

The Butt of the School!

By
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THE **SCHOOLBOYS' OWN**
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HUNTING THE BULL ELEPHANT!

He is no amiable, ambling, shuffling pachyderm with his back view resembling an outside pair of trousers on the march—the big bull elephant of the African wilds. When he happens to be thwarted in any way about his food he can turn particularly nasty. Perhaps one cannot blame the beast for this weakness. It is only just as was set down by La Fontaine of old :

The animal is very bad tempered.
If you attack him, he defends himself.

But the bull elephant, who makes life a perfect misery for the hardworking planter and the natives, stands in a different category. He is a vast and wily lump of improvident wickedness where " grub " is concerned. His staple diet consists of the luscious pea-nut, and he has no scruples about ownership. He goes out foraging, and it is his peccant way to collect victuals wholesale. Like the hungry man who ate the pudding cloth and never even noticed the presence of the trimming, the elephant eats the plant, roots and all. A prosperous plantation after the bull elephant has been over it presents a sorry sight and makes the planter groan.

In the Green Depths !

In the immense sanctuary of the dense forest the bull elephant is effectually hidden, but when on the move his track is easy enough to follow. One way of dealing with the marauding patriarch is by setting a trap by means of a huge suspended spear which hangs ready over the jungle path by which the monster is sure to come. A highly ingenious, yet extremely simple booby trap, this, a bit of mechanism set in motion as the elephant rumbles heavily down the track, and down comes the spear, to cause, more likely than not, a death wound in the neck. Not always. A distinguished elephant hunter tells us that he has seen a piece of iron removed from the neck of a bull elephant years afterwards. The animal had recovered and had lived for long enough, not incommoded a bit by the load of metal it was carrying about.

The Chase !

There are times when, with all his slinking ways, the big bull elephant will decide that he has had enough of being hunted. Then he turns hunter, and with a roar of fury directed at the audacious elephant hunter who has dared to invade the forest, will charge madly. He is a terrible enemy then. The sportsman with nerves of steel can

hardly stand to take aim, for the monster comes hurtling down upon his foe, his white tusks gleaming. When it comes to that tense moment of life and death no man who is not a keen marksman can expect to get a true dead shot at the beast's brain. If he does aim true, the mighty habitan of the forest drops, a splendid prize, and the whole district sighs in relief at being rid of the crop-destroyer.

Discretion is the Better Part of Valour !

This is usually what the elephant thinks, and it is lucky for the hunter. The latter goes in pursuit, watching for the moment to plug a bullet in a vital part of the bulky animal who devastates the land. But the elephant will generally be in no humour to face peril. He trundles on through the deep enclosed spaces of the forest, pressing aside the screens of verdure ; these fall to behind him, and in the dim, mysterious green twilight you do not see the elephant. You are only conscious of a big, shadowy shape. This is the rear part of the quarry—a grey, shadowy wall. This section of the elephant is to all intents and purposes invulnerable.

A Diplomatic Skedaddle !

On these retreats from danger the elephant does not stop to vent annoyance at obstructing trees by hauling them up by the roots. He leaves them standing, and just slithers through, a monstrous phantom of the forest night. If you pause to listen, rifle in hand, you hear nothing but a faint shuffling far ahead, and the brushing of a branch as it swings back into its place. There is scarcely any other life in these green fastnesses—not the screech of a parrot, nor the chatty pleasantries of a simian, for the other denizens of the forest prefer to be nearer the sunlight.

A Listener-in !

But the elephant hears everything that is going on. His knowledge of what is behind him is uncanny. As he softly foots on, on and ever on into the remoter part of the forest, his ears are registering events with admirable accuracy. It is not his fighting day. He has had a good feed of pea-nuts and asks nothing further. It is nothing to him that he has laid waste fields on which much labour had been expended. Pea-nuts he likes. Pea-nuts he will have. "Way argue about it ? He continues his gentle, baffling exercise through the labyrinth of the forest.



THE BUTT OF —THE SCHOOL!

By MICHAEL POOLE



A Story of JOLLY ROGER
and the Boys of St. Katie's.



CHAPTER 1.

A Scrap for the Pictures!

"My hat!" murmured Richard Dexter, and you could see he was excited by the way he jumped from his chair and stuck his hands in his pocket. "You may have been a bit of a prize ass once or twice in the dim and distant past, Linky, but you've hit a real brain-wave this time. It—it's —"

Words failed him as he thought of the good time coming. Even Jimmy Curtis nodded approvingly, and Washington Beck, younger brother of Lincoln Beck, smiled contentedly.

The four of them were together in Study 7, in the Transitus corridor at St. Katherine's School. Katie's is a great school, and its present headmaster, Mr. Roger Blunt, had a reputation throughout Britain, and even beyond this country. They had heard about him even in America, and that explains why Mr. Cyrus Beck had decided to send one of his sons to Katie's and the other to somewhere in Central Africa, in the hope that he would lose himself.

Washington Beck had come to Katie's, and on the very first night he was there his elder brother, Lincoln, butted in and took Washy and the two chuns he had

just made, Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis, both of the Transitus Form, off for a joy-ride.

Linky thought it was a great joke, and he had the shock of his life when he learned that, instead of having a riotous time in Central Africa, he was down to join brother Washy at Katie's. Since coming to the school and becoming a member of the Transitus Form, Linky had learned a good many things, chief among which was that it wasn't the slightest use trying to bluff, deceive, or attempt to outwit Mr. Roger Blunt!

But that didn't prevent Lincoln Beck from trying to have as good a time as he possibly could, and he was nobly supported in his efforts to make life a joyous affair by Dexter and Curtis, with Washy Beck joining up cheerfully in the rear.

Linky had had a brain-wave this past week, and was telling them all about it right away. Right from the beginning Dickie Dexter became enthusiastic, and even Jimmy Curtis began to get excited. Not only was there lots of fun to be had in Linky's latest scheme, but fame and fortune would come to them as well!

Of course, like most brain-waves, this new one of Linky's hadn't happened by accident. In the days gone by, but while he was at Katie's, Linky had met an old

chum of his, Sib Giesler, who had a knack of getting into trouble and out of it more quickly and more frequently than even Linky Beck could do it:

Linky had just heard from his chum. As usual, Giesler had just started in on a new job, and this time he'd become a traveller for some cinematograph company who had just put on the market a movie camera for the home, and wanted a few bright young men to go round the country selling them on the instalment system.

Naturally Sib Giesler wrote at once to Linky, and sent him a whole lot of books about the "Homograph," which was the name of the machine Sib was selling. He told Linky that he ought to jump in quickly and get one before the stock sold out:

The books, and what Sib Giesler wrote in his letter, opened Linky's eyes to the amazing possibilities before any boy who owned a "Homograph." Sib himself said that there wasn't any reason why Linky shouldn't take a film which would make him world-famous and bring him a fortune!

Imagine a really exciting film of school life! All the people who bought and rented films would simply jump at it! Sib would arrange the selling part for Linky, and he could take it for granted that for a really good film Sib wouldn't take anything less than twelve thousand pounds! Twelve thousand pounds!

Linky had promptly raked all his spare cash together, and borrowed all Washy's, and sent away the three pounds ten shillings required as deposit. After that he merely had to pay five pounds a month, and in the fulness of time the "Homograph" was his own. Long before that, of course, Linky would probably be able to buy the factory where they made them.

The "Homograph" was lying there in Study 7 now, in a nice box with two reels of film, a nice-looking stand, a book of instructions, and a catalogue of spare parts, as well as a lot more books which told you about the money to be made by taking films, and how the world was eagerly awaiting new stunts and fresh stories. Wake up, young men! The book said that, and it also said that probably there were boys at school even now whose names would one day ring throughout the world—if they only acted wisely and bought a "Homograph."

"And they're right!" Lincoln Beck said when he read that bit to the others. "I guess we know someone who's going to make a hit pretty quickly! Say, we'll have to have a proper name for our syndicate, you know! All the best film companies do that!"

Linky belonged to what you might call the Excelsior Brigade. Once he'd started on a job he didn't sit down trying to think of the things that might come unstuck. Even Mr. Roger Blunt, their headmaster, admitted that Beck major had a quick-acting and ingenious mind, and that, apart from such things as school work and organised games, Lincoln Beck belonged quite definitely to the "Get-on-or-get-out" type.

It took a day or two, of course, to fix up the story they were going to film, but Dickie Dexter, generally called the Kid, was the scenario writer, and he managed, with the aid of the others, to fix up quite an exciting story, in which there was a villainous master who knew that the father of the captain of the school was really a convict. The wicked master ill-treated the captain, although, of course, it was really the master who had actually done the crime all the time.

The problem of getting additional actors for the scenes was quite a simple one. If you had the chance of playing a part in a cinematograph film would you be stand-offish about it? Of course not! And the six or seven fellows in the Transitus Form who were let into the secret and shown "Homograph" jumped at the idea.

It was one bright Wednesday afternoon when the first scene was staged. Every-body, so the producer, Mr. Lincoln Beck, reckoned, would be out of the school then, and the Transitus Form-room would be free for the Kidlinko Syndicate.

Benson, who was a pretty big chap, was taking the part of the villainous master, and Linky had managed to get quite a first-class beard for him, and there hadn't been any real difficulty in sneaking one of the prefect's caps and a gown, just to give the "master" the proper appearance.

Curtis was down to play the part of the noble captain, and the Kid was his best pal, so they sat together near the head of the Form. Washy Beck, and five other bright lads of the Trans., were to be sitting in the desks, near at hand. They didn't

want too big a crowd, according to Producer Linky, who stuck himself away in the far corner and prepared to operate the camera.

"Now, ready!" Linky called out, and the fun started.

The master jumped up in a towering rage and seized a six-foot cane. With a fierce, vindictive light shining in his evil eyes (he could see the Kid's book of words) he pointed at the Kid and commanded him to stand out.

"I will thrash you within half-an-inch of your life!" Benson stormed, because Linky said it was better to speak the actual words as it made it more realistic. "I will crush every bone in your body! Bend over!"

The Kid, horror shining in his bright eyes, tremblingly obeyed. And then, just as the cane (carefully controlled by Benson on special instructions from the Kid) came whistling through the air, a French dictionary, accurately flung by Jimmy Curtis, caught the master's arm.

That was the signal for the rest of the mob to start flinging their books, and inside ten and a half seconds they were jumping on the desks and throwing themselves in unrestrained fury upon the villainous and brutal master.

"The whole Form, led by the captain, rebels against the injustice of the master," was the Kid's idea of this scene. "They seize the cane from his hand and roll him on the floor."

"That's it! Go it!" Linky Beck was operating the handle of the "Homograph" according to the book of instructions. "Not too much! Mustn't make the scene too long!"

But, of course, you can't begin a pleasant little scrap of that sort without getting slightly excited. Benson had understood that it was going to be all make-believe, and it wasn't till he got a nasty jab in the ribs, and someone trod on his hand just as another fellow dropped an English history fair and square in his face, that he realised the make-believe was a bit too one-sided to suit his ideas of fair play.

"My giddy aunt!" Benson murmured. "If you fellows think I'm the prize mug in this act—I'll show you!"

He did. A jolly good man in any sort of scrap was Benson, and he threw his weight about now in great style. As a result the other six or seven got mixed up,

and above the row Linky Beck was yelling out instructions not to hit each other, but to get Benson down again.

"Not likely!" Benson gasped out. "You keep on, Linky! This is the stuff to give 'em!"

His gown was hanging any old how, and his mortar-board was being trampled under-foot, but his whiskers were keeping on top-hole.

But, just as luck would have it, Mr. Magson, the new Form-master of the Trans, happened to be hurrying by that way, and hearing the row, he experienced quite a lot of shocks. "Maggy" was a young man, very much after Jolly Roger's own style, who believed in stern discipline mixed with common sense.

At the door of the Trans Form-room, however, he stood for a moment or two in bewildered amazement. Of course, he couldn't see Linky Beck just then, but what he did see was about seven boys of his own Form apparently attacking a bearded master.

Maggy gripped that much, and then jumped in. Linky Beck saw the athletic figure dash down the room, and in his own excitement almost forgot to turn the handle for what, as he swiftly realised, would be one of the prize tit-bits of the epoch-making film.

Maggy simply heaved the fellows on one side in great style! Jimmy Curtis found himself collared by the scruff of the neck and slung violently back against one of the desks. The Kid and Washy Beck had exactly the same experience.

"What's the meaning of this?" Maggy demanded in his really high-class imitation of Jolly Roger's well-known performance of the talking glacier. "Quiet! Stand still! Who are you, sir?"

He glared at poor old Benson, who was now looking like a cross between the Fallen Star and the wreck of the Hesperus.

"Please, sir, it's only Benson," Benny himself explained, and he'd just begun to wish that he hadn't taken up film work as a hobby when Linky Beck strolled forward.

Linky had his good points and his bad points, but even Roger's icy glare had never really petrified his thinking-box. He was literally beaming on Maggy as he came forward.

"It's all right, sir!" he assured Maggy. "We're just trying to do something which

will interest and amuse the school during the long winter evenings which are bound to come next term, sir. I—my cinematograph, sir. I'm sure you will be interested, sir."

Linky wasn't going to let everybody into the full secret about the idea of getting thousands and thousands of pounds. He might babble a lot at times—but not to masters, because they wouldn't understand!

And on the other hand, Maggy wasn't the sort to come down with the big boot on what he called "the boys' legitimate desire for self-expression in some shape or form." He looked at Linky's "Homograph," and listened to Linky's explanations.

"I see!" he nodded abruptly at the end. "Well, I've no objection to your hobby, providing you restrict yourself to reasonable methods. You ought not to use the Form-rooms without permission, and I think it undesirable for any boy to impersonate a master. Apart from that, so long as you act in a perfectly sensible manner, I shall not prohibit your amusement."

"Thank you, sir!" Linky said, and the others murmured: "Thank you, sir!"

"And we're wanting to keep it secret, really, sir," Linky pointed out. "We think it will be quite a surprise—when the long winter evenings come, sir!"

"Oh, quite!" Maggy smiled quite cheerily. "I'm sure it will!"

And as Maggy passed out, Linky also smiled and winked at Jimmy Curtis. Maggy hadn't the remotest idea of the real surprise that was in store for him when he heard that Lincoln Beck had sold his first film for twelve thousand pounds!

Aloud, Linky said, in the calm tones of the great producer:

"So that's all right, children! We now have official permission to carry on, and the next item on the programme is—where's the book, Kid?"

CHAPTER 2.

End of Reel One!

THERE were two or three quite exciting episodes "shot" that afternoon. At all events, Lincoln Beck said they had been shot, and as nobody else really understood anything about the "Homograph," anything that Linky said simply went as correct.

They got a splendid scene in Study 7, with everybody sitting round the table, and having a top-hole tea with the captain, otherwise Jimmy Curtis, when into the room the Kid came dashing with exciting news and everybody jumped up and dashed away. There was going to be another big scene to follow this, but they hadn't quite worked it all out yet.

But it was two or three days later when the really thrilling scene was filmed. It had all been arranged beforehand, and Marjory Frayne was already there. They had all agreed that to leave their pal, Marjory, out of the film of the century would be a low-down trick, and Marjory had even helped by suggesting quite a bright stunt.

So at two-thirty, Linky had his "Homograph" all fixed up in the woods. Walking slowly along the path together came Curtis and the Kid. "The Captain of the School tells his friend the terrible secret of his life—'My father is a convict!'"

Suddenly from among the trees there darted a strange figure, clothed in prison garb. He clutched Curtis by the hand, and the captain of the school reeled back in horrified amazement!

"I am your father!" said Mr. Radditch, the second-hand dealer and musical-instrument merchant and dancing-master from Dulchester. It was Mr. Radditch who hired the properties for Linky, and so far as Mr. Radditch is concerned, you can take it for granted that he'd do a lot more than play a part for Linky's great film, Linky being about the only ready-money customer Mr. Radditch has had for years.

At the camera Linky turned the handle in great style, and kept shouting out words of encouragement.

"Now, Benny, you come up!" he called, and from somewhere in the wood Benson crept quietly up and peered cautiously from behind a tree-trunk. Benson had once more donned the whiskers of the wicked Form-master, and on a shout from Linky he contorted his face in the correct villain's fashion.

"Rigford, the Form-master, overhears the convict declare the truth, and a dastardly plot enters his mind," ran the note in the Kid's book.

About this stage in the programme Marjory left them, and Washy Beck went with her to give a hand in getting out the boat which belonged to the Fraynes. The rest

of the party sauntered calmly enough through the woods towards the pool, where Linky fixed his camera all right for the next bright scene.

Absolutely original this was! Mr. Rad-ditch had gone off to the fishing hut to take off his convict suit and put on his ordinary clothes, while Jimmy Curtis was also making a few changes of attire, because, after all, one can't spoil one's best suit, even for a film!

Marjory rowed the boat over towards the bank where Linky had his camera, and she waved a cheery hand to them all. But first of all, Linky had to wait till Jimmy Curtis was quite ready, and not until then did he yell out to Marjory, who promptly stood up in the boat and began to act the giddy goat with an oar. Anybody would have thought she was trying to reach something floating on the water.

"Right!" yelled Linky, and on the word Marjory tumbled head first into the pool!

"Ready, Jimmy? Just a second!"

"Right!" Linky had turned his camera round, and was operating the machinery as Jimmy pulled off his coat, waistcoat, collar and tie, all in one frantic movement. Then, with a flying rush, Jimmy Curtis plunged into the water.

Marjory was now calmly treading water, waiting for Jimmy to roll up and also to hear the next shout from Linky.

"Now, Marjory!" Linky's voice was quite excited, and he was like a cat on hot bricks with his old "Homograph." Just as Marjory's head disappeared beneath the waters of Marshall's Pool, Linky was turning the handle once again, and there was Jimmy Curtis doing a record swim towards the spot where Marjory had disappeared. The fellows who stood watching the business on the bank were as excited as though they were watching Katie's play the match of the season.

That was why they failed to notice the fact that two other people had come dashing along the edge of the pool in a great hurry. When Dickie Dexter saw them he gasped in pained horror, and it flashed through his mind that this was just about the most amazing coincidence, combined with hard luck, that it had ever been his lot to strike.

But when you come to think of it, there was no coincidence at all in the fact that Jolly Roger should wander over to his father-in-law's house for lunch occasionally,

or that on this particular day his eagle eye should observe the fact that Marjory Frayne, his wife's pretty sister, was in a hurry to wind up her meal and get away.

Roger couldn't help noticing things of that sort, and when he saw Marjory doing a stealthy glide through the gardens, and casting anxious eyes behind her as though she were afraid of being seen, and when likewise he observed the fact that she had changed her clothes, not for better ones, but for some of the most dilapidated that her wardrobe contained, Roger lost all interest in the political problem Mr. Frayne was trying to explain to him, and began to puzzle his quick-acting brain over the question of the great adventure which Marjory was obviously seeking.

And that explains just how it happened that Mr. Frayne and Jolly Roger, standing on the high ground overlooking the pool, saw Marjorie's performance with the oar, and also saw the big splash she made when she went headlong into the water.

"Come on!" Roger rapped out. "Marjory can swim, but take no risks!"

Roger led from the beginning, but Mr. Frayne didn't do badly. Even as they struggled along the path round the pool they realised that someone else was already on the noble rescue act, and they caught a glimpse of the mob of lads standing behind Linky Beck's camera.

"It's all right!" Roger gasped out to Mr. Frayne. "This is apparently another of the high-class jokes. Oh, but I'll deal with the young scoundrels when the time comes!"

And Roger stalked magnificently along to the spot where Linky Beck was still winding away at his Homograph.

"Right-ho!" Linky yelled to the two swimmers. "I've got enough! Fado out!"

Dripping and laughing, Jimmy Curtis and Marjory struggled ashore.

"Wasn't it fine? Didn't I do—" Marjorie began, and then suddenly caught the swift gleam of warning in Dickie Dexter's eyes. For the Kid had seen Roger in the background, trying to do the silent onlooker stunt and to keep mildly out of their view, and the Kid had decided that it wasn't any use raising the wild alarm. He'd tried to give Linky the tip, but Linky was too excited in his job to worry about any "Sh—sh!" from the Kid.

But Marjory turned and saw Roger there.

then she caught sight of her father still struggling gallantly along. And quite suddenly she felt mad—very mad indeed!

That's one of the funny things you've maybe noticed yourself about girls? A fellow gets caught, fair and square, on some giddy racket, and he just takes what comes to him with no more than a pathetic "Yes, sir," or "No, sir." Even Linky Beck would no more have thought of asking Roger what right he'd got to be mooning round Marshall's Pool and upsetting the scenery than Dickie Dexter, or Jimmy Curtis, or old Bonson. Mr. Radditch, seeing the steely gleam in the eyes of the headmaster of St. Katie's suddenly remembered he'd got an important appointment somewhere else, and he just faded away silently. The others, including Jimmy Curtis, let their hands drop to their sides and fixed their eyes sadly on Mr. Blunt.

"Ah!" said Roger, and eyed the mob grimly. "I don't quite know—"

"But I do!" Marjory interrupted swiftly, and that rather destroyed the spell of Roger's magnetic gleam. "I suppose you saw me leave the house, and then followed me down here? D'you think it's quite fair to be always spying and trying to catch people? And, anyway, there's nothing wrong in anything we've done to-day. But it's always the same. The moment a boy—or a girl, for that matter—tries to do anything the least bit intelligent everybody starts to wail about what happened in their young days!"

She got out quite a lot more before anybody really tried to stop her, and she blamed the whole human race over the age of eighteen for their utter lack of understanding of the rising generation. Even after Mr. Frayne had said, "Marjory! Marjory!" seven times she still kept on. Instead of Roger and Mr. Frayne doing the stern judge stunt, they were turned into deep-dyed criminals whose sole ambition in life was to interfere with the happiness of the young.

Of course, she didn't crush Mr. Roger Blunt. But she changed the ice-cold gleam in his eyes to one of puzzled amusement.

"When you have quite finished your very interesting lecture, Marjory," Roger said calmly, "perhaps you will allow me to ask one or two questions?"

Even Marjory began to get that squashed feeling in quite a short time. Still, you must admit she'd done a lot to tone down

the first annoyance which had blazed in Roger's mind, and she'd given Linky Beck and Richard Dexter a chance to think out a few intelligent explanations.

Roger gripped the position presently. Lincoln Beck had had a Homograph sent him, and he was trying to make a film, which might perhaps be useful in amusing the school during the long winter evenings, because during the winter, of course, the evenings were often long, and a little amusement in the way of a cinematograph film—

"Oh, quite!" Roger agreed, and began to smile in his well-known cheery manner. Then he asked a few questions, all of which were respectfully and nicely answered by Lincoln Beck. The others lay low, but still wore their pathetic looks.

Now Jolly Roger, as everybody knows, was one of the last men on earth to try and squash the lad who really was taking an intelligent interest in any hobby, short of carving his name in oak panelling, or training white mice to perform tricks in the class-room. And Lincoln Beck could talk some; he told Roger quite a lot of things about the amazing developments he expected cinematography to make in the next year or two, and how no home would be complete without one, and a lot of things like that. He didn't tell Roger that he'd read all this in the Homograph books, of course, and in any case he did impress Roger that he knew quite a lot about the game.

"Most interesting!" said Mr. Frayne, and Roger nodded.

"Yes," he agreed. "At the same time I don't agree with your taking any risks, Beck. There are surely quite a number of exciting scenes or interesting incidents every day at the school without faking foolish rescues. However, I shall take a personal interest in your new hobby, and— But you all know the rules of the school. Good! And now, I think—"

He looked at Mr. Frayne, and Mr. Frayne nodded and looked at Marjory.

"Come along, Marjory. You'll catch cold if you stand about in those wet things. Good-bye, boys!"

"Good-bye, sir!" they said, just like the nice little lads they were.

"Good-bye, everybody! It's been topping!" Marjory said cheerily. "You'll let me see the film, won't you, Linky?"

"Rather! I mean—of course, Miss Frayne!" Linky said. "Good-bye!"

And that, as Linky wisely remarked, was really the end of Reel One, because the film had just about run out, and he'd have to reload. But they were really getting along quite nicely!

CHAPTER 3.

Fire, Smoke and—Fizzles!

DURING the next week or two the Homograph provided any amount of fun, if it didn't do anything else.

The good news began to leak out, and Linky didn't exactly belittle his own importance on the job, not being quite that sort.

"Do I know all about film work?" Linky asked some fellow from the Sixth who'd evidently got secret ambitions that way himself. "Dear laddie, if there is a big producer in the world who doesn't know Linky Beck—believe me, he's not! You grip what I mean? Why, for this film I'm on now—oh, shucks! You couldn't grasp how many dollars I'll be raking in over this! We're showing it at Katie's first, mind. I was talking to Roger the other day, and he's dead keen. I don't quite agree with his idea of having all the governors along; but, as I say, when you're at school—"

"Oh, the wonderful things Linky got in his films were nothing to the fairy stories he pitched in answer to kind inquiries from his little playmates. Just for a brief space, at all events, Lincoln Beck was quite the most popular lad in the school, and quite important pots came up and patted him on the back and said: "Oh, I say, Beck! I'd like to be in that film of yours! I'm rather good on acting!"

"Right, old son!" Linky would say cheerfully. "We'll fit you in somewhere. Matter of fact, we're wanting one or two good men for the big scene we're just plotting out now. I'll just make a note, and let you know what time the call'll be coming."

And they really were fixing up a top-hole scene. It was one of the most thrilling and sensational that had ever been filmed. Linky Beck said so, though it was really the Kid's idea. Just at first Jimmy Curtis was doubtful about it, because he reckoned that if Jolly Roger saw them doing it he'd play merry war, and probably collar the Homo-

graph and the films, and load them all up with enough detentions to keep them from indulging in any more "hobbies" for the rest of the term.

But you can't spoil the biggest film that ever happened just because a stern headmaster might want to butt in.

"You trust me!" Linky Beck smiled. "We'll fix that scene for a time when Jolly Roger will be busy with other things, and it'll be all over inside five minutes! You leave it all to me!"

And Linky ambled round and talked gently to first one fellow and then the other. There's no doubt that Linky ought to have been in the Diplomatic Service, judging by the artful—or rather tactful way in which he explained things.

It was just the same when he went into the town, and had a long chat with Charlie Challinor, who was quite a bright lad in the chemistry line, and knew how to do a lot of funny things. It took some little time, of course, but in two or three days Linky had got one or two queer-looking tubes which were going to do his films a lot of good.

Oh, and it's just as well to mention that Linky had had another letter from Sib Giesler some little time back, asking Linky to send along two or three months' instalments for the "Homograph" as Sib wanted to make his accounts up and was hoping to make quite a good show.

Linky had replied quite cheerily, but said that just at present it wasn't quite possible, so would Sib mind paying the instalments until Linky had had the hard cash for his first film, when, of course, he'd pay up like a shot. Sib hadn't answered that letter so it was evidently quite all right.

On a certain Wednesday then, the master in charge of the dining-hall observed the fact that quite a number of boys left the hall at the very earliest permissible moment. As Wednesday was usually a match day it was one of the days when boys could dodge the second course and clear off quite early. Athletic fellows, who were in strict training, often preferred to do this, and then they'd have barley water and a couple of digestive biscuits instead of suet puddings.

Linky Beck was out of the dining-hall among the first; thirty seconds later he was in the quadrangle with his dear old "Homograph" all ready, while Washy Beck was standing near and holding the queer tubes rather anxiously.

A sudden shout, and the school fire brigade came tearing along towards the spot already marked for them by Linky.

"Now!" said Linky to his brother, and Washy chucked the tube in his right hand as hard as he could so that it struck the ground about six or seven feet from the school wall.

Instantly the thing went bang! And then a sheet of flame, five or six feet wide and fully twenty feet high, shot up!

The fire brigade were absolutely astounded! They thought that Linky merely wanted to see the way they dashed about, and that they were all going to be filmed doing their smart tricks. But a real fire. My hat! No!

The leader of the fire brigade was rapping out orders, realising that for the first time in history the brigade was going to have its chance! They raced forward, and in a jiffy the big hydrant had been turned on and the hose was playing merrily, and there was old Linky like a giddy hero turning away at the "Homograph" for all he was worth!

Almost before the hose began to play the sheet of flame gave a last despairing leap and died away. It was the quickest and most sudden fire that ever happened. Charlie Challinor had said it would burn for a full eight seconds, but it was doubtful whether it lasted more than four and three-quarter seconds at the outside. But even that is quite long enough for a film!

"Now!" rapped Linky, and Washy slung the next tube good and hard against the school wall. Bang! And now a great volume of grey smoke came bursting forth.

"Into it, lads!" Linky yelled to the fire brigade, because they'd stopped now. "Go on, my gallant flame-fighters! Now, Jimmy! Oh, there's the Kid all right!"

And sure enough, standing right outside on the window-sill of Study 7, was Richard Dexter—only, just for a change he'd got on the suit of convict clothes old Raddich had hired for Linky.

Smithy, the captain of the school, who'd really given permission for the fire brigade to give a practice performance, had himself strolled out to see the fun. When he saw the flame, and then the great cloud of smoke which suddenly began to rise upwards, quite a lot of thoughts and ideas began to jump about in his mind, chief of which was that

he'd slay young Beck before the day was out.

But when he saw the figure balancing itself precariously on the narrow window-ledge, Smithy realised that the joke had gone altogether too far. Doubtless he would have been happier had he realised that a stout rope was tied round the Kid's waist, and that five or six hefty lads of the Transitus were holding on to the other end, just in case the Kid over-did the part he was playing and toppled off the sill.

"Chuck this foolery, Beck!" Smithy dashed forward, and nearly knocked the "Homograph" flying, just as Linky was turning it upwards to get the right picture of the Kid.

"Get away! Don't interrupt the man at the wheel!" Linky rapped back. "Can't you see? Get ready, Jimmy!"

You grip the thrilling scene they were now filming? The convict father had been safely smuggled into the school by his captain-son, and was hidden under the rafters or somewhere like that. Then comes the fire; everyone is safe, when suddenly among the smoke appears the figure of the convict-father. For him there is no escape! But, seizing the fire-escape, his noble son dashes forward, a thick muffler round his mouth to keep out the poisonous fumes—

Jimmy Curtis had collared the small fire-escape all right, and was doing the giddy dash forward. Of course, he'd only have to climb up a rung or two before the scene would be over because Linky was going to leave out the actual rescue, and later on he'd take a bit more, without so much fuss, showing the son staggering along the ground with his father—safe!

Already the smoke was drifting away, but there was still enough to give anybody a bit of a fright who happened to wander along without knowing anything about it. And suddenly, before Jimmy had actually got his ladder against the wall, a fierce, ice-cold voice rang out a sharp command.

"Stop!" It was Jolly Roger himself who came up—and everybody stopped!

Linky had calculated that Roger would be somewhere in the middle of his lunch in his own house when this little performance was taking place. But, unfortunately, Roger's lunch had been postponed to-day by the advent of a visitor, and what the visitor said

to Roger didn't exactly please the head-master of St. Katie's.

"I understood that Beck's father purchased the instrument for him," Roger was saying as he stood in his study at the school which commanded a full view of the courtyard. "In any case, I am quite certain that Beck is entirely unaware. Ah!"

He stopped abruptly as he saw the mob below, and away on his right, and it was just at that precise moment that the sheet of flame shot upwards. From the position he was in Roger realised the fact that it was not the building itself which was on fire, but something on the ground.

Roger turned to his visitor.

"Very well, Mr. Jenkins!" he said. "The boy, Beck, is, I fancy, outside in the quadrangle at this moment and using the 'Homograph.' We will go out and you can discuss the matter with him personally!"

They went out, and by the time they were crossing the quad the smoke had burst forth. Roger wasn't scared in the tiniest degree, but he did think, just as Smithy had already thought, that this was carrying a hobby too far. And then he saw the queer figure perched on the window-sill!

"Stop!" Roger did the next fifteen yards in record time, and the first fellow he collided with was Smith, captain of the school. "What does this mean, Smith? Are you responsible for the fire brigade?"

"I am, sir," Smith put out his hands helplessly, and the look on his face told Roger that Smithy himself was feeling just as Jolly Roger did. "It was going to be a little practice for them. But the fire—the smoke—the escaped convict up there! Oh, thank goodness, he's gone in!"

Looking up they could just see Dickie Dexter—disguised as Convict 99—just struggling back into the room. His face was turned outwards and downwards, and Richard observed the Head, and Smithy looking up at him through the very thin smoke mist which still clung about.

"My giddy aunt! There's going to be fireworks after this!" the Kid gasped, as he stood in the study again. "I'm bound to be in it sooner or later; but let's get into my own togs again and hide these things somewhere quick! And then we'll go into your study, Benny, and see what's happening from your window!"

The Kid did the quick-change act and the whole mob wandered into Benson's

study to watch the scene in the quad below. Maybe they'd missed a bit of the exciting part, but there was still quite a lot to be seen, even though they couldn't hear a word of what was said.

The fire-brigade lads were trying to look frightfully busy in rolling up the hose again. The odd fellows who'd been chosen to come in as part of the crowd and give a ringing cheer when Jimmy Curtis staggered along with his convict father were now acting parts they'd never really thought about. They were trying to pretend they were deaf and blind and had never noticed anything at all unusual—and they were trying to drift calmly and quietly towards the playing-fields!

But Roger had seen everything, and his swift eye had taken in everybody present, in case of need. Apart from that he merely rapped out a command for Curtis to come, told Smith to stand by, ordered the fire-brigade to get their things away at once, and commanded Lincoln Beck to cease his performance with the Homograph.

"Did you ask Smith's permission to have this fire and smoke exhibition, Beck?" Roger asked calmly.

"No, sir," Linky answered. "But I did ask him whether he'd any objection to the fire-brigade giving a little performance, but, of course, he didn't know the fire and smoke was going to be thrown in any more than they did, sir. That was my own little idea, sir."

Linky was quite calm and collected and explained that there wasn't any harm in it at all. It was merely a patent chemical arrangement, and it was all over inside ten seconds without doing anybody or anything any harm.

He explained quite a lot more, but he didn't explain for instance why it was necessary for the escaped convict to keep on his branded uniform all the time when he could easily have got other clothes that wouldn't have labelled him so well.

Roger cut in at last because he was getting a bit tired of Linky's yarn. But he'd wanted to know just what the idea was behind it all before turning to something more important.

"I'll talk to you on that matter later, Beck!" Roger said abruptly. "There are other matters which also require explanation. I may wish to see you later, Smith, but for the present you are not required. You

may also go, Curtis—and you, too, Beck minor. I shall go into the whole matter most thoroughly in due course. Serious damage might have been caused to-day. However, come with me, Beck major! No! Bring the camera with you!"

Mr. Jenkins hadn't said a word, but he'd smiled in a superior sort of way when Linky had been explaining about the fire. Somehow Jimmy Curtis got the idea that Mr. Jenkins didn't think much of Linky's brilliant brain-wave. Professional jealousy, no doubt!

It was quite an impressive little procession which passed through the quad, after all the excitement. Jolly Roger, still in cap and gown, stalked ahead, with Mr. Jenkins toddling along just behind him. And behind Mr. Jenkins came Linky Beck with the fairly big camera, still on its stand, being carried like a banner over his shoulder.

Not until they were in Roger's study, however, did the faintest suspicion come to Linky that something had come badly unstuck somewhere. Roger began a close cross-examination about how he came to possess the camera, how much he'd paid, and all about it.

"So you actually paid three pounds ten shillings," Roger said, "but have not yet paid the instalment of five pounds due a week ago?"

"My friend, Giesler, would pay that for me," Linky pointed out. "I wrote him, and—well, I know that would be all right. Sib Giesler isn't the sort of lad to—"

"Ah!" said Roger, and looked at Mr. Jenkins. "And you say that this fellow Giesler has sold five of these cameras—three to Lincoln Beck and two to others whose addresses he has lost?"

Then Mr. Jenkins began to explain all over again. Giesler had set forth after having apparently sold two cameras, for which the deposit was paid. One of these was obviously the one Lincoln Beck now possessed.

But Giesler had gone to the provinces with three "sample" cameras and wrote saying he'd sold two more, apparently to Lincoln Beck, who would be sending along the money very shortly as he proposed to buy them outright.

This was all right, but as the days went by there was no money coming from Mr. Giesler, nor could they find him. He sent

them a sort of farewell note, saying that he didn't find their camera was the sort of thing one could sell, but they'd doubtless get their money all right for those he had sold.

Linky, of course, could guess quite easily what had happened. Sib had got hard up and had probably sold the cameras outright for a small amount. Of course, Sib would mean to pay up all right himself in due course, but Sib had never been the sort to worry very much about dates so long as he got enough to go on with. In all probability he was now stranded somewhere or other, and beyond all doubt he would presently be writing to Mr. Beck—and Mr. Beck would pay!

Even Mr. Roger Blunt felt there wasn't any serious danger of Mr. Jenkins losing any money on the deal, but he did think it was a great opportunity to ram home some common wisdom into Linky.

"So your father does not even know that you have this instrument, Beck?" Roger asked, as though he were staggered at the very thought. "How did you expect to pay for it?"

"By selling the films I made, sir," said Linky, and Mr. Jenkins laughed.

"But it says so in the 'Homograph' book!" Linky retorted quickly, and a little twinkle came to Roger's eyes then.

"Oh, well, if it says so in the 'Homograph' book, I suppose it must be so, Mr. Jenkins?" Roger looked at the man questioningly.

"Yes, yes, yes!" Mr. Jenkins had suddenly stopped laughing. "But one needs years and years of experience. It's absurd to think that a schoolboy—"

"You wait till you see my film!" Linky said. "I've got some real stunning scenes, and I'll bet you— Sorry, sir!"

"Unfortunately, Beck, we cannot wait till you complete this film," Roger said, and he didn't seem nearly so freezingly cold as he had been. "For the moment, Mr. Jenkins is concerned in tracing all these cameras which your friend has apparently distributed without taking proper precautions. Until I have communicated with your father this machine must be returned to its rightful owners. You have had it on hire for something over a month. That is the position, Mr. Jenkins?"

"That will be agreeable, sir," Mr. Jenkins said.

"But my film, sir!" Linky gasped out. "If they spoil that—"

Roger turned and had a brief discussion with Mr. Jenkins. Certainly, the company would develop and print the film at their usual fees and would return them to Lincoln Beck.

And the whole thing fizzled out at that stage in quite a simple way, even though it left Linky very much in the cold. Mr. Blunt said just what was to be done, and even Mr. Jenkins was now saying: "Yes, sir," just as nicely as Lincoln Beck!

The camera was packed; the films were packed (there were two reels; one complete, and one almost complete); the stand was packed, and Mr. Jenkins wandered forth with the lot. Later, the films would be returned to Lincoln Beck, with a report, copy of which would also be sent to Mr. Blunt.

"It's all right, laddies!" Linky said, when at last, after hours and hours it seemed to those who waited, he rejoined his chums in Study 7. They fully expected that Linky would get the order of the sack, and they had seen the taxi containing Mr. Jenkins depart a full hour before Linky eventually appeared.

"But what's going to happen?" they demanded. "What did Roger say?"

"Oh, a whole mouthful," Linky answered. "There ought to have been a shorthand man there to take it all down. He made me go very hot, and then I went very cold, and then we settled down to the old heart-to-heart business, and we're quite good pals again once more. I'm never going to order from the right path, and I'm always going to let Roger know just what's in my mind. And he's writing to tell the dear old dad about the 'Homograph,' and the films are going to be developed, and then—well, you'll see! You trust your Uncle Linky!"

So, for a full week they waited expectantly. Roger never said a word to the others, but Linky heard from his father that Sib Giesler had turned up and was very sorry for himself because he'd been hoping to make a fortune and somehow it hadn't happened. Mr. Beck, of course, was seeing the lad through his troubles with the camera company.

Then one bright day came a bulky packet for Linky, labelled "From the Homograph Company. Films—with care."

"The films! They've come!" The glad

news spread, and quite a little mob gathered in Study 7 to gaze on the wonderful films.

There was a letter enclosed, and swiftly Lincoln unfolded it and looked through.

"Oh, gee!" he murmured weakly. "Say — Oh, my hat!"

The Kid was anxiously peering over his shoulder and read the opening part.

"Dear Sir,—We enclose two reels developed by your instructions. We have not made positives from these, as no useful purpose would be served, but we enclose our expert's report, and suggest that you should read also our book on 'How to Use the Homograph,' which contains much valuable advice for beginners. In common with many other inventions, the Homograph requires to be used, despite its simplicity, with a certain degree of intelligence."

The expert's report was a lot more cutting than that. It said that the films were quite useless, and had evidently been exposed by an amateur of something less than no experience. All the scenes, which he judged had been interiors, were hopelessly under-exposed, and apparently no arrangements had been made for lighting.

There were also scenes which he fancied had been taken in a wood or forest, but these, too, were badly under-exposed. The best strip of film showed a pool and someone falling from a boat, but most of this had been spoiled by the leaves from an overhanging tree which had cut out most of the view. The last part of the second film he didn't understand at all—and just left it at that!

"Oh, my giddy aunt! Didn't you read the instructions, Linky?" the Kid demanded. "We took your word—"

He shut up suddenly as the door opened and Jolly Roger walked magnificently in.

"Ah, Beck!" he smiled quite cheerily upon Linky. "You have read— No, don't go, boys! Anything I have to say will interest you all!"

This was to Benson & Co., who were trying to do the discreet disappearance act. Sheepishly they lined up round the room. The Kid and Curtis had also managed to fade a little into the background, with Washy in the far corner, and Linky occupying the front of the foreground, standing

rather limply and sorrowfully by the chair from which he had risen:

"No, I have very little to say," Roger said cheerfully. "I have read the report. It caused me no surprise whatever. I should have been amazed had it been otherwise. They mention, as you doubtless observed, the fact that even with their camera intelligence is needed. Intelligence!"

Roger rapped the word out—and then he began! He said his sole object in life was to get that blessed word into their minds; he pointed out how Beck hadn't used even the little bit he'd picked up at Katie's, and how he must start cultivating it a lot more before he had any other intelligent toys. How Roger himself always liked to see a lad having a nice lobby and taking an interest in something—providing he did it intelligently, and not—well, not the way Beck had done, anyway!

He curled them all up before he was through; ; nicely and gently he did it for most of them, but for Linky it was a harrowing time! And then old Roger beamed upon them all once more.

"Good-bye, boys! I thought I would let you know just what I think, and perhaps explain the reason why you are at this school," he said. "It will perhaps give you more interest in your work. Cultivate your intelligence! Don't forget that, Beck, will you? Use your intelligence! Good-bye!"

And Roger wandered forth once more, leaving them a bit weak and flabby.

"My hat!" Benson murmured. "And all because—oh, but you are a burbling pie-can, Beck! Fancy landing us in for all that! Why didn't—"

"Jumping snakes!" Curtis said. "To think that I— Don't you ever tell me any of your fairy-stories again, you lop-eared rabbit! If ever you come talking to me about making a fortune with another movie-camera, I'll—"

"Oh, shucks!" murmured Linky wearily. "The syndicate has just struck a bad—"

"Drop it!" said the Kid vindictively. "The Kidlinko Syndicate is dead—right now! When we want a little fun in future we'll arrange it ourselves, without any help from Lincoln Beck!"

They left Linky all to himself and wandered forth to seek refreshment. Lincoln Beck was prize rabbit, and the *Transitus* Form hadn't any use for him!

CHAPTER 4.

The Butt of the School!

IT wasn't only the *Transitus* who let Linky know just what they thought of him. Roger, as the Head of the School, had had his say, and had rubbed it in about intelligence, but after that Jolly Roger dropped the matter. But other people didn't.

If Linky walked across the quad some kid from the Third would ask him if he'd been to the pictures lately, or some feeble question about having any old films on him. Or some fellow in the Fourth would hail him, apparently quite cheerily, and give him a leaflet about the Little Flipper Camera.

"A child can use it! No loose parts, and nothing can go wrong. A splendid gift for the youngsters!" the leaflet said, and Harris of the Fourth rubbed it in.

"Just the thing for you, Beck! Been saving it for you! With the Little Flipper you don't need any intelligence—"

"Oh, shucks!" Linky murmured wearily, and crumpled the leaflet in his hand.

Fellows of the Sixth ignored him; the Fifth smiled contemptuously, or looked at him as though he were some queer animal.

"What is it exactly?" a Fifth man would say. "Does it squeak when you pinch it?"

And the other fellow would say: "Oh, it's some new specimen Roger's found! It used to be the Performing Ape in a circus, but Roger's teaching it the A B C, and things of that sort."

In the *Transitus* they weren't even humorous about Linky. If Linky tried to butt in and give an opinion he was told quite frankly, and without any politeness: "Oh, you dry up! Run away, and make a moving picture of yourself, you prize ass!"

No, Lincoln Beck wasn't popular just now. It seemed a bit unfair, because Linky had really tried to amuse the school and do himself and others a bit of good. He had failed!

Even the Kid wasn't sympathetic, and was just as swift as the next man in shriveling Linky up the moment he tried to put up any new scheme.

"Coming out to cricket, Jimmy?" the Kid would say. "Buck up, Washy! Old Sandgate kicks up a fuss if we're late. You'd better try to get out there in time to-day, Linky! Even if you can't play cricket you can try to look intelligent."

So the four would wander out. Jimmy Curtis, captain of the Trans., and a crack bat these days, giving helpful tips to Washy Beck, who was really keen, while the Kid kept pace and tried to pretend he was above such hints, though, as a matter of fact, in the last three "compulsory" practice matches the Kid had scored exactly none, which was a lot worse than Linky Beck's record. Linky had an average of 1.33 for three games. Washy's average was a shade over 5.

To be quite truthful, the Kid didn't shine at cricket. He was in too big a hurry to make his first fifty to take much care over getting the first two or three. To-day he went in third wicket down, old Benson, who was captaining the "B" team against Jimmy Curtis' "A" eleven, having fallen for the Kid's excuse that it was owing to going in sixth wicket down that he'd failed the last time.

Wingham, the best bowler of the Trans., had just taken the third wicket with the first ball of the over and a mild idea about doing the hat-trick was in his mind as he got ready to sling down the first ball to Richard Dexter.

The Kid saw it coming, and he had an idea that it was quite a soft and simple ball. He lifted his bat and stepped out to lift the ball clean out of the ground. But—the pitch hadn't been properly rolled, or there was something sticking up, or there was a daisy root or something! The ball suddenly shot and turned in so that, before the Kid quite realised it, he was making a desperate effort to keep the beastly thing from shooting right on his wicket.

Mind you, he did stop it, but it was, as the Kid said afterwards, the funniest, flukiest sort of ball that was ever bowled. It skidded up the bat, touched the shoulder, and then deliberately jerked itself off and fell calmly into the hands of Raymond, who was keeping wicket.

"S'hat?" shrieked Raymond, tauntingly triumphant. You can't help agreeing with Dickie Dexter that there's no more loathsome person on the face of the earth than the wicket-keeper who yells jeeringly and exultantly "S'hat?" when, by a sheer fluke, the ball's tumbled into his hands.

The Kid walked off the field with a sense of bitterness about the injustice of the whole thing. Even as he came off he had

to pass quite near to Wingham, the wickets being pitched that way to-day, and the bowler was saying in that cocky way of his: "I thought you would get him! Who's next man? Oh, my hat! The Beck rabbit! It's the hat-trick for me! I'll give him the same stuff I gave the poor old Kid!"

Linky was almost running to the wicket. He always did. In his own bitterness the Kid didn't want to go into the pavilion just yet, so he stopped outside and watched Linky face the music.

Wingham took a gentle little run just as though he didn't really want to frighten the batsman, and the ball seemed to be going a little wide of the wicket. Linky jumped towards it—and the ball suddenly broke across. Linky's attitude the next second suggested he was trying to do conjuring tricks with his bat because he seemed to lift it up and try to protect his chest with it.

There was a sharp click, followed almost immediately by a slightly duller "Snick!" and there was Raymond throwing the ball in the air and shrieking, in that jeering voice of his: "S'hat!"

The fielders' laughter jarred on the Kid. And why on earth did Jimmy Curtis, of all people, want to clap and shout out: "Bravo, Wingham!" What had Wingham done?

"Absolutely the same ball he took Dexter's wicket with!" some ass was saying quite near the Kid. It annoyed the Kid, and when poor old Linky Beck came hurrying from the wicket looking like a depressed rabbit, the Kid joined him and felt sincerely and deeply sympathetic. Together they wandered to the pavilion.

"Let's have a ginger-pop," Linky suggested, and looked at the Kid almost appealingly. This past week's experience of being the prize ass, the neglected goat, and the general butt of the school, had squashed even Linky's bright spirits.

"I'm cutting off!" the Kid asserted, as they drank the stone-ginger. "If I get in a row—I get in a row! That's all! Think of a good excuse, Linky—and let's bolt!"

It was not yet three o'clock, and somewhere towards half-past three the pair would be due to wander out into the field and start chasing Jimmy Curtis' lusty hits, or wandering round to where Benson told them to stand. The mere thought of it,

after his recent inglorious display, filled the Kid with fury.

"You've said it, Kid!" The glad light began to come back to Linky's wistful eyes. "I've got the excuse all right! Urgent telegram! Look!"

From the pocket of his flannel trousers he pulled out a telegraph envelope and handed the whole thing to the Kid.

The message inside was addressed "Lincoln Beck, St. Katherine's School, Dulchester. Urgent. Coming Dulchester to-day" with Giesler. Should like see you and any old friends at Cloisters Hotel, 4 p.m. Good news.—RICKS."

"My giddy aunt!" The Kid stared at the wire and new hopes were already dancing in his mind. It seemed to him years and years ago since those glad days when they'd sneaked over to Daleswick Manor and really and truly taken part in film-making. Shorty Ricks, the famous "star," had been quite a pal of the Kid's then, and they'd had great times together until the California Players packed up their traps and wandered away.

"You'll come?" Linky asked anxiously. "I didn't like to ask you before, knowing how keen you are on cricket—"

"Cut it out!" said the Kid bitterly. "That telegram is good enough. Urgent! Don't let them see you go, Linky. They can kick up as much row as they like when we come back—but we're meeting old Shorty!"

And twenty minutes later, while the mob on the Upper School playing-pitch were still getting excited over somebody hitting a ball with a bat, and equally excited when someone missed hitting, two figures, no longer in flannels, stole cautiously and with much care down the drive.

"I was real sorry about that film wash-out," Linky said, when at last they were on the open road and heading for Dulchester. "It seemed to let you down, as well as—"

"Oh, forget it!" said the Kid kindly. "My giddy aunt! Haven't I come unstuck many and many a time on prize schemes? It's only the pie-cans who never go all out for some big stunt who never come a cropper!"

"You've said it, Kid!" murmured Linky, and he'd got the soft pedal on; in the words

of the poet, deep emotion vibrated in his low, manly tones as he gripped Dickie Dexter's hand. "I reckon I came a cropper over that last li'l affair. But I'm coming back, Kid! Me? I'm not going to play no second-rate fiddle to kids who haven't given up collecting cigarette-pictures yet! You trust your Uncle Linky! I'm coming back! And you'll be in it, Kid!"

"I'll be there!" murmured Richard Dexter, deeply touched by the sincerity of his friend's tone. "We'll show 'em, Linky!"

Reconciliation! The old friends agree to bury the past. Slow music, low lights, and the real genuine sob-stuff; Lincoln Beck and Richard Dexter join hands once more!

And that being so, you can be jolly well certain that something is going to happen round about Katie's!

CHAPTER 5.

The Mystery of the Missing School!

"O H, but it's great to see you bonny laddies once again!"

In the pleasant, cool lounge of the Cloisters Hotel Mr. Shorty Ricks, the world-famed hero of many remarkable films, greeted Linky and the Kid with genuine joy. Behind him, Sib Giesler, now dressed in Bond Street fashion, came forward a little apologetically.

"I'm sorry about that film fiasco, Linky," he said gently, and spoke like a little gentleman. "But—I'll make it up!"

Sib Giesler had joined up for the time being with Shorty Ricks. Mr. Cyrus Beck had straightened out all the complications which had tied Sib Giesler in knots, and to see and hear Sib talk now you'd have formed the impression that he was the secretary of a mutual improvement society, who'd got a nice taste in ties and sound ideas about cream buns for tea.

By the time they'd really got going with the tea, the Kid and Linky had completely forgotten about the rude remarks which had been made upon their cricket display. The joy of life was coursing through their veins once more.

"And so the bright boys of St. Katie's don't look upon little Linky as the pet of the school?" asked Shorty Ricks, after Linky had related the story of his failure

with the cinema camera. "Well, well! Do you want to make them sorry for themselves, and show them that it doesn't do to make rude remarks about a free-born American? Or do you just want to shovel the coal on their heads and prove that it was just a side-slip about the pictures?"

"Me?" said Linky. "I just want to show 'em that when Linky Beck says he'll give them a good time, they're going to have a good time! They thought I was one of the real tin pots, and now they think I'm a prize mug. I want to come back!"

And that's perfectly true. Whatever faults Linky Beck may have had, he never had the slightest desire to play a mean trick on anybody. To be the boss man at a bean-feast, to be the little ray of sunshine, or the lad who got things done, was the main idea of Linky's life.

"Now that's nice," said Shorty Ricks. "Let's talk about it. We're down here for quite a long time, and old Guggy is over at Daleswick Manor now, and we've got a real English fair, and we're going to have everything real English. My! But that last film went great guns over the pond. We're not worrying about the British shows at all. They want the Wild West, and we want the real, genuine, hall-marked British, Gee! But I've got an idea, boys!"

When, somewhere towards six o'clock, the Kid and Linky bade farewell to Ricks and Giesler, the glad light of hope was shining in their eyes, and in Linky's pocket reposed quite a number of pound-notes, repayment of certain loans he had made to Sib Giesler not so very long ago.

They got back in nice time to learn that "B" team had been hopelessly slain by "A" team. Benson and Curtis were discussing the matter in Study 10, and, despite the fact that his team had won, Jimmy Curtis wasn't at all pleased.

"Where've you two prize rabbits been?" Jimmy demanded, in first-class captain's manner. "If you think you're going to dodge cricket—"

"Cut it out, little one!" Linky smiled. "I've heard all that before. Cricket's a nice game for children, but—"

"Look here, Beck!" Benson chipped in. "We had to play nine men. Sandgate's got your names, and there's going to be a row about it. But I'm warning you myself now.

If ever it happens again I'll take good care to give you the finest hiding—"

"Shucks!" Linky beamed. "Say, Kid! Fancy that infant playing the heavy uncle with me! Gee! But I'd just bend him—"

A cushion, beautifully thrown by Benson, put an end to the wordy argument. Linky slung it back, and the Kid decided that the time had come for Benson to depart. He said so just after he'd started on the job of trying to do it.

Inside two and three-quarter seconds there was a first-class scrap in full progress. The Kid and Linky might not be quite up to the form of Jimmy Curtis and Benson on the cricket field, but they were nicely balanced when it came to a rough and tumble.

Curtis tripped backwards over a cushion, and Linky was on him like a shot, and the Kid and Benson rolled over and got mixed up with them. For some three minutes after that even a trained referee couldn't have told how the fight went, and when Washy Beck came into the room his first idea was that there'd been an earthquake.

But Washy's entrance served a useful purpose. The combatants became disentangled, and rolled away from each other, then sat staring at each other solemnly, trying to remember just what it was all about.

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy Curtis. "But you'll be sorry you cut cricket before—"

"Can it!" beamed Linky quite happily. "You'll be glad we cut cricket, my little blue-eyed captain, before we're through. Won't he, Kid?"

"We were thinking about you all the afternoon," the Kid asserted. "Just wondering how we could give you a little brightness and joy—and this is what we get! But we'll forgive him, won't we, Linky?"

Curtis regarded them suspiciously. If he hadn't exactly forgiven Linky for his last washout, he couldn't help remembering that there had been times when he'd enjoyed life to the full when the programme had been personally arranged by Lincoln Beck.

"Lend me your ear, little captain," burbled Linky, and crawled on hands and knees across the floor to where Jimmy still sat. "Bend low and let me whisper to you! Not a word to a living soul!"

He whispered quite a lot to Jimmy, but not a stray word could Benson catch. All that he could see was the bright light that

began to shine in Curtis' eyes, and Benson began to wish that he hadn't been rude to Linky Beck.

"And it's absolutely fixed?" Jimmy Curtis asked aloud, when Linky had finished his outpourings. "Jumping snakes! But this is great! But—you'll have Benny in it, too?"

"Oh, dear old Benny's on the list, you hot!" Linky asserted. "Wouldn't miss him for worlds! He's a bit of an ass, but no more than the rest of the Trans. Just see that Benson's name is down, Kid, will you?"

"But what's the giddy scheme?" Benson asked.

"Shashah! You mustn't ask questions yet, little boy!" Linky retorted. "You'll know all about it by-'n'-by, and then you'll be glad you were always kind to your Uncle Linky!"

It was useless for Benson to ask questions, and it was not until two or three days later that Lincoln Beck called him quietly on one side and handed him quite a posh invitation card:

"The California Players request the pleasure of the company of Mr. T. H. Benson and friends in Study 9 at their private view and entertainment at Daleswick Manor on Wednesday, the 15th instant.

Refreshments.

English Fair. Balloon and Aeroplane Ascents.

R.S.V.P. Mr. H. J. Ricks, Daleswick Manor."

"Keep it quiet!" Linky advised. "Mean to say, no one is likely to object, but we don't want Roger asking too many questions. Savvy?"

Of course, Benson gripped the idea at once. Linky gave him one or two other little pointers on the matter. There would probably be two or three small parties going from the school—in fact, several of the Sixth were going—and for various reasons it was just as well if each party wandered away quietly, and didn't advertise the fact too much.

A very careful observer might have noticed that during the next two or three days either Lincoln Beck or Dickie Dexter, or it might even be Jimmy Curtis, and just occasionally Washy Beck, were very quietly

having a little chat with first one fellow and then the other.

By the end of that time quite a lot of fellows at Katie's were rather pleased that, after all, they hadn't said too many rude things to Linky Beck, because they gathered that the California Players were big pals of Beck's. They also gathered that, when it came to a question of arranging a tophole afternoon, the California Players, assisted by Mr. Lincoln Beck, with stage instructions by Richard Dexter, were easily the prize organisers of the world.

In Study 10 Lincoln Beck and Dickie Dexter spent much time ticking off names on a list, and carefully discussing odd details. And the glad smile of contentment had come back once more to Linky's eyes.

"Gee!" he murmured happily. "But when Roger wakes up on Wednesday afternoon, and they tell him the news, will he say I need intelligence then? And there isn't any catch in it anywhere, is there, Kid? I mean to say, we aren't breaking any rule, or anything funny of that sort?"

The Wednesday dawned doubtfully. As a matter of fact, the weather just lately had been rather like that; sunshine and shower mixed, with odd samples from other seasons thrown in. But it was gorgeously bright and cheery by two o'clock.

At that time, and for the next hour or so, the intelligent and close observer would have noted the fact that little groups of four, or even six, were drifting in very casual fashion away from the school, just as though they didn't quite know what to do with themselves. Some went across the playing-fields, others went down the drive and turned to the right, while others swung round to the left.

There was no particular match on to-day, so that the masters who took an interest in the games didn't drift out until somewhere about three, ready to give advice or bowl a ball, or show them how to hit up centuries. Mr. Magson was among the first of the masters to stroll out.

When he looked across at the playing-fields Maggy blinked and stared, and felt inclined to pinch himself to see if he were really awake. As he came out he had been impressed with the strange and unwanted silence which hung over the school. Where were the glad shouts of youth and the cheery sound of the leather ball as it met the willow?

One solitary figure, and one alone, was on the playing-fields. Bill, the groundsman, was wandering from wicket to wicket, and then shading his eyes to look across at the school. Maggy hurried swiftly to him.

"Where are the boys, Croker?" Maggy demanded, just as Bill asked: "Do you know where the boys are to-day, sir?"

"Most extraordinary!" said Maggy. "I—I think I'll go and see the Head. Strange he has never mentioned anything to me!"

But Roger had heard of nothing which was likely to cancel cricket. Perhaps they had gone down to the river? He had heard something of the rivalry between the Sixth and the Fifth so far as rowing was concerned.

Maggy bolted to the river; but came back within half an hour to report that every boat was in the shed, and not a Katie's cap was to be seen in the neighbourhood.

Jolly Roger wakened up with a jerk then. Other masters were summoned, but not one of them could throw any light on the strange mystery. There was no particular attraction in the town so far as they knew, and they hadn't noticed anything suspicious in the conduct of their respective Forms this morning, beyond the fact that they all seemed quite happy—perhaps a little happier even than usual.

It was extraordinary! In imagination one or two of the masters began to see scare headlines in the papers: "The Missing School." "Strange Disappearance of Two Hundred and Fifty Boys." Even Jolly Roger felt for once that his eagle eye had missed something, and he questioned the masters afresh. Hadn't they noticed anything at all unusual or suspicious?

"Well, sir," Maggy said at last, rather doubtfully, but remembering that Roger had specially mentioned certain youths when first he came to Katie's, "I have observed that Beck major and Dexter, of my Form, appear to have been somewhat preoccupied of late, and once or twice I've noticed—though it didn't strike me particularly at the time—that they took other boys on one side apparently to communicate some secret to them."

"Ah!" said Roger, and the steely gleam came into his eyes once more. "Ah, I wonder? I felt at the time—you remember, Magson, that I reduced our young friend, Beck, to a limp rag only a short time ago?

I feared at the time. He is a sensitive soul, Magson, and I rather insisted upon his lack of intelligence. It may be that, in conjunction with young Dexter, he is now endeavouring to prove that I underestimated his capacity. I wonder—"

Even while Roger had been speaking a loud buzzing and booning had partially drowned his voice. One or two of the masters had strolled quietly to the window, and were now looking out.

"By Jove!" Tommy Tod, of the Fourth, cried. "That's a big machine! And she's flying a bit too low—great Scott!"

A great open, passenger-carrying aeroplane had come swooping down from the skies, and then circled round the playing-fields, widening the circle as it ended the circuit, and, flying still lower, swooped dangerously round the school quad.

It passed so low that the mighty wings darkened for a moment the very room in which the masters were standing. Then as it swung onwards the masters could see four or five heads peering over the side of the plane in the uncovered pit behind the wings. But even that brief glimpse was just sufficient to give them a clear impression of the caps which the passengers were wearing. One couldn't mistake the Katie's cap a mile away!

"The school cap!" gasped Tommy Tod, and looked at Roger.

"Quite!" said Roger calmly. "Gentlemen, we will adjourn to the roof and endeavour to locate the precise landing-place of the aeroplane. It may afford an excellent clue to the whereabouts of our missing school!"

CHAPTER 5.

Adrift in the Clouds!

IT was a day of shocks and surprises for quite a lot of fellows that particular Wednesday.

You can take the point of view of Smithy, captain of the school. When Dexter mentioned to him about the "private view" and the entertainment, with aeroplanes and balloons thrown in, Smithy was quite interested. He knew that Linky Beck wasn't quite the mug some fellows seemed to think—and, anyway, it would be jolly interesting to spend an afternoon with a film crowd. What?

It had been mentioned to Smithy and his

three pals who accompanied him, that it would be a good idea for him to get there about two as they were anxious to show him quite a lot of things.

Thus, owing to the careful organisation and calculation of Linky Beck and the Kid, the little groups all left Katie's at different times. Naturally some of them picked up with other groups, and expressed surprise and joy when they found they weren't going to be entirely on their own.

Any doubts about the welcome they'd have at Dalewick Manor were promptly dispelled when they got there, and it was shortly after Mr. Guggenheim, who was the boss man and head producer of the California Players, had given them the glad hand and handed them over to some other member of the company, that most fellows began to realise that there were really quite a lot of other chaps from St. Katie's!

"Jumping snakes!" Smithy said, when he ran down Linky Beck and the Kid strolling round with Shorty Ricks. "But how many fellows are coming to this show, Beck? Seems to me there's over half the school here already! How many—"

"Every one!" said Linky cheerfully. "And every one is coming! But you come and have another trip in the plane, Smithy! We're just going for a run round the old school!"

The kids of the Third and Second and the F.F.P. were having a high time on the so-called "English Fair" which was rigged up some distance away from the house. There were roundabouts, flip-flaps, scenic railways, and the whole outfit, all hired by the California Players for a month at least while they took their next remarkable film.

Inside the house the big dining-room had been turned into a gorgeous tea-room. You just went in and tackled what you liked; though there were one or two men-servants hanging round just to give a hand in case you didn't quite know what would tempt your jaded palate.

The Sixth fellows and quite a lot of the Fifth had special attention. That was Linky's idea, because he didn't want the big chaps to start doing the bored-stiff attitude. But even the Sixth couldn't help being impressed with the magnitude of the joke. What Roger would say when he grasped what had happened they didn't quite know. But what could he say? There wasn't any rule which said that boys could not accept

invitations to tea at a private house on an ordinary half-holiday!

In the little cinema theatre in the manor itself, a "private view" of the film, in which months ago, Lincoln Beck, Dickie Dexter, Jimmy Curtis and Washington Beck had taken parts, was being shown most of the afternoon, and fellows just drifted in any old time and enjoyed themselves.

Outside, three or four men with cinematograph cameras were dodging round and getting odd pictures of the bright lads on the roundabouts, while old Guggy was in the background, with his megaphone, of course, giving hints on just what he wanted. This was an opportunity to get certain crowd effects which were wanted in the next film, and Guggy wasn't missing the chance!

Oh, but it was a top-hole day, and as old Linky moved about among the mob his smile was one of the fadeless sort as he observed the glad way they greeted him. No rude remarks about strips of film to-day!

More, Shorty Ricks had put several of the players wise to the trouble Linky had been through, and a few brief hints had been dropped. Fellows didn't quite understand the whole story, but they gathered that there'd been some dirty work over that film! It would have been all right, but—professional jealousy! Only a sportsman like Linky would have taken it so cheerily!

Everything in the garden was lovely, and there isn't any doubt about the fact that there would have been quite a triumphant march back to Katie's, with Linky the hero of the hour, nobly supported by Richard Dexter and his comrades of Study 10. But

The weather had been rather doubtful for several days past; but this afternoon it had apparently turned over a new leaf, until somewhere in the neighbourhood of five o'clock. Quite a lot of odd clouds had been floating round, but they hadn't interfered with the sun much, until they began to join up for a little chat. A little thin wind also began to whistle round, and presently the sun decided to retire for a while.

"Going to have a bit of a storm, I guess!" Mr. Guggenheim remarked, as he saw the great heavy cloud which was rolling up from somewhere away back beyond the far horizon. "I reckon we'd better start tucking the old balloon away soon!" He wandered across to where the captive

balloon was sagging about. There was a kind of windlass arrangement, besides other ropes to keep it in place. During the course of the afternoon the ropes had been slipped away a good many times, and dozens of fellows had gone up, nicely and gently, and surveyed the giddy landscape from quite a decent height. Then, on a signal from the man in charge, the old windlass got busy again and down came the balloon.

You couldn't have anything safer than that, and Mr. Guggenheim had got plans in his mind for some really thrilling pictures of aeroplanes and balloons and Shorty Ricks doing his hair-raising stunts.

As Mr. Guggenheim strolled over to the balloon two or three lads were just climbing aboard. Smithy and Lincoln Beck, with Benson and Dolell, were just going up for the last time, because they hadn't had a chance before.

"I don't think—" Mr. Guggenheim began, because the wind was really beginning to get a trifle fierce now, and two or three big drops of rain had struck his cheeks.

But the man at the windlass was already winding away and the great balloon was tugging and straining at the stout rope which still held it. As Mr. Guggenheim called out the man who was in charge of the winding business suddenly looked up.

"Yes, sir? Do you think—"

Actually it didn't matter what Mr. Guggenheim thought for the handle of the windlass suddenly jerked out of the man's hand and was whizzing round at a record rate. The balloon was really going up—up—up!

There was a crack and a snap, and the windlass suddenly settled down once more to a quiet life. But the rope which had broken loose from its fastening, was swinging in the air high above them.

"Oh, Jeremiah!" said Guggenheim, because he was really a very calm man right inside him and didn't lose his head very easily. "Who's with them? Is Rosman aboard?"

"Yes, sir!" the windlass man yelled. "He said—last time—but thought it quite safe! Look!"

Just what he wanted Mr. Guggenheim to look at it was difficult to say, because quite a lot of things were happening just then. The balloon was going for the clouds in quite first-class style, and already it didn't look much bigger than a child's toy, though

it was difficult to see it clearly because the rain had now begun in real earnest and was literally sheeting down.

The wind, too, had evidently only been having a practice performance in the few gusts which had blown before. Now it began to drive the rain fiercely, and one could hear it howling round the many corners of the manor. The merry-makers on the fair were making swift dashes for the house, and from beneath the veranda which ran along one side dozens of fellows were crowding and trying to ask just what was happening about the balloon.

"Linky's gone up—with Smithy!" the Kid was gasping out to Jimmy Curtis and Shorty Ricks, who were wanting to know all about it. "And—oh, my noble aunt! Roger!"

Until some ten minutes ago Mr. Roger Blunt had been quite tickled about the desertion of the school. From the roof of Katie's Roger had been able to get quite a fair view of Daleswick Manor, with the aid of a powerful pair of glasses. And, without anyone telling him just what had happened and how and why, Roger had got a pretty exact idea of everything.

"We'll wander over there presently, Magson!" Roger told the master of the Transitus cheerily. "I really think that when Beck was arranging this jamboree for his friends he might have included a few of the masters at all events!"

The weather was looking a bit doubtful when Jolly Roger and Maggy set forth, and they took their rainproofs. By the time they walked down the drive at Daleswick Manor there was no longer any doubt about it. And suddenly Maggy seized Roger's arm and cried out in amazement.

"Look! The balloon! It's broken loose—and there are boys in the basket! I can see them!"

Just for a moment Roger stood dead still and watched the huge gas-filled monster as it swerved wildly upwards. Then, as it steadied into a slower ascent, Roger did a sprint across the gardens and lawns to the little group still standing in the pouring rain near the windlass.

"What has happened?" Roger had to yell the question out, but Mr. Guggenheim turned and looked at him as though it were quite a nice day and the boys had just gone for a penny ride on a camel.

"Afternoon, sir! Mr. Blunt, isn't it?" Guggy was always the little gentleman.

even if he did weigh seventeen stone. "The balloon has gone up! Those nice boys of yours will have something to write about by the time they touch terra firma again. But don't worry, sir! I'm in command!"

It was really quite a new experience for Mr. Blunt. Very rarely in his life had he struck anyone who was cooler and more level-headed than himself, but he admitted now that Mr. Guggenheim, despite his queer name, was the frozen essence of calmness. As a matter of fact, Mr. Guggenheim's real name was Jones, and it was chiefly his sense of humour which had led him to adopt his "stage-name." He reckoned that with a name like that nobody would come buzzing round claiming to be a nephew or a second-cousin once removed, and could they have free tickets, or a job, please!

But Guggy was now booming forth through his megaphone, calling loudly for Shorty Ricks to come forth. And presently, Shorty, followed by two or three of his friends, was dashing forth through the rain.

"Plane ready, Shorty?" Guggy asked. "You'd better go an' chase that balloon! Them boys'll be catching cold if they stay up there very long. Maybe you can get it in tow? It's your stunt this time, Shorty! An' get Eric to go up with you. Light's bad, but he'll have to 'low for that."

"And I'll want one or two more on the job!" Shorty said, and again Roger felt interested at the cool way they were taking it all. "Say! I'd like young Dexter! He's a cool kid—"

Roger was just going to protest, but very probably Shorty realised that he'd put his foot in it, because he turned and bolted. A few minutes later Roger saw him, now covered in heavy oilskins, chasing through the rain towards the great aeroplane which still stood just where it had last come to rest.

After Shorty came two or three men, and—as Roger recognised with some doubt in his mind—two or three boys from St. Katie's also enveloped in oilskins.

Roger himself decided to go and join in the chase. By the time he reached the plane the engines were whirring, and two of the Katie's boys, at all events, had gone aboard. Standing up in the front of the machine was Shorty Ricks, shouting out in-

structions to the men who had followed him to get the machine off.

Shorty saw Roger and waved a cheery hand.

"Coming aboard, Mr. Blunt?" he yelled, and waved a hand towards the back, "Right!"

Roger rushed round towards the back of the machine, where, just behind the wings, a ladder was in position. He was up it and inside the fairly large passenger compartment within thirty seconds. A man was already hard at work fixing up a waterproof covering over the framework above, for this particular plane had not been built for wet weather journeys.

The first fellow Roger recognised was Jimmy Curtis, who was trying to carry on a shouting match with the man with the camera. Jimmy promptly struggled over to Roger, and even as he did so there was a rattle and a bumping as the machine raced over the ground.

The rattling and jolting ceased by the time Jimmy was really facing Roger, and they were both dimly aware of the fact that they were in the air and climbing steadily upward.

"Dexter is with Mr. Ricks, sir!" Jimmy yelled out, and pointed to the front of the machine.

"Who is in the balloon?" Roger yelled back.

"Smith, Dobell, Beck major, and Benson, sir," Jimmy called, and Roger nodded, then turned to look at the weather. There were quite comfortable seats in the plane, but for the present Roger was content to grip on to the side and stare into the drifting rain-mist through which they were climbing.

And then, through a megaphone arrangement, which connected with the first part of the machine, a voice, which was probably the Kid's, came shouting out at them.

"The balloon's away on the right and slightly ahead and above us. We shall overtake it very soon."

The cinema man was getting his camera ready, but kept yelling out something about the light, which, as a matter of fact, was beginning to improve. The rain no longer came down furiously, though the wind still howled and whistled through the struts and struts of the plane.

Looking out on the right-hand side Roger and Curtis could see the balloon through the mists, but as the plane began to swing

round again, the huge ball with its swinging basket below was lost to them once more.

On the balloon itself the four Katie's lads and the man in charge had had their brief minutes of fright. When first the balloon broke loose it didn't seem to care twopence what happened, but it swiftly settled down into comparative steadiness, so that, despite the rain and the wind, they were only just conscious of the fact that they were actually going upwards and eastward. Then the man in charge, who was a cinema actor as well as a balloonist, reassured them.

"You needn't worry," he told them. "We'll end up all right, though just where we'll land eventually I can't promise. Wouldn't be quite safe to start dropping yet—not in this wind."

"My hat!" Smithy said, as he stared down towards the earth. "But old Roger will have a fit when he hears of it. We shall be for the high jump, young Beck!"

Linky shook his head sorrowfully.

"Mo? I'll be for the long jump after this!" he murmured. "Funny how my luck's come unstuck just lately. All I wanted to do this afternoon was what the boxer wants when he's been knocked out of his championship. I just wanted to come back!"

"And that's what we want to do now—or go back!" said Benson. "Still, it's no use worrying. This old gas-bag seems safe enough."

"Wish we'd got a macintosh," Dobell said, because by then they were beginning to worry a bit about the driving rain.

They made themselves as comfortable as possible and watched the chap who understood the balloon looking at the instruments; he was evidently trying to calculate where they were going and what was likely to happen. But presently he gave a little shout of joy.

"That's our 'plane coming after us!" he told them, and pointed through the drifting rain-clouds. "I'll bet Shorty Ricks is aboard, and if so, he'll be trying some stunt as sure as fate!"

Things began to get exciting after that! Within a few more minutes the aeroplane was above them, then gently swept down on the other side and began to run rings round them. Once or twice it came so near

that they could feel the rush of air as the great wings swept past.

Someone was standing up in the forepart of the 'plane and making signals to the fellow in charge of the balloon—Rosman, by name.

"It's Shorty Ricks!" Rosman told them. "Stand by, boys, and try to catch the rope he's going to sling out! He's evidently going to try to take us in tow! Withering smoke! If that isn't Eric Flinders—trying to tell us all to look pretty! That's like old Guggy! Let me come to the front, boys! I'm playing balloon man in this picture!"

The 'plane had swung away again, but once more it swept round them and they could see the heads of two or three people looking across at them from the 'plane.

Now a rope suddenly jerked across towards them, but never even touched the balloon-basket, falling some feet below. The aeroplane boomed away from them then, and presently was humming mournfully above them.

Again the rope came downwards and swung away from them, only to be suddenly jerked towards them. Linky Beck and Smithy tied for first place as they grabbed at it, but the balloon man had also got his hands about it almost in the same moment.

"Cling on!" he yelled. "Pull in—Givo me the slack!"

It was doubtless a jolly good thing that Rosman was on the job, for he manipulated that rope like an expert. Inside a couple of seconds Linky and Smithy had hauled in quite a good length, and by that time Rosman was clambering up the rope from the edge of the basket and running the slack end round the big ring above his head.

Another couple of seconds and the balloon was being violently jerked, and it really seemed as though the whole basket would be upset and Linky and his pals sent headlong through space. But, as is the way of the gas-bag, it just shook itself after the last hefty jerk, as though to say: "Oh, well, if you insist, I don't mind!"

Rosman was at the instruments again and was doing funny things with one of the gadgets. The aeroplane was now ahead of them and slightly lower, and the ropes of the balloon were creaking a little with the new strain.

But they were conscious of the fact that they were being dragged downwards, steadily and evenly, and on board the 'plane Shorty Ricks was shouting to the Kid.

"We've done it! Guggy will be pleased! And it's going to be quite fine now!"

The great cloud had apparently passed on even more swiftly than the 'plane, and although the wind still kept up, the sun was beginning to shine on a glistening earth.

Above them the balloon was beginning to sag. Rosman had been manipulating the gas-pressure very carefully, and as the earth seemed to rise upwards towards them they suddenly realised that the aeroplane had cast the rope adrift and they were sinking slowly by their own weight.

Two ropes began to trail on the ground as they drifted very slowly and weakly across the grounds of Daleswick Manor—the strong five or six hundred feet of wire rope which had been fastened to the windlass was the first to find earth, and already across the grounds came streaming some two hundred boys.

But the aeroplane made the first landing and Shorty Ricks and Roger and Dickie Dexter were among those who finally lent a hand and dragged the now unwieldy balloon towards its proper place. By the time the basket began to bump the ground they were very near the windlass once again.

"So you've come back?" It was Guggy's voice which boomed the question cheerily through his inevitable megaphone. "Welcome home, boys!"

And then, as Linky Beck and Smithy, and the other two, tumbled out of the basket, safe and sound, somebody started a cheer.

It was one of those cheers that just happen to be the right thing at the right time! The one thing that Guggy complained about was that he couldn't show the row on a film. But even Roger, who'd really enjoyed that aeroplane trip, laughed joyously as he heard the full-throated row the lads of Katie's kicked up.

"Bravo, Beck!" some prize ass yelled, because, after all, it was old Linky who'd really given them all the fun and the excitement of this afternoon, and if there was any row coming over it all, it would be Lincoln Beck who would get the Big

"Bravo, Linky!" Another cheer just to show Roger that they thought Beck was all right.

But Roger was talking quite cheerfully to Mr. Guggenheim and Shorty Ricks. Then he called to Smithy.

"It's six-fifteen, Smith!" Roger said, in his well-known manner. "I shall expect every boy to be in the Drawing Hall at seven-fifteen. I am afraid preparation school will be something of a failure tonight. You will arrange for the return of the whole school?"

"Yes, sir!" Smith answered—and wondered.

Roger himself drifted indoors with Maggy and Mr. Guggenheim. Shorty Ricks did the polite last act and bade the lads a fond farewell. Smithy insisted on the mob getting into drill order. They'd drifted casually to Daleswick Manor, but they marched away like a battalion, Form by Form. And they did it well, too, as Roger admitted when he watched them unseen from the windows of the Manor.

"It's coming to me, little ones!" Linky sighed as they marched homewards. "There'll be a grand fireworks' display tonight, I'm thinking!"

"I shall be in it with you, Linky!" the Kid declared. "I'd as much to do with the giddy picnic as you had, really!"

"And I shall toe the line with you!" Curtis asserted. "Roger is bound to find out I dished out the invitations to the Sixth, and I may as well line up first as last!"

That was the spirit in which they waited expectantly in the Drawing Hall. There was a queer, eerie silence as Roger mounted the platform and other masters took their usual places. It was, as everyone felt, the moment before the slaughter.

And that was just where everybody had the last and almost the biggest surprise of the day! Roger's voice was calm and pleasant. He said he wasn't going to blame anybody. Of course, there had been the sudden storm, but nobody could be blamed for that, and they ought all to be very thankful that it had finished up as it had done. In future, however—

Well, Roger gave them a heart-to-heart talk on discipline, school rules, and a few other odd matters. That was all! No prep., no punishments, no cutting remarks! A nod—and Smithy led the way and they wandered back to their studies. It had

been a great day, a topping day! Old Lincoln Beck was a lad—and Jolly Roger was a sportsman! All's well that ends well!

CHAPTER 7.

Preparing a Surprise Show!

IT was only a few days after the jamboree at Daleswick Manor when Smithy strolled in to Study 7 and greeted them all cheerily. Since the great day with the California Players crowd, the Sixth men and the Fifth fellows had all nodded kindly to Lincoln Beck. He was no longer an outcast, or a subject for cheap jokes. Linky had come back!

"I'm just on the job of organising things over this Hospital Show," Smithy explained. "We don't want any fireworks or anything of that sort, but it's up to us to make the thing go with a swing."

"Count on us to do our little bit," Jimmy Curtis said. "We'll have a talk about it, and if the old Trans. can't strike some idea to amuse the mob—well, we'll just be programme-sellers! Anyhow, we'll let you know in good time, Smithy!"

"That's right! Let me know, so that there won't be any clashing," Smith said. "We've got an Aunt Sally, and Roger says there'll be a palmist's tent, and the General guarantees the town band, but any new ideas—"

"You've called at the right address!" Lincoln Beck burred, and Smithy nodded cheerily and wandered forth.

Already there was a hint of excitement in the school, and it had all come about because General Margetts, who was an important man in Dulchester, had recently been appointed chairman of the local hospital committee. Mrs. Roger Blunt was also on the committee. The hospital wanted money. General Margetts said they'd have a garden party or a gala, and Mrs. Blunt said it was a good idea.

But where and how? The trouble was that in the past these giddy picnics had cost just about as much to run as they had taken in hard cash, and the hospital was lucky if it got more than two shillings out of the thing.

"If only we could run something without so much expense!" General Margetts said. "Supposing we could enlist the ser-

vices of some of the bright, enthusiastic youths at St. Katie's—"

Straight away Mrs. Blunt said that the General had got it! The general saw the governors, and the governors and Mrs. Blunt spoke to Roger. Roger sent for Smithy and told him all about it, and some of the masters were dragged in, and after that Smithy went off and told the prefects, and the prefects wandered away and told a lot of others, while Smithy himself was buzzing round and choosing different people, and generally fixing up the programme for the great gala day at Katie's, when bags and bags of money would be handed over to the hospital funds.

"Curtis, Dexter, Beck ma. and mi. Study 7. Special side-show. Something new—leave it to them. Can have any Trans. fellows to help."

That was what Smithy had written down in the new note-book he had brought out for the gala day arrangements. There were a lot of other things like that in his book, and Smithy had a real busy time during the next few days.

But, of course, it's one thing to say "something new," and quite another matter to get just the right idea. There was a lot of discussion in Study 7 after Smithy had gone, but at the end of half an hour it began to look as though the brain-wave department had gone for a holiday.

"If we had our old jazz band—" Linky suggested, but Curtis dried him up swiftly.

"They're having the town band," he pointed out. "Besides nobody would start chucking money at us for marching round and making a horrible row. Think of something else, Linky!"

"My hat! But what about Esmeralda?" The Kid suddenly came from his day-dream as the first brain-wave of the day struck him full force. "Twopence a ride on the elephant! Walk up! Walk up! All the kids—"

"And how about Joseph?" Linky Beck suddenly found himself switched over on to the right rails, and a swift smile began to take the place of the sad droop which had been hanging round his lips. "We could easily get Esmeralda and Joseph, and the seals—neither Guggy nor Sib Giesler would mind one little bit. Say! Let's go all out for a real circus! We could hire things—"

Linky went off a rapid rate after that. Despite any criticism Jolly Roger may have passed on Lincoln Beck, there isn't any doubt but what he had a swiftly-rotating mind, and when he really started on a job he didn't rest till he'd got the biggest ever.

That was why it was a good thing he had the Kid knocking round just to keep things down to a reasonable level. Before the Kid had a chance to say anything, Linky was already talking about sending wires to the Zoo and asking them to send down a mixed assortment of animals as early as possible.

"Steady! Steady!" urged the Kid at last. "What we've got to get is a jolly fine side-show—admission threepence a time—"

"And twopence for a ride on the elephant's back," Jimmy Curtis chipped in. "I like that idea, Kid! And maybe we could lead Joseph round on a piece of cord and have a big box on his back for putting pennies in, same as they do on the railway-stations, only they have dogs."

"But some of us might rig ourselves up as cannibal chiefs," Washy Beck suggested. "Why couldn't we have a South African kraal, or whatever it is they have out there?"

They got gloriously mixed, and they got gorgeously tangled. But out of it all came certain quite clear items; Benson and his pals were called in because they'd be needed to give a hand in the game.

"But—a lion!" Benson gasped, when they began to go into details. "Mean to say, suppose the jolly old brute broke loose?"

"You haven't seen Joseph!" the Kid laughed.

"You come over with us to-morrow afternoon!" Linky told him. "I'll drop a note to old Guggy and let him know we're coming!"

Mr. Guggenheim hadn't any real use for lions and elephants, but—well, it's a mixed-up story, and it was all through Linky's pal, Sib Giesler.

Sib Giesler had bought the lion and the elephant and the performing seals with the idea that he was going to make a fortune as a circus owner. Unfortunately, the big scheme had come unstuck, and, as nobody wanted to buy a circus just then, the whole outfit was left on Sib's hands.

Sib had spent quite a lot of money on advertisements in papers saying: "For Sale or Exchange. Grand forest lion, very tame, answers to name of Joseph, good jumper; nice elephant, good condition; pair performing seals, and several musical instruments. Cheap. Or would exchange motor-cycle, wireless set, or anything useful."

But nobody wanted to do a deal with Sib, and eventually, when Sib hitched up with the California Players and began to settle down to a quiet life at Daleswick Manor, the lion, elephant, and performing seal were all transferred there, and took up their home in the disused stables, Mr. Guggenheim having an idea that he might make use of them some day in one of his famous films.

Now, of course, there are lions and lions; there's the sort that prowl the primeval forests and spend most of their time in having fierce scraps with other wild beasts. And then there's the sort like Joseph, who'd been brought up in a circus, and taken his three meals a day of nice clean water and several pounds of Bratt's Best Bulldog Biscuits for years and years without a murmur.

Seeing Joseph for the first time, as Benson did on the day following Smithy's important announcement, one felt quite a real thrill of admiration and wonder. Joseph looked the genuine article all right. But when you saw him roll over because the Kid tickled him just under the lower jaw, it began to be rather laughable.

"My giddy aunt!" Benson's first little doubts began to disappear as the Kid and Linky gently urged Joseph into the paddock at the back of the stable. "But are you sure? Doesn't he ever bite?"

"Chuck him one of your biscuits and see!" the Kid laughed. "Up, Joseph! Good boy!"

The Kid flung a petit-beurre biscuit into the air so that it fell a couple of feet or so in front of Joseph. Just for an instant, Joseph's head gave a jerk, and Benson had a glimpse of as fine a set of teeth as ever he wanted to see—and the biscuit had found the right address.

By the end of a very pleasant afternoon, Benson and his pal, Wingrove, who were a kind of deputation on behalf of the Transitus Form generally, were even more enthusiastic about Joseph and his stable

companion, Esmerelda, the elephant, as well as Bingo and Sam, the two performing seals, than Linky Beck and the Kid.

There was a committee meeting of the Transitus that same night, at which Mr. Lincoln Beck was unanimously appointed the Master of the Ceremonies, Jimmy Curtis was general manager and chief boss, and Dickie Dexter was a sort of stage producer, with Washy Beck, Benson, Wingrove, and one or two others, on the staff.

"I'll see Smithy!" Jimmy Curtis said. "We'll tell him, and everybody else, that it's going to be a surprise, so we can't explain till the day of the gala. And my giddy aunt! It will be a surprise, or my name's not Jimmy Curtis!"

Smithy, the captain of Katie's, being absolutely head over ears in plans and arrangements and bossing around, listened to Jimmy Curtis' few words quite kindly.

"Right-oh, Curtis! I don't want to know any details, so long as I can rely on you to produce the goods," Smithy said in his well-known manner. "I'll just make a note. Transitus Form. Surprise side-show. And you'll arrange about raking in the cash? Good man! Good luck to you!—And see it is a real, genuine surprise!"

Smithy needn't have worried. He'd had a few surprises in his little life, but the Transitus side-show was going to put the tin hat on most of them!

CHAPTER 8.

A Stroll in the Moonlight!

DURING the days which preceded the Gala Day at Katie's, there was quite a lot of excitement for most people. As a result no one was particularly interested in the comings and the goings and the long talks and arguments in the Transitus.

But Linky Beck was a whale for organising. Of course, he'd written a nice letter to his dear father explaining how he'd been given the job of getting up a side-show for the Hospital Gala, and Washy also wrote just to show there wasn't any catch about it. Mr. Beck, being a kind father and glad to hear his lads were doing something useful, promptly sent along the dollars

which Linky said he wanted for the fancy dresses he meant to get for his company.

So Mr. Radditch found himself with a bit more work to do for Lincoln Beck. He liked doing a job of work for Linky, because it meant cash down, without argument.

There was just one little awkward snag in the surprise packet the Trans. were fixing up for the Gala Day, and that was the problem of how to get Joseph and Esmerelda over to the playing fields without attracting undue attention.

"We'll have to do it at night," Linky decided, when the subject was discussed. "We could come across the fields, over the bridge, along the river-bank, and then up through the woods to the playing-fields. We'll have to fix up the screen business on Friday afternoon."

The screen wasn't a difficult job, though quite a lot of fellows wandered round and wanted to know what it was for, and even Mr. Roger Blunt strolled over and watched the Transitus lads, assisted by Mr. Radditch, fixing up yards and yards of brown sacking, about six feet high, so that it made a circular enclosure just at the back of the pavilion.

"It's going to be a sort of tableaux vivants, sir," Jimmy Curtis said, when Roger questioned him. "Something like they have at the Empire Exhibition—African village scene, sir, with natives in the foreground. And we shall give a sort of performance, sir, but, of course, it won't last too long. But we think— We're charging threepence a time, sir. I think it'll be worth it, sir, when it's all fixed up, sir."

"I'm sure it will!" Roger agreed quite cheerfully, and he really was bucked at the way every Form in the school was doing its little best to give the old Hospital Fund a leg up. "I shall most certainly expend threepence myself on your surprise show. Mind you do give me a surprise, Curtis!"

Smithy didn't get unduly suspicious when Curtis and Dexter went to him and asked him whether he could fix up for six of the Transitus fellows to have late passes on the Friday night, as they had to go out and get certain stage properties for the side-show they were giving.

"Right-oh!" Smithy agreed. "I'll just see Mr. Magson, but I don't suppose he'll

object. You're giving a still-life picture of a South African village, or something of the sort?"

"Not exactly still-life," the Kid said tactfully. "There'll be a little performance chucked in for your threepence as well. It'll be worth the money, Smithy!"

"Good man!" Smithy had so many things to think about that he wasn't worrying over the exact details of their performance.

Over at Daleswick Manor, Mr. Guggenheim and Shorty Ricks were only too anxious to give the lads a hand, and, naturally, being used to a fairly exciting life themselves, they didn't see there was any harm in taking a tame lion for a stroll through the roads and woods, or letting Esmerelda leave her way across to the school, any more than there would be to-morrow morning when they were going to run the performing seals over in their car.

The California Players, in fact, were very interested in the gala day, and they were all going to pay their shilling entrance money to-morrow, as well as their three-pences to see the Transitus Surprise Show.

A big, plaited-rope collar had been made for Joseph, and to this was fastened two fairly long leads of stout rope. Jimmy Curtis and Benson were to be in charge of this department, while the Kid would lead the way blowing a mouth-organ.

That was one of Joseph's little weaknesses. Unless there was a bit of music knocking round somewhere he just lay down and slept. Start a band playing, and he'd be up and doing, because he'd been brought up that way. Even Mr. Guggenheim had marvelled at the way Joseph would follow a chap playing a mouth-organ, and that was why it had been decided to give the Kid the job of being a one-man band.

Linky Beck was going to ride on the little chair arrangement fixed away up somewhere behind the elephant's ears. Esmerelda was even more sweet-tempered and obedient than Joseph, and there wasn't any trouble anticipated so far as she was concerned.

"But I guess we'll stroll over with you, laddies," Guggy said when they'd roused Joseph from his sleep and the Kid had begun to play the mouth-organ. "And you

say Mr. Roger Blunt is very pleased with this little brain-wave of yours?"

Once or twice Mr. Guggenheim had had his doubts as to whether Mr. Blunt would really and truly be pleased if his bright lads had an elephant and a lion dancing round the well-kept playing fields at Katie's. But they'd assured him that all that Roger really wanted was a surprise for the crowd.

"Our headmaster is delighted that we are taking such a keen interest in an institution which is so dear to his heart," Jimmy Curtis told Guggy, and felt quite pleased with himself for the nice way he put it. "We've got a lot of costumes for the chaps who're going to be the African natives, and old Radditch has done us quite well in the band line. But Linky's got the whole programme mapped out, and it's going to be a great success."

It was quite a weird procession which marched forth from the grounds of Daleswick Manor that pleasant moonlight night. The Kid led the way, partly because he knew the way as well as anybody, but chiefly because he'd got the mouth-organ.

Just behind the Kid came Joseph, strolling along as amiably as a pet lamb, even though Jimmy Curtis on one side and Benson on the other were holding on to the ropes fastened on to Joseph's collar. Mr. Guggenheim and Shorty Ricks strolled happily alongside the lion-leaders.

Behind this came Esmerelda, the elephant, with Linky Beck and Wingrove sitting in the chair arrangement up aloft. There was a collar arrangement somewhere round Esmerelda's neck, and ropes were fastened to this just as they were to Joseph, the idea being that a gentle tug would indicate which way Esmerelda had to move.

There wasn't the slightest hitch in the procession as they wandered across the Daleswick meadows, then climbed out for a time on to the high road, in order to cross the bridge.

The Kid had resigned his job for a time, because one can't go on blowing a mouth-organ for ever, and Washy Beck had taken it over. He was giving quite a nice performance of "Way Down Upon the Swanee River" as he struggled through the gate which led to the main road.

On the bridge a policeman was just passing the time o' night with a stray pedestrian, and some yards beyond them a

young man and maiden were strolling home to supper.

There was a little incline from the road to the bridge, and Joseph took this at the nearest approach to a run he ever indulged in. Even Esmerelda put a little jerk into it as she gambolled up and through the fairly narrow gateway.

Away up the hill which rose from the bridge a motorist was just looking forward to a swift glide downwards when he perceived in the moonlight that there were various stray people and things knocking round who didn't seem to realise that they might get a motor-car in the back of the neck if they didn't hop out of the way. He let his horn go full buzz just to let them know he was coming.

"Snakes alive!" the constable was just saying to his friend when the motorist honk-honked. "That's the biggest dog— Hi, look out!"

His last remark was a shriek of frenzy. I told you Joseph had been brought up in a circus. Well, one of the things he'd been trained to do was to jump when the band crashed. Joseph, being a very obedient and docile animal, never failed to obey the signal, and although to-night he thought the band was a bit on the feeble side, there was a certain vindictiveness about the repeated honk-honk-honk, that made Joseph take notice.

He jumped! It was the one little trick Joseph could still do quite well, and he simply shot out at the policeman, jerking the ropes out of the hands of Jimmy Curtis and Benson without the slightest warning.

The policeman gave one wild shriek of horror and simply collapsed. Of course he didn't know that Joseph had no more intention of harming him than he had of flying. As a matter of fact, Joseph would simply have stood there on his hind legs, his front paws resting on the bobby's shoulders until someone gave the command: "Down, Joseph!"

Instead of that came a louder and more insistent honk-honk-honk, and Joseph looked round, saw the policeman's pal, who'd just staggered back helplessly against the wall of the bridge, and made a flying leap at him, intending to show everybody who happened to be knocking round that he really could do the leaping business all right.

"Down, Joseph! Down, old boy!" the Kid was yelling, but the ass who had his hand on the honking arrangement hadn't wakened up to realities yet, and was still banging away with his wretched din.

But when the motorist really grasped the fact that there was a savage, untamed lion jumping about and knocking people down, while an elephant was dancing slowly but gracefully in the background, he suddenly felt he wanted to get home quickly, but without kicking up too much noise. The honk-honk-honk stopped abruptly.

"Down, Joseph! Down!"

Everybody was yelling at poor Joseph now, and he dropped down like a lamb. The Kid, Jimmy Curtis, Benson, and Shorty Ricks all grabbed at his ropes and gave him a jerk just to let him know that he was wanted on the other side of the road.

As soon as he realised that Joseph wasn't doing any more leaps the Kid left the rope and ran to the bobby, hurling out a command to the motorist, who was trying to take shelter behind his wind-screen.

"Don't play any more tunes on that horn of yours!" he yelled out. "Joseph's all right—wouldn't harm a fly! Keep still, for the love of Mike! Sorry, constable! But you're not hurt, are you?"

Linky Beck said afterwards that he reckoned the sight of the Kid running round and bossing everybody was the best bit in the performance. It certainly had the effect of calming everybody. The policeman sat up and instinctively began to feel for his notebook.

"It's a lion!" he asserted. "Nobody's got any right to come on the King's Highway with a lion—not under proper control. He ought to be in a cage, not wandering round loose and—"

"That's all right!" the Kid interrupted. "But I'll tell you all about it, constable, if you'll promise not to tell too many others. We're just taking him over for the gala to-morrow up at the school. It's a sort of surprise-packet—"

Mr. Guggenheim and Shorty Ricks strolled up, and they, so to speak, put the gilt-edging on the Kid's kind words. The policeman's pal also recovered, and he came in for a bit of the gilt-edging which Shorty Ricks was ladling out nicely and tactfully.

The motorist even ventured to get out of his car, but the young man and maiden

had disappeared swiftly. Even so, it was quite a pleasant and happy group which gathered on the bridge and discussed lions and elephants and other beasts of the jungle. Joseph and Esmerelda stood quietly on one side, and before the party broke up the policeman had himself patted Joseph on the head.

"And you won't tell too many people about Joseph?" the Kid asked. "What I mean is that you can drop a little hint that there's going to be a big surprise for everybody who comes to the gala to-morrow, but we don't want them to know just what it will be."

"You leave that to me, sir," the policeman said. "What d'you say you're calling it? The Surprise Side-Show? Very good, sir. I'll let one or two people know that that's the thing they want to see. Good-night, sir!"

The procession re-formed and wandered down to the other side of the river. It was a bit of a struggle climbing up through the woods which led to Katie's playing-fields, but apart from a few odd birds which wanted to kick up a fuss about folks trespassing in their woods at that time of the night, there was no more excitement until they reached the pole-and-sacking enclosure where Joseph and Esmerelda were going to spend the night.

Nor was there the slightest trouble here. Anybody who knew Joseph and Esmerelda never expected it, any more than they would have expected difficulties had they been dumping a couple of white rabbits in a comfortable hutch. Joseph was sleeping happily and contentedly before they left, while Esmerelda was wandering quietly round trying to find the ideal spot for herself.

"We'll be coming over to-morrow morning with the seals," Mr. Guggenheim said. "And we'll bring over the mid-day feeds for all the little pets. But I don't think you've anything to worry about now!"

"Nothing at all!" Linky Beck agreed. "And won't there be a jolly surprise for everybody to-morrow!"

After which they said good-night to Guggy and Shorty Ricks, and stole quietly into the school and up to their dormitories. No one stopped them; no one wanted to see their passos; no one even asked silly questions.

They tumbled into bed and slept, just as

Joseph and Esmerelda slept, the calm refreshing sleep of the just. And when morning came the sun was shining and the birds were singing, and everything was just as it ought to be on a Gala Day.

Right from the word "Go!" the bright lads of the Transitus were busy, and Linky Beck was buzzing round fixing things, while Jimmy Curtis and the Kid were standing guard over the mysterious enclosure against which there was now a big notice: "The Transitus Surprise Side-Show Admission Three-pence."

Not that there was any violent need for a guard, because practically everybody in the school was busy on his own stunt. Even Roger was buzzing round with a glint of excitement in his eagle eye, and as he dashed past Jimmy Curtis and the Kid just nailing or fixing up another notice outside the "Surprise Show," he called out to them cheerily.

"All ready, Dexter? Going to give us all full value for our money, Curtis? I shall be coming along to see your show, and I hope you've got a real surprise for me!"

He hardly gave them a chance to say more than a respectful "Yes, sir," before he'd whizzed on to the mob at the Aunt Sally show, and then to the rifle range the Sixth were running, and the palmist's tent Mrs Blunt was keen on, and the ice-cream stall Mrs. Butt was managing, and all the other things that were going to make this the biggest Gala Day the hospital had ever had.

And at half-past one the strains of sweet music floated gently from the drive up which came marching the Dulchester Town Band. The Gala Day had begun!

CHAPTER 9.

Joseph Gets Angry!

"WAH-AH!" said General Margetts gladly and kindly to Mr. Roger Blunt. "Wa-wumph! Fine, my dear Blunt! Wa-umph!"

Generals often talk like that, because it's the way they've been brought up, just as Joseph always started to give his high-class imitation of a steeplechaser when he heard a band.

As a matter of fact, Joseph was doing

that at the time when the general said "Wumph!" The general himself was keeping an eye open for the Transitus Surprise Side-Show because he'd heard a rumour, just as a lot of people had, that it was something which knocked all other little exhibitions absolutely sideways.

"Wah—whah is the Surprise-Show, my dear Blunt?" the general asked. "I've heard quite a lot about it. I must see it!"

"Apparently other people have heard about it, too!" Roger laughed happily, because as they rounded the pavilion they could see quite a mob trying to get into the sacking-hidden enclosure labelled in big letters, "The Transitus Surprise Side-Show," and they could hear Washy Beck and Hartigan of the Trans yelling out in great style.

"Please have your three-pences ready! Admission only three-pence each, but all change kept for the Hospital Funds. Honestly worth ten times the money, but we let you in for three pennies! Three pennies only! This way, ladies and gentlemen, for the great true-to-life African village scene, with the man-eating lion—"

Hartigan stopped because he began to lose his wind, but everything was so well organised that Washy Beck carried on the yarn without a break.

"And the world-famed elephant, Esmerelda, the only ivory-tusked animal that can dance the two-step without wagging its ears. Also the famous African tribe in their native war-paint, together with the renowned lion-tamer, Dexter Dick of Colorado. Now showing, ladies and gentlemen! Please have your three-pences ready! No change given!"

There was a sudden outburst of noise—the crashing of cymbals and the blaring of many weird instruments (all hired from Mr. Radditch for quite a reasonable sum), followed by fierce shouts and yells and shrieks and laughter from the mob inside the enclosure.

"No more for the present!" Hartigan was yelling out. "The next performance will take place—"

Roger had fought his way through and would have dashed right through, thinking, of course, that he was on the free list. Or if he didn't actually think that, he was so anxious to get inside that he forgot about the money. The talk about

Dexter Dick and the lion-tamer had given Roger the first shock of the afternoon!

"Three-pence, sir, please!" Hartigan barred the way, and the entrance had been so constructed that one couldn't see anything until right inside the enclosure. Linky Beck hadn't been to all the shows in America without learning a few things about the game!

"All right!" Roger realised that he'd got to keep calm, cool, and collected. "That's for General Margetts and myself! Come along, general!"

The general and Roger struggled inside. There must have been a mob of about two hundred and twenty people all crowded round in a circle which was properly roped. In the centre there was the weirdest, most surprising and amazing collection of creatures and things that anyone could imagine.

Esmerelda the elephant was parading slowly and in dignified fashion round the top end of the arena. Sitting on a patent chair arrangement on her back were two remarkable-looking fellows in turbans and feathers and white robes, with big swords hanging from their sides.

There was another imposing-looking person sitting in front of them, and he was dressed even more magnificently. One judged that he was the chief boss of the whole concern, because he never really stopped shouting out something or other.

Just at first Roger didn't recognise any of the three on the elephant's back at all, because they'd got that sunburnt look pretty badly. A fairly decent application of Mr. Radditch's renowned minstrel stain, harmless to the complexion, had given Linky Beck and his pals, Wingrove and Benson, the real genuine colour of the natives of the tropics.

It was Linky who sat in the front seat on Esmerelda's head, and it was Linky who gave the thrilling description of everything that happened.

"Here you have, ladies and gentlemen, a genuine African village, brought over the seas for many thousands of miles at enormous expense for this gala," Linky was warbling when the band stopped for a time. "Although the lion is a wild and ferocious animal, it is perfectly harmless and obedient in the presence of the renowned Professor Dexter Dick of Colorado, who, owing to his magnetic eye, can quell

the fiercest brute of the tropical jungle. Let the band play!"

The band really did look the genuine article. Jimmy Curtis and some eight other giddy youths of the *Transitus* had laid on Mr. Radditch's minstrel stain good and thick, and they were a lot blacker now than any of Africa's sun-scorched sons. Likewise the band could have gone in for a competition with any native musical mob.

Mr. Radditch had done them well. He'd dug up all the quicerest and most staggering instruments he could—drums and twisted horns, and tambourines and patent curly trumpets, which made an awful row when you got the proper knack of blowing into them. And when Linky gave the signal the band got ready.

"The famous war-march of the Foozco-Wuzzees!" Linky announced from the elephant's back. "Professor Dexter Dick will now give—"

The rest of what he said was drowned in the awful blare of the band. Joseph was standing upright and his tail was swishing round in quite the proper leonine way. Then he jumped!

Dickie Dexter was absolutely top-hole in the way he put out his hands and did his bit of a graceful balancing trick as Joseph flew at him. And, fummily enough, no one yelled or shrieked this time—except General Margetts.

They'd seen it once, just before the general and Roger had entered the show. And after seeing the way Joseph went on after his spring, a lot of people said he was only a man wearing a lion's skin. Anyway, instead of shrieking out in fear, most of the folks who saw this second jump of Joseph's merely grinned happily.

Dexter hadn't used Mr. Radditch's minstrel stain, but had hired instead a nice suit of blue silk tights and a fairly hefty tiger-skin, or a good imitation of one anyway, and he was wearing the skin for this gala performance. He was also wearing white running pumps, and he'd used quite a lot of Linky's patent hair pomade on his head, which gave him a very classy look. Richard also had quite a nice whip, tied with a blue bag to match his tights, and a first-class man would have been really pleased with him.

There was also a fair amount of the sacking strewn about the arena, and

there was a big stew-pot dangling over a fire which was laid, but not burning. Round the fire about five or six other weird merchants were sitting, also clad in Mr. Radditch's best assorted costumes. Some were white and some were rainbow-coloured, but it all helped to give variety and to show people that life on an African village wasn't quite so dull as some folks might think.

These "villagers" who squatted round the fire also looked after the seals which were flopping about in a flat foot-bath. Even Roger marvelled when he realised that all this weird and wonderful collection had been smuggled in without apparently a single soul knowing anything about it!

Of course, everything was a bit mixed. Linky and his pals on Esmerelda's back were supposed to be Indian rajahs, and you might think that wasn't quite right in an African village. But, as Linky pointed out when Jimmy Curtis raised the point, there wasn't any reason why the rajahs shouldn't be spending their summer holidays there, having taken their favourite elephant with them in order to go lion hunting.

But the general had his shock when the lion jumped at Dickie Dexter. Already the general had spotted the fact that Professor Dexter Dick was one of the Katie's boys whom he had met not so very long ago. The general had also met lions in his time, and he wasn't swallowing any non-sense about Dexter's magnetic eye cutting any ice with a jumping lion!

"Wa-umph!" jerked the general. "Wah—stop this, Blunt! Must! Wah—stand—wah!"

He was turfing the mob out of the way in true British hero way, treading on their corns, and digging them in the ribs, and generally making them wish they hadn't been standing there. As a result the general got through the few people between him and the lion-tamer in record time.

"Wah!" said the general, then stopped. He had just the same queer sort of feeling a lot of the others had had some little time before.

You got the thrill when the lion first jumped, but when you saw Dickie Dexter quietly stroking the brute and calling it by its Christian name, you felt that there

was some catch in it somewhere, and that you were going to be the mug in the act if you weren't careful.

"Wah—ah!" said the general again. "Ah—is that—ah—animal—ah—quite safe?"

The Kid turned, and up on Esmerelda's back Linky was yelling for the band to stop. Jimmy Curtis had also grasped the fact that someone was trying to butt in and spoil their well-organised performance of the march of the Foozoo-Wuzzees, but he gave the signal, and the ghastly row ceased.

"Down, Joseph!" the Kid said, and Joseph dropped like a gentle little lamb, but stood watching Dexter anxiously, in case he flicked up one of those nice petit beurre biscuits which he often gave to Joseph.

"Oh, quite, sir!" There was nothing in the Kid's manner to suggest that he really had got a magnetic eye, but neither was there anything apologetic about him. "Just watch this, sir!"

The general had hopped over the rope just as easily as Joseph could have done when the band blared forth. The Kid took out a couple of biscuits from a patent pocket under his tiger-skin, and threw one into the air. Instantly Joseph's neck jerked out, and the biscuit went home. A second was treated in similar fashion. That particular trick and his famous jump were about the limit of Joseph's programme. Having bolted the biscuits, he simply lay down and prepared to take a gentle snooze till the band began again.

"Wah! 'Pon my soul!" said the general. "And are you quite sure—it really is a lion?"

"It is a lion, sir," Dexter assured him, and then shut up because Linky was once more going ahead with his lecture and instructions. If there was one thing Lincoln Beck really enjoyed it was doing the showman act, and he was having the time of his life this afternoon.

"The first performance is now over, ladies and gentlemen," Linky bawled. "Come again and again and see the renowned Professor Dexter Dick of Colorado hypnotise the wild, untamed lion from the tropical jungle! Also observe the performing seals, brought at great expense from the icy wastes of the Far North. Don't miss the genuine native band of the

Foozoo-Wuzzees, now performing in this country for the first time, and having been brought at great expense from their home village way back in the desert wastes of Africa. After the next performance of this renowned and world-famed show there will be a grand procession through the fields, and the famous elephant, Esmerelda, will be available for pleasant rides—adults, fourpence each; children, half-price! Tell your friends about Professor Dexter Dick, the world-renowned lion-tamer with the magnetic eye! Don't forget—"

Linky burred on, while the Kid stroked Joseph and said: "Down! Down! Good boy!" because the band had begun to buzz forth once more. The mob went out, laughing and contented, and no one asked for their money back because they didn't know even now whether it really was a lion or whether it was some remarkable performer who'd got inside a lion-skin.

Roger and the general remained, and they managed to persuade the band to dry up for a time while they had a little chat with Dexter and Curtis. Mr. Guggenheim also paid his threepence and came inside the enclosure, and Mr. Blunt called to him.

"You are quite sure there is absolutely no risk?" Roger asked the film-producer. "So far the performance seems entirely amusing—"

"Say!" said Mr. Guggenheim. "That lion's been strolling round Daleswick this month past, and he plays with the kitten same as if it was his own brother. No! Don't you worry about Joseph, Mr. Blunt!"

The Kid heard the conversation, and when Linky descended from the elephant for a brief period he told him about it. They were very pleased, because the word had gone round that the Transitus Surprise Side-Show was the success of the day. The second performance was packed to overflowing, and they had to give a third before the advertised procession could take place.

The procession itself was quite a fine affair. In this Joseph came last because of the band, and there was just a little bit of doubt as to whether he'd start jumping out of his turn. That was, perhaps, Joseph's one and only weakness—or, at least, it was the only one they knew about up to somewhere in the neighbour-

hood of four o'clock, when the procession had really got going.

The Kid and Washy Beck looked after Joseph in the procession, and the Kid kept on whispering: "No, Joseph! Down, Joseph! Good boy!"

Joseph began to get used to it at last and didn't worry about the band at all, especially as the good news had gone round that he liked biscuits. Only big, brave men dared to chuck a biscuit to him at first, but presently shy maidens and cheeky kids began to do the same. It looked as though Joseph would have the time of his life, and anyway it was all good for the hospital, as the biscuits, or as many as could be sold, were all a free gift.

People kept rushing off to buy packets of biscuits, and if it hadn't been for the fact that Joseph had a strong neck he must have got tired jerking it out so often that afternoon.

And then some prize ass went and threw up a threepenny bar of stick-jaw. Joseph grabbed at it in his well-known manner just as he'd grabbed at everything that came his way that afternoon.

But if ever you keep a lion as a pet never give it stick-jaw! This particular chunk had got prettv soft and sticky before the Kid slung it up for Joseph to catch, and it was evident almost as soon as Joseph got his teeth in it that he was a bit hurt about it. He started to twist his head round and open his jaws.

It must have been about the stickiest brand of stick-jaw ever invented. In less than three minutes Joseph was absolutely sick of it. It wouldn't go down, and it wouldn't come out, and thin streamers of it began to get round his whiskers, and his jaws wouldn't work properly, and his tongue stuck first in one place and then in another.

He tried rolling over, and then he tried to stand on his head. Some of the asses who saw all this, and had begun to get used to Joseph, thought it was all part of the performance, and began to laugh.

At that, Joseph tried to bolt, probably having an idea that if he could grease away to the skyline he'd leave the wretched stuff behind him. Unfortunately, in order to keep a firm grip and control on Joseph, the Kid had wound the rope round his waist, and was pretty well secured to his little pet.

When Joseph gave his imitation of a

runaway, the Kid ran, too. It was no use gasping out "Down, Joseph! Good boy!" because Joseph's thoughts were concentrated on the stick-jaw problem.

The band was kicking up its most hideous representation of a musical evening in Africa's sandy wastes, and even this annoyed Joseph, especially as the Dulchester town band, being musicians, were also having their nerves shattered by the heart-rending wails of Jimmy Curtis' crowd, who had started in to play one of Sousa's marches. The combination delighted the crowd, who were, at that juncture, getting absolutely full value for their entrance money.

Two bands going full buzz; an elephant surrounded by genuine natives, parading in full war-paint over the pleasant playing-fields of St. Katie's; a real, live lion turning somersaults and jumping wildly up to catch imaginary biscuits, with a youngster attached to him at the end of a rope. You couldn't have got a better shillingsworth of amusement anywhere in England!

But the Kid wasn't enjoying it one bit after the first giddy rush, and when Joseph calmed down after one of his wild leaps, Dickie Dexter made a fierce grab at his mane.

"Down, Joseph! Down——"

But Joseph wanted to get rid of the stick-jaw first of all, and all that the Kid could do was to make a frantic leap and fling one leg over Joseph's back. And there he lay, clinging valiantly on to Joseph by the mane and trying to get a grip somewhere with his legs.

"Wah-ah!" The general suddenly realised that this was an item not included in the original programme, and he grabbed Roger by the arm. Other people were beginning to waken up to the fact that Joseph wasn't quite the little plaything they'd thought.

"I say!" Jolly Roger gazed in amazement at the spectacle of Dexter lying full-length on the lion's back and careering madly round the fields. "Something must be done! I feared——"

Roger and the general didn't waste time in argument, but simply raced across in the hope of cutting off the lion in its wild career. Now it came heading for the procession, but the band hadn't wakened up to realities yet.

As soon as it came within reach of Esmerelda Joseph made a flying leap—and the Kid was jerked off! The next moment



The *Transitus* fellows were going strong on the roundabout, when Earle and Darricott strode up, followed by the two girls. "Have you an exact, Curtis?" demanded Earle. "Well, no, not exactly, Earle," admitted Jimmy Curtis, realising they had struck a nasty patch of luck. (See chapter 14.)

Joseph was standing on his hind legs with his front paws resting on Esmerelda.

Then he subsided quite suddenly to the ground, opened his jaws, and began to realise that the sticky feeling was beginning to grow less.

"Down, Joseph! Down! Good boy!" The Kid was nearly winded, but he still realised that he was the man with the magnetic eye, and he mustn't lose charge of Joseph.

"My dear boy!" The general forgot to say "Wah!" because he was so concerned. "Are you hurt?"

"No, sir!" Dexter was already patting Joseph on the head, and somehow the sight tickled the general so much that he began to laugh again.

"Jove! But for a moment—I say, Blunt! I really think it's about time the lion went home!"

"I think so, too!" Roger agreed, and looked at Dexter. "Ah! Your performance has been excellent, Dexter. But—what arrangements have you made for conveying this animal to its proper quarters? My own impression is that he is beginning to get a little over-excited."

"Yes, sir." Dexter agreed, because after his last performance he really did feel that it was about time he began to take life quietly. "I will take him home, sir. He will come with me."

Shorty Ricks came strolling up, having seen that last wild dash, and he swiftly gripped the situation.

"We'll wander away, Richard," he said kindly to the Kid. "I've got the car 'way back there. How about taking Joseph home that way? He'll come all right. Esmerelda will have to foot it later."

The band was still blaring, and the elephant was still parading when Joseph, accompanied by the world-renowned Dexter, Dick, and Mr. Shorty Ricks, buzzed down the drive. Joseph was very quiet now. He had done his bit for that day!

The procession, indeed, was a grand wind-up to the Transitus Surprise Side-Show. A surprise soon loses its novelty, and Esmerelda came down to the level of an ordinary elephant at the Zoo before long, while the performing seals were a free show for anybody who cared to go and look at them. One by one the Transitus lads wandered into the school and began to struggle with the minstrel staid on their faces, and then got

into flannels again. By the time Dickie Dexter got back to Katie's the great gala day was over.

But Hartigan and Washy Beck were hard at work counting the cash they had taken, and what with the no-change idea, the trips on Esmerelda, as well as the collection made by the procession, the Transitus show alone had netted nearly twelve pounds.

Everybody was pleased! The Katie's gala day had been a great success, and the Transitus Form had done their full share towards it. Linky and his friends of Study 7 had enjoyed themselves—and Linky had been in the limelight once again!

CHAPTER 10.

Breaking the Monotony!

YOU would have thought that after the excitement and fun of the Transitus Surprise Side-Show on the gala day Lincoln Beck would have been well content to take life quietly for a time.

But Linky wasn't built that way. He sat in Study 7 one evening and looked gloomily at the three solemn-faced youths who were absorbed in their preparation work.

"Things are getting duller and duller in this moth-caten hole," Linky wailed at last. "Nothing ever happens except work—"

"Will you dry up, Linky?" Jimmy Curtis looked up and spoke in such a way that it sounded like an ultimatum.

"If you open your mouth once more inside the next half-hour, I'll flay you!" the Kid said, with fierce vindictiveness. "Stop it right now—or get out!"

Linky stared at them sorrowfully. There were times when he really did find it hard to understand the lack of courage, the hopeless feebleness, and the general toadying to masters which even his own chums indulged in. At this present moment right throughout the school every fellow from the head boy to the kid who occupied the bottom place in the First Form Preparatory would be stewing and swotting, and trying to work out problems in algebra or swallow lists of French verbs or dates about kings and battles, or something equally silly and useless.

Why? Oh, well, every now and again the eagle eye of Mr. Roger Blunt, Headmaster of St. Katie's, would perceive that

his bright lads had been having a good time, but were beginning to slack off in the work department. Then Mr. Blunt would have a quiet talk with the Form-masters, and would run his eagle eye over lots and lots of Form lists, after which he would speak gentle words to each Form in turn. Boiled down, his little speech would run something like this:

"You're slacking. Of all the Forms I have ever observed in the course of a long and varied career, this Form contains the highest percentage of criminal work-dodgers I have ever known. When I look at this Form list and note the work done, and the marks awarded, I am staggered and astounded. It must be altered. In a fortnight's time I myself will examine the lists again, and I will also test your mental progress. I warn you now that any boy who fails to reach the standard I have set—"

Roger told them exactly what would happen, and they shivered. At least everybody but Lincoln Beck shivered, but Linky wasn't a shivery sort. Somehow he'd scramble through all right, and, anyway, what was the use of getting excited about it?

Other fellows, who knew that what Roger said he really meant, and that he had an uncanny knack of weighing up everybody's brain capacity to the last half-ounce, decided that the best plan would be to stick at work till the ordeal was over.

Wherefore in Study 7, as in many other studies, there were bent heads and corrugated brows. Linky did his best to be in the fashion, but every time he looked up and saw them he heaved a big sigh, and made some avingine remark.

He was standing up in the study now, practising juggling tricks with two fairly large paper balls. He did it pretty well, too, until, just by accident, his thumb stuck in one and it jerked violently across the table.

Again it was purely a matter of luck that the Kid had got his ink-pot tilted because there wasn't a great deal of ink in it. Still, there was quite enough to make quite a decent mess when the ink-pot was biffed by the paper ball.

Linky had caught the second ball all right, and was just turning to retrieve the one that had gone astray when he struck an avalanche. The Kid didn't give any warning, but just made a swift dive for

Linky, and tried the famous Madrali wrestling grip on him right away.

"Out you go!" the Kid breathed. "Out! Oh, you prize ass! But I'll teach you!"

Jimmy Curtis had also got a fair share of the ink, and he didn't make a speech about it, but just went into action.

"Sling him out, Kid!" Jimmy cried. "Now, then, you burbling pie-can! Out!"

Jimmy had opened the study door almost in the same moment that he jumped into the scrap. As a matter of fact, it wasn't really a scrap at all. Before Lincoln Beck really wakened to the fact that his little playmates were rather annoyed with him, he was going with a sudden jerk through the doorway into the corridor. As the door banged behind him Linky found himself sitting on the floor, trying to figure it all out.

He was still gripping his one paper ball quite firmly as he rose, and just for a moment the idea entered his mind that it would be quite amusing to open the door for one brief instant and sling the ball at the back of the Kid's head—then bolt.

But Linky wasn't a vindictive sort. He smiled sadly as he thought of the fun his chums were missing, and then wandered on.

"Maybe old Benny'll be glad to see me," Linky thought, and barged into the study next to his own. Benson and his pals thought quite a lot of Lincoln Beck, especially round about tea-time.

"Well, children," Linky murmured kindly as he gazed on exactly the same scene as he'd left in Study 7—four fellows all poring over books or scribbling notes in exercise books. "I thought I'd come along and tell you a funny story 'bout a lad I knew—"

"Get out!" Benson rapped out.

"Hop it—quick!" Wharton snapped.

"Scoot!—Sling it! Shoo!"

If Linky had been really wise he would have hepped swiftly. Benson & Co. weren't argumentative fellows at any time, and they didn't start explaining to Lincoln that although there were times when they were pleased to see him they were, unfortunately busy just now, and would he call again in an hour or so.

Instead of being little gentlemen, and explaining all this to Linky, they just picked up any old books that weren't actually in use and buzzed them straight and true at

Linky's face. A Bisley marker would have gasped in admiration at the manner in which those four lads scored four bull's-eyes in one and one-fifth seconds.

Fair and square they caught Linky, and then, before he had a chance to recover from the shock, Benson and one of his pals had jumped up and butted Linky out into the corridor without saying anything more than: "Outside, you duffer!"

"Gee!" Linky murmured once again as he toppled backward and sat upon the floor. "And to-morrow that mob'll be feeding out of my hand. It's a queer world!"

Pondering on the rumminess of things in general Linky drifted on, but didn't attempt to pay calls on any more Transitus lads. It was just as he turned into the corridor which led to the Sixth Form studies that he realised he was still gripping the hard paper ball, nearly the size of a cricket ball, in his right hand.

It was just at that same moment, too, that Linky saw two other fellows lounging against the corridor wall, just outside one of the studies. Strictly speaking, one fellow was lounging, while the other was standing more or less in a correct and upright position. Linky could see the face of the upright youth, and recognised him as a fellow in the Fourth. The lounging merchant, who didn't seem to be quite so big as the Fourth-Former, had his back to Linky.

As Jolly Roger often pointed out, the brain works with frightful swiftness at times. From the moment that Linky realised the ball was in his hand, and that there was quite a good target right ahead of him, to the instant when the ball was whizzing through the air, no more than three-fifths of a second elapsed.

Maybe it was what they call "sudden temptation," but, anyway, Linky was out to find a little amusement, and even chucking a paper ball at the back of somebody's head does provide a brief thrill, especially if it really goes "Biff!" right in the centre of the cranium.

Linky felt the thrill all right, and a glad smile spread over his face as he saw the chap put his hand to the back of his head and whizz round and jerk upright in a most surprising sort of way.

In his own mind Linky could see exactly what would happen. There would be a brief scrap—and Linky was ready for it! It was quite a long time since he'd

tried some of his patent tricks, and a couple of Fourth-Formers would provide him with just the right weight for a practice round.

And then, as the fellow whizzed round, Linky had another thrill. It wasn't a Fourth-Former at all, but Derricott, a Sixth-Former and a prefect!

Now even Linky Beck had been long enough at Katie's to realise that in some ways a prefect is even more important than a Form-master. He gasped for a moment when he realised that he really had struck a packet of trouble this journey.

"Say! I'm awfully sorry—" he began, but Derricott cut him short.

"You! Come here!" Derricott was the smallest of the prefects, but what he lacked in height he made up for in dignity. One of these clever, bumptious little chaps he was, not at all a bad sort if one didn't try any tricks, and treated him with the dignity due to a prefect, but very easily upset if any kid showed the slightest sign of cheek.

And, just as it happened, Derricott had been laying down the law in rather a lordly way to the captain of the Fourth. He was just impressing on the Fourth-Former the fact that he was Derricott, the prefect, and that there would be serious trouble in the Fourth if things didn't alter.

Wimperis, the captain of the Fourth, was really impressed by the jawing—until the paper ball struck Derricott. Then Wimperis began to snigger. Derricott began to blaze as Linky Beck strolled up with his usual lop-eared grin playing round his lips.

"Ah, Beck!" Derricott might have been the general officer commanding a big division from the way he spoke. "Stand there! And don't grin at me! I'll show you—stop grinning, I tell you!"

Linky had positively winked at Wimperis, and then grinned a bit more. Derricott suddenly lifted his hand, and gave Linky a nice stinging smack across the cheek. Of course, prefects aren't supposed to smack fellow's heads; but, on the other hand, any prefect would smite any kid who didn't seem to realise that he was in the presence of one of the tin pots.

"Now then, Beck!" Derricott felt a bit better after smacking Beck's head, and he could even feel his own hand tingling because there'd been a fair amount of real temper behind the blow.

The effect on Linky was quite different

from what Derricott expected, however. It really did sting, and Linky suddenly felt that he was utterly fed up with other people knocking him about.

"Oh, you toad!" Linky gasped out, and just lurched forward and gave Derricott a real resounding flat-handed winger across the face. "You think you can—"

It was Derricott who got the surprise just then. And any student of human nature knows that there's nothing like a first-class slap in the face to rouse the fighting blood. Derricott simply felt blazing wild and filled with swift determination to pulverise Beck instantly, and then drag his mangled remains before the prefects for further and official treatment.

Ho landed out at Beck instantly, and this time it was a clenched fist which caught Linky fair and square under the chin and sent him crashing against the other side of the corridor.

"I'll teach you—" Derricott began again, but all the fighting blood of the Becks was now roused, and it was Lincoln who meant to do the teaching part of the business. Hadn't he taken first-class lessons in the noble art away in old New York? Didn't he know exactly how to crouch and spring and hammer his man after a nasty knock such as Derricott had given him?

"Gee!" he murmured, and then jumped. It was Derricott's turn now to test the hardness of the walls, but Linky was on him, and landing out in great style.

It wasn't the time to explain to Beck that prefects didn't soil their hands in common scraps with cheeky youngsters. Derricott was up against quite a good-class fighting man, whose weight wasn't much below his own. It took the prefect all his time to ward off the first few blows, and by that time Derricott's main idea was to knock Linky through the corridor wall and away out somewhere in the playing-fields.

"Scrap?" Wimperis said afterwards when he told the full and lurid story. "My giddy aunt! I'll bet there's never been anything like it in Katie's corridors before! Old Beck simply slugged into Derricott just as though he were in for a championship. And Derry got jumping wild and fairly pasted old Linky! My hat! But Beck's a pretty quick lad, and I'll bet he'd have made Derricott go all the way before he gave in!"

Doors began to open, and Sixth-Formers

put their heads out to tell any kids who happened to be there that the sooner they disappeared the safer their skins would be. When they saw a first-class boxing competition in full progress in their highly respectable and dignified corridor they just jumped out with weird cries of amazement.

"Who on earth! What the dickens! Great Scott! Derricott! Hold on! Drop this!"

Oh, but it was pretty spectacle just then! Not the sort of thing to write home about, mind you! The real, genuine claret had been tapped and the pair had forgotten all about dignity or larks or anything else.

"Beck! Stop it!" Smithy himself, captain of the school, had been roused by the sudden uproar. Practically all the Sixth Form were on the job now, and they forced the combatants apart.

"What's the meaning of this, Derricott?" Even the Sixth Form men were inclined to blame their own man in the first few moments, because, after all, it really was lowering the dignity of the Sixth for a prefect to start scrapping with a Transitus fellow.

Derricott, one eye swelling very nicely and his face marked with dark-red stains, stood back against the wall and gasped out his views and opinions.

"What's it mean? Ask Wimperis! You—stay here, Wimperis!" Derricott still had a touch of command in his voice. "This—this hyena—this tiger—gone mad—run amok! Attacked me—I—report to the Head! Ought to be kept—proper control!"

"You struck me first, you sneaking toad!" Lincoln Beck said, and for once in a way Linky really did feel annoyed. "Any time you want to fight send along for me, and I'll mop the earth with you!"

"Becky!" It was Smithy who took command. "Stop that! Derricott is a prefect! You seem to forget—"

"He'll not forget Lincoln Beck!" Linky murmured. "My giddy aunt! Has he bought the whole school—"

"Drop it!" Smithy commanded, and he began to feel wild with Linky, though he'd always been in a mild way, and as far as a Sixth-Former can be, quite a pal of Beck's. "You'll come to the prefects' Common-room, Beck! You, too, Wimperis! Ah—any prefects who can come? We'll get the

truff of this right now! I think that's the best scheme, Derricott?"

It was quite a good imitation of a state procession which meandered along the corridor to the big room where the prefects held their meetings and sat in judgment on many matters that were brought before them. Smithy led the way, and Derricott and one or two others came behind him, listening to the explanations.

Linky wasn't quite aware of it, but he was being guarded by two solemn-looking prefects. Already he was a prisoner!

CHAPTER 11.

Through the Hoop!

IN Study 7 the shouting and the tumult in the Sixth corridor came merely as a gentle murmur to the hard-working lads who were swotting at their work.

They were just packing up their books for an hour or so. It was only about seven-thirty, and probably, being the lads they were, they'd have another brief peep at them later just to make sure they knew all about it.

The door opened—and a ghost, apparition, or last survivor sort of fellow stood there.

"Linky!" The Kid gasped it out with the air of one who's just guessed the right answer to a hard riddle. "Jumping snakes, old son! But where have you picked that up?"

Linky's eye had had time to get a healthy colour, and his nose was swelling pleasantly, and one corner of his mouth had a lump on it, while the smears about his face had dried a nasty-looking brownish-black.

"Shut up!" said Linky politely. "Oh, you pie-faced little rabbits! Mothers' little pets! You ought to be stuffed and put in glass cases in some museum! You oughtn't to be allowed out without your little nurse-maid taggin' round! Go on playing noughts and crosses! Slimy little swots! Oh, you burbling pie-cans! Me! I could eat you and bend you and break you and twist your little necks—"

It did Linky quite a lot of good to get it all off his chest, and being the kind lads they were, they didn't interrupt him till the record had run down. They just sat and admired the colour scheme of his face and

made mental notes of one or two new words Linky brought into his non-stop run.

"And now you've said your little piece, Linky," Jimmy Curtis said kindly, when at last Linky had stopped to gasp for fresh air, "perhaps you'll tell us how you won those pretty little ornaments on your mug. You look just like one of these coloured supplements that's been dropped in the mud! Tell us, dear laddie, how did you do it?"

That started Linky all over again, but this time he did begin to drag in a few others. He mentioned things such as ponnypous, flat-nosed prefects, and even spoke gloatingly about the crushed-strawberry effect on Derricott's face.

"Derricott?" the Kid gasped out. "Did he—do that, Linky?"

"Pooh! This is nothing!" Linky began to recover the right point of view. "I wiped the floor with the little toad. And then those flat-footed freaks you call prefects came up and marched us off, and they jawed and jawed, and warned me—oh, shucks! I told Smithy that I'd seen bleating lambs in America that could give him a postal course on hot air. So they closed the meeting after that, saying that I could have time to think it over, and I'm due to appear and listen to some more at two p.m. to-morrow. Maybe I'll be there, and maybe I'll go and talk to the goats over at Roston. Hear those pie-cans talk you'd think—I was cowpuncher Pete trying to frighten the life out of Derricott."

They got the whole truth little by little, and the more they heard and the more they grasped the more did they realise that Linky was well in the soup.

He didn't seem to realise it fully himself. He was just blazing wild about most things, but in particular he was mad about the prefects, especially Derricott, and he was also pained about Wimperis.

You can see Linky's point of view, of course. Derricott had hit him—and Linky had hit back. There'd been a hefty scrap in which honours were about even when the mob interfered. If the prefects had patted Linky on the back and said "Well played, Beck!" Linky would have felt that honour was satisfied and would have shaken hands with Derricott and offered to get him a stone-pop there and then.

But the prefects hadn't patted him on the back at all. They had been quite rude to

him and asked silly questions. They even asked Wimperis to corroborate Derricott's statement that he merely gave a flick because he was grinning—and because Beck admittedly had thrown a paper ball at Derricott.

Finally the prefects had said that it was a very serious matter, and they didn't know but what it ought to be reported to the Head immediately. However, they were going to let Beck have time to think it all over, and to-morrow afternoon he was to appear before them again, and they would decide what steps were to be taken.

Derricott apparently had now become one of Linky's judges, which seemed unfair to Linky.

"My hat!" said Jimmy Curtis, because, of course, he saw the thing in its right proportion. "You're for the high jump, Linky, anyway. Mean to say, if the prefects send you up to Roger—well, he's bound to support them. He won't stand for Trans. fellows lamming into prefects just because they're being ticked off for slinging paper balls about! You did ask for it, Linky!"

"You take my tip, old son," the Kid said very seriously. "You make yourself look like Eric, or Little by Little, to-morrow—nice tie, clean collar, and hair nicely brushed. And when you speak to the Tin Pots you keep the soft pedal on all the time, and keep saying, 'I'm very sorry—I'm really very sorry!' just like that. And tell 'em you wish to apologise to Derricott. Wouldn't it be a good idea, Jimmy, if he wrote a note of apology to Derricott to-night? It would rather—"

"You make me tired!" Linky murmured wearily. "Cut it out, Kid! If you think think this child is going to do the crawling act and sending notes of apology to anybody—least of all that pie-can Derricott!—I could lick him in a straight fight!"

"But don't you understand, you ass?" Jimmy Curtis broke in, and the argument began all over again. Linky had learned all about masters and their rights and powers, but he had never quite gripped the position of the prefects. The idea that it would be a hopeless position if any fellow who felt annoyed with a prefect could just start a free fight didn't impress Linky at all. Why should prefects have any authority at all over anybody?

"Well, you'll jolly soon find out that they

have!" the Kid asserted, when he'd got tired of trying to explain it all to Linky. "You take my tip, old son, and put on a sorrowful, pathetic sort of look. I'm telling you for your own good, Linky!"

Linky yawned, and then tried to grin, but it hurt his face. But the argument closed then, though, as Linky jolly well knew, the talk about his exploit was going on all over the school, and in a back-handed sort of way Linky realised that he was a bit of a hero. After all, there wasn't another fellow in the school who'd have dared to try and knock a prefect about!

About two minutes past two Linky drifted into the prefects' room. Smithy was already looking at his watch, and feeling annoyed. As a matter of fact, Smithy was probably worrying over this job more than anyone else in the school, and he was hoping very violently that Beck would be frightfully apologetic and sorry, and then Smithy would tick him off in his best captain's manner, and warn him what would happen if he didn't go carefully in future, and somehow the whole job would be settled, and allowed to fizzle out with nobody any the worse.

But right from the word "Go!" it was pretty plain things weren't going to pan out as Smithy wished. There was nothing apologetic about the grin on Linky's face, and when Smithy started off by asking Beck whether he realised that it was a most serious matter, Linky smiled a bit more broadly and looked at Derricott's face.

"It would have been if we'd gone on a bit longer," Linky murmured. "I'm not proud, but anybody who starts knocking my face about generally wishes they hadn't!"

Smithy did his best to explain to Linky and bring him to a right frame of mind. After about ten minutes of Linky's back answers the prefects began to get restive.

"I propose the whole thing is reported to the Head," Crowther said, and one or two of the others nodded in agreement. It was rather lowering to their pride to start arguing and explaining to a Transitus fellow, who, if he got his deserts, would be turfed out of the school.

"No!" Smithy didn't want either to give Roger the idea that he couldn't handle a job of this sort, nor, on the other hand, did he want to land Beck into a really serious row. "We're going to deal with this! Just stand over there, Beck!"

"Say! You're chucking your weight

about a bit, aren't you?" Linky had definitely made up his mind that he was not going to be cowed by the prefects. But the look Smithy gave him then did bring a little touch of doubt to his mind.

He moved a little way towards the corner Smithy had indicated, the idea being that the prefects should have a whispered consultation. It didn't take them long, and Linky didn't hear anything till the captain spoke to him again.

"You've got to understand, Beck, that the prefects are responsible for order, and that they have certain rights which you haven't," Smithy said. "If last evening's affair were reported to the Head he would take serious notice of it. We're not reporting it. The prefects will deal with you yourselves. Right, Hammond!"

He nodded to a prefect named Hammond, who turned and opened a tall cupboard from which he took a healthy-looking cane. It was only then that Linky began to realise that the prefects were really in earnest.

"If you don't mind, Beck!" Smithy indicated with his finger just where he desired Linky to stand, and two prefects came forward and put their hands on the Transitus lad, just to help him along a bit.

"Over here!" said one of them, and Linky promptly shook him off.

"Me! If you think you're trying any little games—" Linky began, when the two prefects really gripped him and tried to force him over the end of the table.

For ten seconds after that Lincoln Beck was like nothing on earth so much as a fire-works' display. He chucked his weight about in great style, and two or three prefects did most undignified tumbles to the floor.

But it was twelve against one, and the end of ten seconds found Linky helpless. They didn't give him any chance of showing off after that. Inside two seconds Linky was spread-eagled over the table, and Hammond was standing back to get the right length.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Linky couldn't even wriggle as Hammond laid them on good and hard. Ten—eleven—twelve!

"Right!" Smithy snapped out. "You can get up, Beck!"

They hoisted him up and planted him on his feet, but they still kept a grip of him.

"You will apologise to Derricott within

the next twenty-four hours," Smithy said. "If you don't, there'll be more trouble! You can go now—but don't forget the apology."

Linky was really too blazing wild even to start another fight. He just glared at them, especially Derricott, and slammed out.

"Nasty-tempered little brute!" Hammond said.

"I don't think so," Smithy said. "Maybe a bit quick-tempered. And, anyway, we want to cut out that face-slapping business so far as prefects are concerned. That's all I want to say! Right!"

CHAPTER 12.

Quits with Derricott!

IF Linky Beck were quick-tempered he was equally swift in getting over it. The Kid and Jimmy Curtis began the good work, and within a couple of hours after his remarkable performance of chucking prefects about, Linky began to see that he ought to have followed his chums' advice right from the beginning.

Then Smithy rolled up, and he talked to Linky really decently. There wasn't anything of the heavy uncle about him, but he sort of suggested that Linky was too much of a sport not to play the game in a sporting way, which really rather pleased Linky.

"So you'd better come along with me, and just say you're sorry to Derricott," Smithy wound up. "Matter of fact, I've had a word or two with Derricott myself, and—well, if any prefect starts that business of smacking your face again, just come along and tell me. That won't be sneaking, Beck. We're cutting that sort of game right out. You'll come and see Derry?"

"Right!" Linky made not the slightest fuss about it. It wasn't that he was keen on apologising to Derricott, but he was quite keen on showing Smithy, and Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis as well, that he could play the game.

They went along to Derricott's study, Smithy introduced the question, and Derricott smiled in rather an irritating way. At least, it irritated Linky, but he said his piece quite nicely.

"I'm very sorry, Derricott," Linky said.

"I must have lost my temper a bit, but—well, I'm very sorry."

Now, if Derricott hadn't been quite so bumptious, he'd have patted Linky on the back quite cheerily, and said he was very glad it was all settled, and that he was sure Beck didn't really mean anything, and, anyway, it was all over, and there wouldn't be any ill-feeling anywhere.

Instead of that Derricott started off to make a speech in a superior sort of way, and tried to put Linky right in his place. He might have been talking to a kid in the First Form, and it absolutely washed out all the nice feeling Smythy's little chat had given Linky.

"But I shall keep my eye on you in future, young Beck," Derricott wound up, "and if I catch you trying any more practical jokes—"

"That's all right, Derricott!" Smythy interrupted. "I've done all the talking that's necessary. Beck has apologised in my presence, and the whole affair is settled and forgotten. Right-ho, Beck! Fade away and forget!"

Linky faded, but he couldn't forget. Somehow it had brought back all the little feeling of anger against Derricott. The more he thought about it the more he felt something ought to happen to take some of the starch out of the prefect and make him look an ass.

But how? Linky knew jolly well that if he tried any practical jokes on Derricott everybody would say straight away that it was Beck, and there'd be more fireworks in the prefects' room!

Linky wandered over to Daleswick Manor, where his friends, the California Players, were still staying. A little sympathy from outside the school was what Linky wanted just now, and he told Shorty Ricks, the famous film-star, all about the affair with Derricott.

"Gee!" murmured Shorty, when he'd gripped everything. "And if you was to go and try any li'l tricks on Mr. Derricott like I've been reading about—you'd get it where the chicken got the axe?"

"I bit lower than that," said Linky reminiscently. "Me? I wouldn't play any practical jokes on the pie-can. No, and I wouldn't encourage anybody else, either. Of course, somebody else might feel annoyed with Derricott, and maybe I'd be able to smile then!"

"Quite!" said Shorty thoughtfully. "But you forget all about it, Linky, and then, if anything did happen, you'd be the good little laddie who doesn't bear any ill-will. Let's talk about something else!"

They did, only Shorty kept asking queer little questions from Linky, which didn't seem to have anything to do with anything else.

"And you won't be able to come over here on Wednesday because you'll be playing cricket all the afternoon?" Shorty asked. "Well, be a good boy, Linky, and get out early with your little playmates. I shan't be seeing you for quite a long time."

When Linky had gone Shorty spent some little time in hunting out various little gadgets which had been used at times in films. And he smiled as he thought of the little adventure he was trying to fix up for himself.

"It's the simple things that make the boys laugh," he told himself. "One of the dear old stunts they played when Adam went to school. Well, well! If there's nobody knocking round the school on Wednesday afternoon I shouldn't have much difficulty in giving some of the lads a little amusement!"

On Wednesday afternoon the chums of Study 7 were out in the playing-fields just as soon as anybody else, and for once in a way Lincoln Beck really did try hard to get up a certain amount of enthusiasm for chasing after a cricket-ball.

There was no match on to-day, but half-a dozen games were in progress, as well as a good deal of work going on at the nets. Away down on the river, too, other lads of St. Katie's were showing what they could do with the oars. It was one of those days when one didn't play games merely for the fun of the thing, but because, whether one liked it or not, it was compulsory.

Masters were strolling about or taking a turn themselves, or giving free advice and instruction. Not till close on five o'clock did anyone dream of making for school and tea. But at two minutes past five half the school were drifting back to their studies.

Derricott was with two or three other Sixth-Formers and he looked, as he always did, absolutely dressed for the part. There wasn't another fellow in the school who could beat Derricott when it came to creases in flannel trousers or nicely-brushed hair. He really was the correct thing, even after an afternoon of mooning round.

As he reached his own study Derricott stood for a time with his hand on the door-knob, finishing his chat with the others.

"Right-o!" he agreed. "I'll just stick this bat away and come along to your study. Won't be a—"

He pushed the door open and went in. At least he got about two feet inside his study when the avalanche fell!

From somewhere above him came a sudden torrent of greyish-black liquid, and it caught Derricott fair and square on the head, splashing over his nice clean flannels, smothering his face, and slopping in thin, but sticky blobs all about him.

"I—Ouch! Wow! I—you fellows—" Derricott came jumping back in frenzied amazement. Just for an instant his pals stared at him in equal surprise, and then began to laugh.

"Oh, my giddy aunt! You've caught it this time, Derry!" In the first joy of the spectacle they chortled with delight, and their laughter brought others hurrying up to share the fun.

"My hat! What is it?" Even Smithy, captain of the school, laughed with the rest of them as he beheld the sight. Derricott was still gasping and trying to wipe the beastly stuff from his eyes and face generally. But when he wiped it, it only seemed to rub the mixture in, and even if he got some of the blobs off he made a bigger mess of himself in doing so.

The shouts and the laughter had attracted the crowd from other corridors. And it's wonderful how swiftly such news spreads, long before anyone had started to make an investigation or any attempt to discover just how it had all happened.

Dickie Dexter and his chums heard the joyous cries and hurried along. Just at first they couldn't see much because the mob was surrounding Derricott, and when they weren't laughing they were asking him to tell them all about it. Derricott was spluttering incoherently, and for the time being hadn't any idea of what he was doing really.

Then, as he managed to get a clear vision of things once more, he caught sight of Lincoln Beck peering over the heads of the crowd in an effort to get a good view of Derricott.

"This is your doing, Beck!" On the instant Derricott grasped that there wouldn't be much need to search far for the

author of this trick, and a sudden wave of fury overwhelmed him. "Out of the way! Scmeono's going to pay for this!"

They jumped aside for him because so far no one quite knew what the sticky stuff was, and the only thing they cared about was that Derricott shouldn't start distributing samples as he passed them.

For the fraction of a second Linky had a first-class front-seat view of Derricott, and the sight cheered him tremendously. He was just getting his grin up to top gear when Derricott made a swift lurch and gripped him by the collar. Linky hadn't a chance of making any protest before he was jerked forward into the centre of the crowd.

"You've done this!" Derricott half-snapped and half-wailed. "Oh, but you'll pay for it!"

Derricott wasn't a boxer, but he was certainly pretty free with his hands, being that sort. In the excitement of the moment he wasn't thinking about anything in the past, and the sight of Linky's grin was certainly enough to annoy him.

Even as he spoke he brought round one hand, very much as an angry child would have done, and for the second time in his life Derricott caught Lincoln Beck a stinging blow across the cheek.

Linky's grin became unstuck instantly, and just for a moment his fist was drawn back. Then he dropped it, and just then Smithy jumped in.

"Stop that, Derricott!" he jerked out, for Derricott had made another wild attempt to hit Beck. "We don't want any—"

"Ah, Smith! I was just coming along to see you!" It was just the luck of the game that at this precise moment Mr. Roger Blunt, arrayed, as most of them were, in flannels, should have suddenly remembered some urgent, if trivial, detail about which he desired to see the captain of the school.

Roger had had a glimpse of the brief scrap between Derricott and Beck, but he was the sort of man who generally took great care to avoid butting in on anything of that kind. Even now, he really intended to pretend that he hadn't noticed anything unusual and to pass on with Smith.

"Yes, sir," Smithy said, but he couldn't help looking a bit perplexed. "I—ah—just settle—you get cleaned up, Derricott. We'll inquire into it all later."

"Ah, ah, Derricott! Been having a little

argument? Quite!" Roger couldn't pretend that he'd never noticed what a mess the prefect was in, but he judged that Derricott would bolt pretty quickly—and Roger would go on.

But Derricott didn't bolt. He stood gasping for a moment and staring at Roger. Then he blurted out, with the temper still showing in his voice.

"No, sir. This is a practical joke—played by a member of the Transitus, sir. I—it's carrying things too far, sir."

"Yes; I see!" Roger realised that he'd got to take a hand in the game now. "What happened exactly?"

Somehow three or four of them went back to investigate—and Roger became more and more alert! The apparatus which had brought about the calamity was most highly ingenious and likewise simple. A stick had been wedged and balanced in the partially open fan-light; from this stick hung by a short cord a small rubber bag, not unlike a football bladder. It was adjusted so that when the door was opened a safety-razor blade, which had been ingeniously fastened to the door itself quite near the top, cut across the bottom of the bladder—and whatever happened to be inside came out with a rush!

"Very ingenious!" Roger said. "But I don't know that I approve. But you say that you know the miscreant who arranged this booby—"

Roger was going to say "this booby-trap for your benefit? Doubtless you will deal with him justly and according to his deserts. I will leave the matter in your hands!"

But he never said it because Derricott burst out with quite unnecessary bitterness:

"Oh, I know who it is, sir. Beck major, of the Transitus, sir. I—I intended to report him to you, sir. The matter is too important for the prefects, sir."

"Ah!" Roger looked round him for a moment till his eagle eye fell on Beck. "So you have been exercising your ingenuity, Beck?"

"No, sir," Lincoln Beck said simply.

"Oh! Do you know who did it, Beck?"

"No, sir," Linky said, and it was perfectly true. He might have had a guess and said "Shorty Ricks," but even that was very doubtful as Shorty was the sort who'd most likely get somebody else on the job.

"Ah! Beck denies it," Roger asserted judicially. "I think—well, I think the best

plan would be for you to get cleaned up, Derricott. This stuff appears to me to be a mixture of flour and lamp-black, or some similar concoction, and it is very sticky. I will go into the matter later. Smith!"

And Roger stalked magnificently off, with the captain of the school accompanying him.

Almost as soon as he had disappeared there was a second instalment of the row. Derricott was not only angry about the trick, but was angry because Roger hadn't been nearly so sympathetic as he might have been. Then someone in the mob murmured "Dirty sneak! Down with the prefects!"

"Down with the prefects!" some other ass cried more loudly.

It was one of those ridiculous cries that nearly always lead to trouble. Within two seconds the prefects were letting everybody know that they weren't going to be downed! They drove the mob before them, breathing threatenings and smacking heads with great joy. Fellows who had merely drifted up to see what the fun was now found themselves being brutally turfed out.

Of course, the row died down pretty speedily, but it had of course queer effect. Everybody wanted to know just what had happened, and, having learned all about it, they felt that Beck was a giddy hero even if he had done what Derricott said he had. But as Beck said he hadn't done it—then he hadn't done it, and he was still a hero, and the prefects were a lot of bouncers, always trying to leg somebody into a row.

"But old Derricott did look a gorgeous sight," said the Kid gleefully. "I'll bet you Roger was laughing all the time, though he did try to do the 'stern Head act' for a bit."

Everywhere fellows were talking of the latest excitement. Those who had really seen Derricott gave wonderful descriptions of the sight; those who hadn't seen him discussed the problem of who had really worked the giddy stunt.

Below the Sixth there was a very popular theory. It had been done by a Sixth-Former. Derricott wasn't particularly popular in the Sixth, and someone who knew of the row there'd been over Lincoln Beck, had judged that poor old Beck would get all the blame. Fortunately the whole of the Transitus could prove that Linky had been on the field all the afternoon.

Smithy, not knowing about this theory, sent word that Beck would be required to attend a prefects' meeting that night at 8 o'clock, his idea being to settle the matter out of hand. If Beck could prove he hadn't done it, that would settle it!

But at 8 p.m. all the Transitus, half the Upper Fourth, and a fair number of the Fifth accompanied Linky to the prefects' room. Linky was grinning happily because there was nothing he liked better than to be the hero of the hour. As Linky went in to the prefects' room Jimmy Curtis led the cry: "Fair play for Beck! Down with the prefects!"

Smithy heard it, and Smithy went to the door. They quietened down for him, but the captain saw trouble ahead! He didn't fool round on the job to-night!

"Look here, Beck! We don't want any long arguments. Did you or did you not fix up that trap for Derricott? If you didn't, do you know who did it?"

"I did not!" Linky said. "I was out all the afternoon—ask the Trans. fellows! This is a put-up job by Derricott or some of the prefects, and this time there isn't going to be any bullying! I report Derricott for striking me across the face, and spoiling my flannels by wiping his dirty hands on them. I demand that the Head—"

They tried to shut him up then, and outside the mob heard the row and judged that Linky was being put through the hoop. They were just in the right mood for a scrap, and in they went.

"Rescue! Trans. to the rescue! Down with the prefects!"

For ten seconds there was a top-hole scrap. But it was Smithy who handled the job manfully. He stood on the table and yelled for silence—and got it at last.

"Stop it!" he ordered. "There's going to be trouble over this! But one thing is settled. Beck did not put that booby trap for Derricott this afternoon. There will be an inquiry—"

"Three cheers for Beck!" Dickie Dexter sang out, and they swarmed round Linky.

And that really ended the inquiry. Roger inquired of Smithy, but they both realised that, all things considered, the best thing was to keep quiet and say nothing. Derricott had been to blame, and he was politely told so, but nobody managed to find out who really did fix the trap.

Even Linky Beck didn't really know. Only Shorty Ricks and one other member of the California Players ever did know, and they said nothing. Actually it was the other man, an expert in comic business for the films, who stole into the school that afternoon and fixed everything up. They did it because they thought it would please their young friend, Lincoln Beck—and they were quite right!

CHAPTER 13.

A Meeting of the Trans!

THE trouble between Derricott and Lincoln Beck had fizzled out to a certain extent, but it wasn't by any means settled. If anything, it had spread, and several people who could sense the feeling in the school judged that trouble was brewing, somewhere and somehow.

There would be little outbreaks when the glad cry would ring through the corridors, "Down with the prefects!" It wasn't Smithy's fault, and even he realised that some of the prefects this term always managed to do the wrong thing in the wrong way at the wrong moment.

So far as Lincoln Beck was concerned, he kept pretty clear of the prefects after his row with Derricott. He wasn't worrying about the prefects or anybody else when he burst into Study 7 one bright evening about one minute past seven. Linky had dashed past the gate-porter's lodge at about one minute to the hour, which was good timing, because if he'd been another ninety seconds late it would most certainly have meant the high jump for him!

But there was a glad smile on Linky's face as he gazed on his playmates in Study 7.

"What's the joke this time, old son?" Curtis began hopefully.

"Tell us all about it, Linky!" the Kid commanded. "No sob stuff! No fairy-tales! Just the plain facts. Is it anything good? And where do we come in, anyway?"

"With the rest of the Transitus Form," said Linky. "It's coming to us this time! Do you think your Uncle Linky would forget the bonny laddies who taught him how to play noughts and crosses? Not likely! How's this for a nice little programme, per-

sonally arranged by your old friend, Linky Beck? Leave this noble edifice at two o'clock in the afternoon, proceeding by car to Dingholme, where a short halt will be made for ginger-pop or such refreshment as may be desired. Say, but don't I speak nicely when I try? You lads have done it!"

"Carry on!" said the Kid. "This is getting interesting."

"After consuming the refreshment already mentioned," Linky went on, still speaking in the tones of a wireless uncle, "we proceed in the cars once again to the pleasant village of Danefold, where stands the ruins of the ancient castle—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Curtis. "I knew there'd be a catch in it somewhere, Kid! This burbling piecan is bound to drag in some ruined castle or ancient church; but if he thinks he's going—"

"Forgive me, children!" Linky said gently. "In the ruins of the castle I ought to mention there is being held a remarkable and interesting Old English Fair, with roundabouts and swing-boats and cocoa-nut-shies. There is also an excellent refreshment tent where my dear friend, Mr. Vandome, proposes to have a large and magnificent tea provided for us. Mr. Vandome will himself be present, and he's looking forward to being kept busy laddling out the dollars to provide us with such innocent amusement as we may desire. Got me, children?"

"It sounds all right," murmured the Kid, and a little look of gladness was coming into his sad eyes. "And we—Jimmy and me and Brother Washy—we're all in it?"

"Sure!" Linky smiled. "You and everybody else in the Trans! Vandome would have taken the whole school, but he sorter dropped a little hint to Roger this morning—and Roger nearly froze him stiff on the spot. So Vanny asks me—and it's five cars, or maybe six, and everything's going to be gilt-edged and hall-marked, and everybody'll be as happy as—"

"Yes, but—" Jimmy Curtis looked across at the Kid, and he saw that the brightness had faded from his eyes. "What do you think, Kid?"

Sorrowfully Richard Dexter shook his head.

"A wash-out!" he murmured sadly. "If Linky had kept it down to three or four of us—I hate mentioning it, old son, but you put the tin hat on it right away when

you talk about the whole Form going on a giddy picnic. Roger won't stand for it!"

"He won't!" said Jimmy Curtis decisively. "Think again, Linky, and see if you can fix up something a bit milder. I'm willing to stand down if there's some poor fellow who really needs a picnic more than I do, but you know how Roger's been on his hind legs just lately?"

Even Linky hadn't thought of it in that light. Roger wasn't the man to stop any fellow from having a little amusement, but this business of relatives buzzing up to the school and asking permission to cart off their son and his pal, and any other pal he happened to remember, had been getting a little bit too hectic just lately, and Roger had to draw the line somewhere.

"But we're only going to be out the ordinary time," Linky pointed out, and again the Kid shook his head. Roger had dragged out an old rule that no boys were to go more than three miles from the school on their free halves. Danefold was nearer thirty miles than three.

It was a great pity, because Linky had really been trying to do his best for the Form. As anybody knows, Linky wasn't one of those miserable fellows who think only of themselves. The more the merrier, was Lincoln Beck's motto.

Mr. Vandome was one of these American merchants who come over to Britain to enjoy themselves and get rid of any money they can't spend in U.S.A. He was a cheery, jolly-fellow, who had pots and pots of money, and he was a great friend of Mr. Cyrus Beck's.

That was why he had come down to Dulchester and paid a polite call on Mr. Roger Blunt, who said a few kind words to him, then sent for Lincoln Beck. Roger was quite the beaming sunshine until Mr. Vandome dropped a suggestion that he would like to have the pleasure of giving the boys at this famous seat of learning a little treat.

Roger just looked at him and shook his head, and although it was a hot day Mr. Vandome suddenly felt that he'd run into an iceberg. He felt quite pleased when Roger smiled on him again, but he was also glad when he said good-bye and left it to Lincoln Beck to show him the sights of St. Katie's.

Linky did this part of the job very thoroughly and nicely, and even Mr. Roger

Blunt, who reckoned to know all there was to know about Katie's past as well as its present, would have been surprised to hear some of the history that Linky let loose.

After which Linky buzzed down to Dulchester with Mr. Vandome, had a top-hole tea, and fixed up quite a nice programme for the whole of the Transitus Form. Mr. Vandome and Linky had this much in common—they liked to do things on a big scale.

"My boy, it'll be a great day in my life," Mr. Vandome said. "And I don't have to do anything, except make the arrangements about the cars and the refreshments and all that? You'll see about your chums getting leave, or whatever you call it?"

"Leave it to me!" said Linky, and very soon after that he buzzed off to tell the glad news to his chums.

And now he was facing the hard facts. Four of them might have stolen away, but a whole Form—

"Why not?" demanded Linky, after he'd got over the first shock. "Nobody need know we've been to Danefold. We could fix up to meet the cars at different places, and we could—gee! But it only wants a bit of care, and the whole thing goes through. Let's ask Benny!"

The Kid and Jimmy Curtis looked at each other—and wavered. Washy Beck meekly murmured: "You trust Linky!" While Linky himself quietly slipped out and summoned Benson into the conference.

Before they returned to Study 7, however, there was a brief discussion in Benson's study. Strictly speaking, Linky couldn't have chosen a better time for his scheme. Masters and prefects had been combining just lately to try and squash the Transitus Form, and they were just about ready to do something to show their proud and independent spirit.

"Why not?" demanded Benson, when eventually he stood in Study 7 and listened to the Kid's objections. Not that Richard Dexter really objected, but he did like to feel that he always did his best to lead others in the right path.

"Put it to the whole Form," one of Benson's pals suggested. "Those who don't want to run the risk can stay behind, but those who aren't weak-kneed, lop-eared funks can accept Mr. Vandome's very kind invitation."

"Hear, hear!" said Benson. "Fetch 'em in, Watkins!"

There wasn't really room for five-and-twenty stout lads in Study 7, but they squeezed in somehow, with Jimmy Curtis, the Kid, and Linky Beck standing on the table. It was Linky who put the whole question to the meeting.

"Anybody who doesn't want to go, kindly put up his hand," he asked, and waited.

There were no hands shown.

"Anybody who wishes to accept Mr. Vandome's kind invitation please raise the right hand!" Linky called.

Every hand went up, and the cheering began. The Kid and Jimmy were cheering just as hard as the rest of them.

"Three cheers for Linky Beck! Three cheers for Jimmy Curtis! Three cheers for Vandome!" They let the row rip, and forgot all about the fact that the Sixth Studies weren't so far away. They remembered it when there came a hammering on the door and the fellows who were wedged round about that spot realised that someone was trying to get in.

When the door did at last open about half-a-dozen fellows could just make out that Earle and Derricott, two prefects who didn't love the Transitus, were trying to get in.

"Stop this row!" Earle shouted out. "What's the meaning—"

The Transitus weren't funks at all, but quite a number decided that perhaps after all it might be as well to get out, and even Jimmy Curtis and the Kid thought it was as well to get off the table. The result was that there was a sudden surging towards the door.

"Stop this—" Derricott began, meaning to let the Transitus understand that he was a prefect and couldn't be pushed and shoved in this way. But everybody had decided to get to the door, and the leading men felt an irresistible force behind them. The next second Derricott and Earle were swept forward, stumbled, and down they went with about half-a-dozen Transitus fellows on top of them.

Derricott and Earle were yelling furiously; the Transitus fellows who were on top were yelling just as wildly, trying to tell the mob behind not to be prize asses. Those at the back, wondering what all the row was about, and wanting to find out, just barged forward and sent a few more

toppling into the struggling mass on the corridor floor.

In about five seconds there was a glorious row in the corridor. Some of the Fifth fellows from further down the corridor came out and thought it was a free fight, open to everybody, so they jumped in and started to sling their weight about. The Transitus fellows were not standing for that, and they began to chuck the Fifth about in a gentle sort of way.

A regular pandemonium was going on when Smithy and others of the Sixth came tearing on the scene.

"Stand back! Keep quiet!" Smithy jumped into the business in great style, thinking it was a Form row between the Fifth and the Trans., even though some of the Fifth were trying to tell him that they were just trying to stop the noise.

But imagine the surprise of Smithy and the other Sixth fellows when eventually two gasping and bedraggled figures arose and stood revealed as Earle and Derricott!

"I—but somebody will pay for this!" Earle gasped. "They did it purposely—attacked us—prefects! I report—"

"Oh, dry up, Sneaky!" It was a Fifth fellow who yelled it out, but you couldn't quite tell who it was. Smithy instantly blazed out:

"Be quiet! Now—Curtis!" He had suddenly spotted Jimmy Curtis, looking very hot and very happy, in the centre of the mob. "What is this about? Who began the row?"

"Nobody," Jimmy Curtis answered promptly. "At least, we were having a quiet, peaceful little Form meeting when Earle and Derricott barged in and ordered us out. And when we tried to get out they tried to push us back again. Take 'em away, Smithy, and tell 'em not to be prize asses in future!"

"I don't want any check, Curtis!" Smithy said sternly, but, of course, Jimmy Curtis, being in the First XI at times, could risk a bit of cheek.

"It's not cheek," Curtis asserted. "It's true. Better have a prefects' meeting and inquire into it. Put me down as chief witness, and I'll be there."

"There won't be any inquiry," Smithy retorted. "But I just want to warn the Transitus that they are becoming a nuisance to the whole school—and they're asking for

trouble if they're not more careful! That's all I've got to say! Be careful!"

Once again a row had fizzled out quite feebly. Smithy had acted wisely, of course, and Solomon himself couldn't have done anything better, but it was a little bit more to the account the Transitus had up against the prefects.

"We're going, old son," Benson assured Linky Beck. "You tell the dear old fellow that the Transitus will be there. And there won't be any piebald, lop-eared prefects knocking round Danefold. If there is any breeze about it—the Transitus will stick together. Don't forget that!"

CHAPTER 14.

Maggy Piles it On!

ON the day fixed for the giddy picnic not even the eagle eye of Jolly Roger would have observed anything strange in the conduct of the Transitus. Discreetly and quietly, in threes and fours, they stole softly away. Linky had organised the whole thing, and Lincoln Beck was something of an expert when it came to organisation.

They picked up their cars at different points, and not until they were getting near Dingholme did the six cars begin to draw together. Mr. Vandome quite understood the need for all this secrecy, because Linky had explained that Mr. Blunt didn't want the other Forms to be jealous.

It was a jolly journey altogether, but, of course, the real fun began at Danefold. Maybe the Castle wasn't anything to brag about as ancient castles go, but there was some sort of a fête in progress in the very delightful grounds, and within ten minutes the lads of the Transitus were having a high old time.

So was Mr. Vandome. He was a great lad, especially when it came to the laddering part of the programme. It was a great sight to see five and twenty lads and Mr. Vandome on the jumping horses!

They set the pace for the rest of the crowd, and their cheers and glad shouts of joy made everybody feel happy—except two spectators, who stood and stared in horrified amazement as the jumping gee-gees whizzed past. They felt that it was not

merely the most remarkable coincidence that had ever happened, but also that all the laws of England had been violated at one fell swoop.

As a matter of fact, there wasn't anything remarkable in the fact that Earle's people lived not so very far from Danefold, and that his father was taking an interest in the local charity for which the fête had been arranged. Nor was it particularly wonderful that Earle had asked his particular pal, Derricott, to come over to Danefold with him this afternoon, and that they had full and proper permission to return quite late to St. Katie's that evening.

They had come by train to Danefold, having left Katie's some time before the Transitus lads began to drift away. Then Earle's sister and a friend of hers had picked the two Sixth-Formers up at Danefold Station and driven them to the fête.

Earle was doing the heavy Sixth-Former act with his sister's friend, while Derricott was doing his best to impress Gladys Earle with the stories of his prowess at sports and the way he had to keep St. Katie's School in order.

And then they drifted up to the jumping horses, and saw the Katie's caps being whizzed and jerked round and round.

"Oh, there are some more Katie's boys, aren't there?" Gladys Earle inquired. "If they are friends of yours, I should so like

"Friends?" gasped Earle. "My dear Gladys! They're kids! They've no right—D'you see who that is, Derry?"

"Curtis and Dexter!" gasped Derricott.

"Beck and Benson!" snapped Earle.

"Wainwright and Beck minor!"

"The whole of the Transitus Form!" Derricott asserted.

"Something's got to be done about this!" Earle said, and a real, grim, strong-man glitter came into his eyes.

"If they haven't all got exeats—" Derricott began.

"Roger would never allow it!" snapped Earle, and just then the jumping gee-gees began to slow down. "Excuse me, girls, but I'm afraid even here one cannot escape duty. As prefects, Derricott and I—"

"It's a frightful fag, of course," Derricott said. "But if these kids have broken bounds without permission—well, they've been unlucky! They'll have to deal with us!"

Earle was already striding forward, and Derricott followed him. The Kid and Jimmy Curtis, Linky Beck and Benson, had joined Mr. Vandome, ready for the next turn, when suddenly Earle and Derricott loomed up before them. Just behind the two prefects two girls came sauntering up because they felt it would probably be jolly interesting.

"Curtis!" Earle gave quite a life-like imitation of Jolly Roger's well-known refrigerating performance. "Have you an exeat?"

Jimmy Curtis realised straight away that they'd struck a nasty patch of luck this journey, and that it was just as well to go carefully at first.

"Well, no, not exactly, Earle," he admitted. "After all, it was scarcely necessary, was it? We're going back before lock-up. S'pose you'll be staying—"

"Who gave you permission to come here?" Earle demanded, and Curtis began to feel tired. By now the whole of the Transitus had gathered round, while Mr. Vandome was standing by and wondering just what they were talking about.

"I'll tell you all about it to-morrow," Jimmy said. "We're just going along to have tea."

"Has anyone here got an exeat?" Derricott butted in. "This is a very serious matter."

"Oh, cut it out, Derricott!" Benson interrupted, because he simply couldn't stand Derricott at any price. "Come on, you fellows! We don't want to waste all the afternoon talking with these burbling pie-cans!"

Somebody laughed, and the mob began to move.

"Stop!" Earle really did look impressive for a moment. "Listen to me! This is a most serious breach of the school rules! I don't know how you came, but you will all return immediately to the school, and Curtis, Benson, Dexter, and Beck will report to me at two o'clock to-morrow afternoon!"

"Delighted!" Benson grinned. "Anything else you want to say, Earle?"

"That is all—for the present!" Earle snapped back. "I don't wish to create a scene here—"

"Then, for the love of Mike, push off!" begged Benson, and, just to help him, Dickie Dexter vawned.

"I am going to see you get out through those gates!" Earle said. "Now then! Line up!"

"Come on!" Jimmy Curtis turned to his mob, and he was really getting fed-up with Earle's performance. "Take no notice of him, Mr. Vandome! He's what they call a prize ass at Katie's. Shall we drift along to tea?"

"Are you going to obey me?"

Earle stepped forward in a threatening manner and put out his hand to grab Curtis. Instantly Linky Beck, who had kept very quiet so far, gave a little lurch forward, twisted his arm in some queer way round Earle's arm and neck, and before you could say "Shoo!" Earle had spun round and dropped to the ground.

"Stop that!"

Derricott had a turn then, and he jumped in swiftly. Jimmy Curtis put up his hands to form a sort of guard, then gave Derricott a sharp, quick rush.

"Don't!" It was Jimmy who was doing the commanding-officer stunt now. "We don't want any row here, Derricott! Please go!"

Derricott had advanced again, but Curtis, Benson, Dexter, and two or three others simply pushed together. They didn't mean to hurt him, but he staggered back just as Earle was rising to his feet—and over went Derricott.

"Come on!" Curtis turned to his lot again. "Quick march—to the refreshment tent! I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Vandome!"

And Jimmy really was sorry. So was Linky Beck and Benson, and everybody else in the *Transitus*. They wouldn't have minded a row with the prefects in the least, but it was rotten to make the noble citizen who was their host to-day feel that he was landing them in for a row.

But the incident didn't really upset the day's pleasure. Mr. Vandome had written ahead about the tea, and hadn't run the slightest risk of any shortage. It was one of those teas you remember years afterwards, and begin to wish you were young again. Nor did they see anything more of Earle and Derricott.

Then a jolly ride back, rather too early, of course, but no one was going to complain about that. And nobody enjoyed it all more than Mr. Vandome, who was in the car with Linky Beck, Jimmy Curtis, and Dickie Dexter.

"It's made me years younger!" he kept murmuring. "Say, boys, but we must fix up another little trip. What about next Wednesday?"

They'd forgotten about Earle and Derricott, or, at least, they weren't worrying much about them. What could they do? Even if they chucked their full weight about and started to hand out lines, who cared?

"We'll be there!" Linky Beck asserted, and the other two, on behalf of the Form, promptly agreed.

Later, when the news was passed round, everybody else agreed.

Nor was there the slightest hitch in the programme, even in such a matter as getting back to the school in good time. At seven o'clock every *Transitus* fellow was inside, and you couldn't have found twenty-five lads in the whole kingdom who were more contented and well-disposed to the rest of the world than they were.

"Are you going to wander along and report to Earle?" Benson asked Curtis on the following morning. "I've got a dim notion he said something about it. What do you think?"

"Oh, I don't know!" Jimmy Curtis had nearly forgotten about it. "Mean to say, they were probably breaking bounds just as much as we were. Anyhow, if they want us they're bound to let us know."

"Right-ho!" Benson agreed. "I reckon they'll be wanting to forget it more than we do. Anyhow, if they want to kick up a fuss, we're waiting on the door-mat ready for them!"

But even though they saw Earle and Derricott not a word was said. The two prefects might have been utterly unaware of their existence to judge by the lofty way they passed them by. Jimmy Curtis and Benson promptly came to the conclusion that the matter was now closed.

They were wrong. Earle and Derricott were horribly sick about the performance at Danefold Castle, and they were dead keen on making the whole of the *Transitus* realise that prefects were very important people.

But there were difficulties in the way. Of late, Smithy had been trying to tell the prefects to do a bit more of the kindly help business and not so much of the stern uncles stuff. If they reported the matter to the prefect's meeting the chances were that Smithy would take the job on himself,

listen to all the excuses Curtis and Benson had to put up, probably laugh at the way they'd slung the two prefects about, and then tell them to be a bit more careful in future.

So instead of mentioning the matter to the prefects, Earle and Derricott sought out Mr. Magson, master of the Trans., and explained, to him that while they didn't want to sneak, this was a job too serious for the prefects to tackle, yet they didn't quite care for the idea of going to the Head.

Mr. Magson was a youngish man, and really quite a decent chap who was tremendously keen on being a strict disciplinarian on the lines of Jolly Roger, but he hadn't quite gripped the fact that Roger's icy glitter and stern words were generally about ten thousand times worse than anything else. More, Maggy hadn't quite grasped the fact that it was often a good idea to overlook certain breaches of the rules so long as no harm had been done.

Maggy was astounded when he heard the story Earle and Derricott told him. A whole Form breaking bounds, and then attacking the prefects when corrected by them! It was undoubtedly a matter which must be reported to the Head.

That was exactly what Earle and Derricott wanted, and they wandered forth quite pleased with themselves. Undoubtedly there would be a first-class row now—and those Transitus kids would learn.

Mr. Magson mentioned the matter almost apologetically to Jolly Roger, and Roger looked serious. But he wasn't really looking serious about the breaking of bounds so much as the idea that prefects had reported to a Form-master, and the Form-master had then reported to Roger.

"I suppose it was this man, Vandome, who invited them?" Roger mused. "Yes! He rather tried to suggest to me. But I don't want to create precedents of that sort. No! They were all back at the school in time?"

"I don't think there is any complaint on that point," Maggy answered.

"No! Well—" Roger still looked perplexed. "I think you'd better deal with it, Magson. Carefully, but seriously, you know. Try to avoid dragging in the prefects—and leave me out of it altogether. Just suggest that it would probably mean expulsion for the ringleaders—Beck and Dexter, Curtis and Benson, I suppose, and the whole of

the Form being gated for the rest of the term if I heard about it. But you're not going to do that! You'll deal with it yourself. Shrive! them up a bit, and make them realise what a wonderfully narrow escape they've had! That's all! I don't know anything at all about it!"

Roger beamed again, and even Maggy smiled as he went out. It was pleasant to work under a Head who left things in your hands, and gave such sound advice! Maggy would most certainly shrivel the Transitus Form, according to instructions!

On the Friday morning when the Trans. went into their Form-room they could feel from the first moment that Maggy wasn't quite himself. He rather looked as though he'd been having icebergs for breakfast, and had forgotten to get unfrozen.

He banged his desk viciously as soon as they'd settled down.

"Before we begin work this morning," he began, in an awe-struck voice, "it is my unhappy duty to speak on a most serious matter which concerns every boy in this Form. It has been reported to me that a most serious, unwarrantable and unpardonable breach of the rules has been committed by this Form. How and in what manner this very grave and serious breach has been brought to my notice does not matter, but, knowing as I do the head-master's views on the subject, I realise that if it were brought to his notice—if so much as a whisper reached his ears—"

Old Maggy really did pile on the agony. Listening to him you'd have thought that the Transitus Form had at least sacked and pillaged the town of Danefeld, robbed all the inhabitants, and pawned the mayor's gold chain to pay for their tea. Never until Maggy started on his lecture had the Transitus realised what a first-class gang of hooligans and criminals they really were.

Still, that was all right if he'd been content to wind up with saying what horrible things would happen the next time anything of the sort happened, and just left them gasping at the thought of the narrow escape they'd had this time, and what a good thing it was for them that Maggy was such a lenient and kind-hearted little fellow.

But Maggy didn't do anything of the sort.

"Curtis—you are captain of the Form! Benson, you are vice-captain! Together you are equally responsible. Beck, I under-

stand that you had a great deal to do with the arranging of this so-called picnic?"

"Yes, sir!" Linky admitted, feeling a bit proud to be dragged into the thing in this way.

"Very good! For the rest of the term Curtis, Benson, and Beck major will not be allowed outside the school grounds. Next week the whole Form, including Curtis, Benson, and Beck major, will attend in this room each afternoon from two o'clock until four-thirty. In addition every boy in the Form will hand me at the end of a fortnight one thousand lines. I feel that I am dealing very leniently with you, all, but you must understand—"

By the time Maggy had finished jawing the first hour was nearly up, and during the second hour the Form had time to grasp what it all meant. Why, next week they were going to meet Mr. Vandome again! Next Thursday there was a big house-match on! And why did he drop so heavily on Curtis, Benson, and Beck? Gated for a whole term!

Long before the end of morning school came every fellow in the Transitus was quite prepared—was even anxious—that the whole thing should be reported to Roger. But most of all there was blazing a fierce indignation against Earle and Derricott, the two miserable sneaks who'd landed a whole Form into such a frightful mess.

Probably the Kid was wilder than anybody else. It annoyed him even to think that he'd been left out of the gating business. The Kid never quite liked to be amongst the also-rans.

A fierce and excited meeting was held partly in Study 7 and partly in the corridor. Some were for marching up to Roger there and then; others were keen on a plain and simple strike by just refusing to take the slightest notice of what Maggy had said; but everybody was dead keen on smashing Earle and Derricott in some way.

"Rag their studies!" Benson suggested. "Let 'em sneak about that! We'll all be in it—"

"No, you won't!" said the Kid. "Jimmy Curtis, Benson and old Linky are not in this act! You leave it to me! This is where we'll do a bit of your old game, Linky! You keep out of this part of the show! The rest of us will settle with Earle and Derricott!"

And in the end the Kid got his way. At two o'clock Jimmy Curtis, Benson, and

Lincoln Beck strolled out to the playing-fields while the rest of the Transitus lads remained quietly in their studies, except a couple of scouts who drifted round in a thoughtful manner until they were quite certain that all the Sixth had wandered out to the playing-fields. Then they reported to Captain Richard Dexter, the officer in command of the raiding party!

CHAPTER 13.

When the Battle Raged!

DURING the course of that afternoon Earle and Derricott learned just how Maggy had played merry with the Transitus and simply pulverised them. Whereat the two prefects smiled, especially when they saw Curtis, Benson and Beck wandering moodily round.

Other people, especially the pals of Benson and Curtis in the Fifth, heard what had happened. The Transitus disliked most of the prefects, but the Fifth loathed them.

"And are you going to put up with it?" one or two of the Fifth fellows asked. "My hat, Curtis! But if you take that lying down—"

"It's all right!" Jimmy Curtis said quietly. "If you are wanting to see some fun you'll maybe get it if you hang round the Fifth corridor about tea-time!"

"We shall be there!" said the Fifth men hopefully.

And they were. They saw Derricott and Earle stroll in with their pals. They each shared a study with another Sixth fellow, and they lived practically next door to each other.

When Earle opened his door, with his study-mate just behind him, a prefect named Lipscomb, he had the shock of his life! A couple of cyclones and an earthquake couldn't have made a better wreck of Earle's study than Dickie Dexter and his pals of the Trans!

The whole place had been turned upside down, and the walls stripped of every picture and adornment. Books and magazines and odd papers had been scattered round, chairs piled any old how, photograph frames lay about, and even the rug had been slung into the centre.

On the table leg, which stood up prominently, was a big notice: "World's Champion Sneaks. First Prize: Earle and

Derricott, the Cads of St. Katie's. Rest Nowhere."

Derricott, entering his study, found the same blazing transformation scene. It was something superior to an ordinary rag, and Derricott staggered out helplessly, feebly calling for Earle, or any other Sixth-Former to come and look at the wreck.

"My study——" Derricott began, when he saw Earle come dashing from his room.

"And mine!" gasped Earle. "They've ruined everything. Oh, but there'll be a row about this. I know who's done it. Those Transitus kids! I say, Lipscomb! Wharton! Look at Derricott's study—look at mine! I—the prefects—those Transitus kids——"

He was babbling helplessly, while two or three other Sixth-Formers stared in at the mess.

"Who's done it?" Lipscombe gasped out. After all, he hadn't done anything to the Transitus fellows. "I'm going along there now. There'll certainly be trouble. They'll have to come and clear up this mess, and if there's any damage done—they'll pay!"

Half a dozen others supported Lipscomb's idea of coWaring the Transitus kids there and then, and a little mob of big fellows set off at once to tackle the job.

But the Transitus scouts were out, and there went echoing through the corridors the warning cry: "Pre-e-e-fects! Pre-b-e-fects!"

The men of the Fifth and the lads of the Upper Fourth, knowing a little bit of what had happened, heard the glad cry, and came forth to see the fun. The mighty Sixth men swept them on one side contemptuously as they stalked for the Transitus studies.

"Curtis and Dexter, and that mob, you say?" Lipscomb demanded of Earle. "Study 7, aren't they? Right! We'll have 'em out——"

He had almost reached Study 7 when the fire opened. The leader of the Transitus had mapped it all out beforehand, and he guessed that there would be a swift raid on the Transitus studies. Wherefore his men were well provided with ammunition in the shape of nice, sappy paper balls, and they'd come hurrying from their studies immediately the warning cry of "Prefects!" went forth.

Biff Bash! Splosh! The prefects

hadn't a chance to get near Study 7 before they caught it hot and strong.

"Down with the prefects!" the battle-cry shrilled forth, while the prefects, suddenly realising that their escape was cut off, yelled out mightily:

"Sixth! Sixth! Rescue! Res—cue!"

It was rather like the dear old days when they buzzed round with a fiery cross, or lighted bonfires on the hilltops to let the next county know that there was a big fight going on, admission free. The Fifth had been spoiling for a scrap for a long time with the prefects, and they sent forth the glad call joyously.

"Fifth! Fifth! Down with the prefects! Lam 'em!"

And the Upper Fourth were tremendously pleased. Obviously if they took a hand in this scrap they could have all they wanted for nothing, because if there was any row afterwards—well, the Trans. and the Fifth would be in it, too.

But the shouts of the Sixth men had reached their own crowd, and into the corridor came mighty reinforcements. Smithy and the big men of the Sixth, including such fellows as Pascall, Denison and Raikes, came dashing along.

"My hat!" murmured Smithy, as he saw what was taking place. "But it's come at last! It was bound to happen!"

But he plunged in gallantly, without quite knowing what it was all about, and began to shout out commands.

"Drop this! Will you stop it?" Biff—and some fellow in the Fifth or Trans. went a mighty crash against the wall. "Stop this row! Dexter! Benson! What——"

"It's all right, Smithy!" came the cheery answer. "We're just giving him his right name!"

This had been part of the programme, carefully mapped out beforehand. A small party of the Trans. lads had bided their time, and ignoring everything else, had collared Earle. They dragged and pulled him clear of the main mob, and then above the general row could be heard Washy Beck's raucous voice:

"Ernest Francis Adolphus Earle, we confer upon you the order of the Prize Sneak of the World!"

"The Prize Sneak of the World!" yelled the others, just as Dickie Dexter politely tipped about a quarter of a pint of blue-black ink over Earle's head.

"Now—altogether, boys! Sling it!" They gave Earle a mighty push, and he went flying into the mob. The Sixth saw it, and they made for Dexter's crowd, which only made the fun grow faster and more furious.

Then Derricott was collared, but they didn't have quite the same chance to pour the ink over him, because the scrap was getting too fierce. But the Kid managed to splash him pretty hectically all the same, and the battle surged on.

It drifted slowly from the Transitus corridor into the very domain of the Sixth. The Upper Fourth had brought up bigger supplies of soaking wet paper balls, and these were flying about and being picked up and slung back, while here and there two fellows were giving an exhibition of top-hole wrestling.

Masters came rushing up, for the row must have been heard all over the school. They yelled and shouted, but even the Sixth had passed beyond the stage where they worried about masters or anything else. And all the time the battle-cry was being yelled out lustily and joyously:

"Down with the prefects! Down with the sneaks!"

The Sixth studies were being raided, and books were being collared for ammunition.

"The Fifth! Fifth! Lam 'em!" yelled the Fifth men. "Up the Trans.! Played, the 'Trans.! Down with the sneaks!"

Once a row of that sort really gets under way it needs an earthquake to stop it. Sixth men struggled to stop other lads from going into their studies, and if the masters managed to stop the fight in one corner, somebody went at it more fiercely in another corner.

If the Trans. began to back with the idea of beating a retreat they found the Sixth suddenly attacking again—so back into the fry went the Trans. The masters by now were content to stand far back, watching the whole thing helplessly.

Far away Roger heard the murmurings of the scrap much as he might have heard the sound of the sea. But now and again a fierce shriek drifted his way, and he knew something big was afoot.

He came over to see what it was all about—and was staggered when he reached the battle-field. The corridor was as pretty a picture as ever anyone saw, strewn with books and papers and squashy wads, to say

nothing of odd youths tumbling down and dragging someone else with them.

"Down with the prefects! Down with the sneaks!" the battle-cry was still being yelled, and Smithy had long ago given up all idea of restoring order by merely yelling out a command to stop.

Roger stood by his assistant masters for a few brief moments, and Maggy turned helplessly to him trying to explain that he didn't know what it was about, and that the whole school had taken leave of their senses.

Then Roger tried to yell out, but at first it wasn't much use. If he said "Stop!" it was drowned with the fierce shouts of the mob: "Down with the sneaks! Down with the prefects! Lam 'em!"

So Roger himself just stepped in and did a bit in the laming department. It was a magnificent sight! He just collared lads by the neck and turfed them out of the way, giving them a paralytic grip just to let them know he'd come. And every time he collared anyone he just hissed in their ear: "Stop it! Stand against that wall, boy!"

It took Roger just about ninety seconds to heave his way through to where Smithy was tackling all comers, and by that time the battle was dying down.

"Stop!" Roger blazed out his command once again and this time it was heard. They saw Roger—and Roger looked round in a way that made everybody feel that he'd seen them, separately and individually. "Stop! Stand still!"

A hose-pipe and ice-cold water couldn't have been more effective. Fellows who had just begun the dear old refrain: "Down with the—" suddenly left their voices trail away to nothingness. Lads who'd just got the half-nelson on the next man decided that it didn't matter this evening: boys who were raising their arms to sling a book at the towering headpiece of some Sixth-Former quietly dropped the book to the floor.

"What is the meaning of this, Smith?" Roger demanded, then swung round suddenly and pointed an accusing finger. "Don't move! Every boy will stand exactly where he is. Now, Smith!"

"I'm sorry, sir!" Smith faced the Head quite bravely. "I don't know what it is about. The row had begun before I arrived: I tried to stop it—and failed."

"I—I can tell you, sir!" Earle struggled to bring his inky face within Roger's ken, and he was panting a little with his recent exertions.

Roger stared at him for a moment, hardly recognising him.

"Well?" Roger demanded, "can you explain how it began, Earle?"

"They've wrecked Derricott's study—and mine, sir," Earle said. "Curtis, and Beck, and Benson, sir, and other fellows in the Trans, while we were—"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh!" a faint hissing sound began, and Roger blazed out once again.

"Silence!" he commanded. "Let me look at your study, Earle! Derricott, I want you! Mr. Magson, see that no boy moves. Smith, you will keep order!"

Roger gripped the main facts inside two or three seconds. Undoubtedly Earle and Derricott had suffered—and Roger knew why! Still, that didn't quite explain all the row.

"And you went to treat Curtis and company in the same way?" Roger asked. "I understand. Curtis!"

"Yes, sir?" Jimmy Curtis stepped forward.

"Did you have any part in the wrecking of Earle's study, or of Derricott's?"

"No, sir!" Jimmy Curtis let it go at that.

"Oh!" Roger jerked out. "Benson—Beck major!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you had any part in wrecking these two studies?"

"No, sir!" they answered together.

Away in the background the Kid could have cried for joy, and wasn't worrying a bit about what was coming to him. Roger turned to Earle and Derricott.

"You are evidently misinformed," he said curtly. "Had you taken the trouble to inquire—"

"I'm quite certain it was Curtis and the Transitus, sir!" Earle said hotly, rather forgetting the fact that Roger wasn't the sort to stand contradiction.

"And I am equally certain that it was not Curtis!" Roger said. "Please be quiet, Earle! I will inquire into this at once. Any boy here who had any part in the wrecking of the studies occupied by Earle and Derricott will please step forward."

Every lad in the Transitus except Curtis, Beck, and Benson, came forward! Even

Roger found himself very nearly letting a smile drift into his stern and ice-cold eye.

"Ah! Every one in the Transitus with the exception of the three you named, Earle!" Roger said. "Very well! Mr. Magson, take your Form—the whole Form—to your room! I will join you there in ten minutes. The prefects will go to their common-room. I wish to see them there. The rest—for the present—dismiss!"

The meeting broke up in orderly fashion, Roger watching them. Two minutes later he was with the prefects, and he said a few things! It wasn't about the row so much, because he said straight away that he'd been expecting it for some time, and that it would probably relieve the atmosphere. But he told several of them that they weren't supporting the captain, and he also said a few things about prefects who were chiefly concerned with getting others into trouble without making any attempt to get them to play straight simply for the sake of the school.

Then Roger left them to talk it over—and some of the prefects told Earle and Derricott just what they thought about them for landing them into this row. Roger went on to the Transitus Form-room, but he'd already sent a message to Mr. Magson to come to the prefects' room, so that he met Maggy just as he came out and walked with him to the Trans. room.

Roger didn't blame Maggy in the least, but his eyes were almost twinkling as he suggested what course Maggy should now take. But his eyes weren't twinkling when he entered the Transitus room!

He fairly went off at the deep end. He pulverised them into powder, and then wound up by saying that whatever punishment Mr. Magson had imposed upon them he intended to double!

"I—I'm sorry, sir." Magson shook his head suddenly. "I am exceedingly sorry that the Form has taken the matter into their own hands as they have done. My intention this morning was to let them realise what punishment they might get if you dealt with it, but I fully intended to remit it if they showed—ah—signs of contrition. Perhaps I was to blame. But—ah—without going into the matter, sir, I suggest that my Form is not deserving of very heavy punishment."

"Ah!" Roger looked like Napoleon and

Wellington all in one. "Very well, Mr. Magson! If you feel that way, I shall be willing to leave the matter entirely in your hands. But this Form must understand that in future—"

He said a lot more, and they began to realise dimly that it was time the Trans. did buck up. When he left them Maggy's voice sounded quite nice and homely. Maggy, in fact, was smiling very gently as soon as the door closed.

"You have had a very narrow escape!" he told them. "I hope you will not form the impression that I shall always be so lenient, but I certainly don't want you to spend the rest of the term in school. In the circumstances—we will forget the punishments I imposed this morning. You will merely attend on Monday afternoon, when I hope to say a few words more to you. All other punishments are wiped out."

They stared at him. Then Curtis blurted out:

"Thank you, sir!"

And the others joined in a chorus of "Thank you, sir!"

The biggest row of all had died quietly down, and the Transitus breathed a gentle sigh of thankfulness. No, they'd never have any rows with the prefects! Not this term, anyway! Even Lincoln Beck was quite content.

"Me? I'm going to be the good little laddie till the end of the term, Kid!" he told Dickie Dexter later on. "Then I'll get a nice report, and the dear old dad will be so pleased he'll ladle out the dollars, and then next term—"

"We'll have a good time next term!" Dickie Dexter asserted confidently. "But we'll go pretty steady for the rest of this term, old son!"

CHAPTER 16.

Some Excitement for the Governors!

SO far as Linky Beck was concerned he really meant to live a quiet life till the long summer holidays came round, and there isn't any doubt but what he would have done it, but for the fact that someone else butted in on his plans, and that led to Linky being butted violently into trouble he had never even anticipated, still less tried to seek it.

That is why you have switched away from

the school for a time to spend an hour or so one pleasant evening at the house of Mr. John Frayne, father-in-law of Mr. Roger Blunt, and also the father of Marjory Frayne, who was a great pal of Lincoln Beck, Dickie Dexter, Jimmy Curtis, and Washington Dexter.

On the following day the annual meeting of the Governors of St. Katherine's School would take place. It was quite a different thing from Speech Day or Founder's Day or Sports' Day, and often enough there wasn't any fuss at all about it. Still, there was generally some sort of meeting in Big Hall, when the whole school assembled just to listen to what one or two of the Governors had to tell them.

Two or three of the Governors who didn't live in the district were staying with Mr. Frayne, and Mr. Blunt and his wife had drifted over to the house to have tea with them. There was Admiral of the Fleet Sir Hubert Rawson, quite a meek-looking man when he wasn't in his uniform, but with a sixty-horse-power voice which could travel at a terrific speed when the admiral got speed up.

And there was Lord Velwood, General Margetts, Sir Thomas Birdlip, and one or two others, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Frayne—and Marjory Frayne.

"I remember when I was a boy at school—ah, ah, ah!" boomed Admiral Rawson, and told them the story of a wild and giddy joke he'd played in the days of his youth. General Margetts capped it with a story which showed that lads who were going in for the Army in those days were even wilder than future admirals.

But you know what it is when some of these old lads get together? If any of Katie's boys had done any of the things the Governors reckoned they'd done, there would have been a most terrific row and somebody would have got the boot. But they kept talking as though they were jolly fine fellows and kept hinting that lads nowadays hadn't the spirit they used to have.

Marjory Frayne began to get fed up with their yarns, and tried to butt in and tell them a few things which happened at her school.

"When I was at St. Agatha's," Marjory began, "three of us arranged one night

"My dear Marjory!" Mrs. Roger Blunt,

who was of course Marjory's elder sister, interrupted promptly. "I am afraid your childish pranks at St. Agatha's were not very amusing!"

"We had a most terrific lark one night," Marjory went on, completely ignoring her sister. But this time it was Jolly Roger who butted in.

"Did you eat an extra bar of chocolate, Marjory?" he asked laughingly. He meant it to be funny, of course, but it simply upset Marjory a bit more.

"It was a most gorgeous joke," Marjory said quickly, and made up her mind to get through with the story. "After lights out

"Someone let loose a white mouse? Ah, ah, ah!" Admiral Rawson chuckled. "I think it's a great pity our girls' schools are so namby-pamby these days! Now I remember when I was a boy at school—"

The admiral had cut Marjory right out, and was booming full steam ahead, forty knots an hour, and nothing short of a big naval gun could have stopped him. The story was quite fat-headed, but everybody laughed as though it were a terrific joke.

"My goodness!" Marjory said to herself when she was squashed once more by Mrs. Roger Blunt butting in and telling her not to interrupt. "If only I could think of something to make these moth-eaten fossils sit up. If I could strike some little scheme to make Nancy realise she can't treat me as an infant in arms these days! Something I could tell them about long afterwards and make them wish—oh, my goodness!"

Marjory never told her story that night, but when her sister was out of the room she heard one or two things which interested her. In celebration of the fact that Mrs. Roger Blunt had organised a remarkable gala day at St. Katie's School in aid of the local hospital, some of the big pots on the committee thought it would be very nice if they made a present to Mrs. Blunt.

When you think of it there's something queer in the way these presents get given. Really and truly the one who ought to have had a presentation was Linky Beck who organised the Great Transitus Surprise Side-Show, or Dickie Dexter who helped him such a lot. But things don't work out like that in this world, and the big people were going to give a nice-looking casket to Mrs. Roger Blunt, though, after some talk

about it, they had come to the conclusion it would be nice to make the presentation before the whole school, because it was the boys of Katie's who had really gathered in the shekels for the hospital.

So to-morrow, besides the governors, there would be quite a mob of the hospital committee, and they were all due to gather in Big Hall at six o'clock, when Lord Velwood would make the presentation. The whole school would be present, whether they were interested in this sort of thing or not.

It wasn't the sort of thing that excited Linky Beck very much, but he would go, of course. At half-past five on the afternoon of the governors' meeting, Linky was sitting alone in Study 7. The others had pushed off to wash their little hands and faces and make themselves look pretty for the gathering in Big Hall, but Linky felt tired, so he lay on the couch and thought great thoughts.

The door opened rather stealthily and quietly, and just at first Linky wondered who on earth it was. Although it was summer the weather had been on the dull and misty side to-day, and the fellow who stole in was wearing a long grey mackintosh, and the collar was turned up, while his cap was pulled well down so that you only saw a bit of the face.

"Hallo! Want anybody?" Linky rose lazily and tried to identify the intruder.

"Sh! Where are the others? Don't make a noise, Linky, but it's all right—Marjory Frayne! I thought I'd get through all right in these things. I say, Linky, can we get down to Big Hall without anyone noticing us? I mean—you know there's a presentation to-night? I've just got to put this thing on the table, you know."

"Right-oh!" Linky was grinning, because it seemed so funny to see Marjory standing there in that rig-out. She had a box under one arm, and it was wrapped in brown paper. Linky offered to carry it for her, but she wouldn't let him.

She didn't explain anything at all really, but Linky rather grasped the fact that Lord Velwood wanted her to do this little job as a sort of extra surprise, and Marjory thought it would be better if she got one of her Transitus chums to help her.

She couldn't have chosen a better time than this. They barely saw a soul as they hurried down to Big Hall, and in the main

entrance the light was a little on the dim religious side, so that they never saw Butt, the porter, in his little glass-windowed office. Not that it mattered really, because they just slipped quietly into the hall. On the platform at the far end stood a table, which was already decorated with flowers, and also on which was a flattish wooden box about a foot square and three or four inches deep.

"Ah!" Marjory seemed tensely excited about something. "Is there anywhere we can put this?"

She had handed the paper-covered parcel to Linky for a moment, and now picked up the wooden box. The table was covered to-day with a small dark-coloured cloth, which Marjory lifted for a moment and looked beneath the table.

"There's a ledge here!" she whispered, and promptly slipped the polished wooden box under the table. It was one of these rather ornamental tables, and it had a flat bar about five inches wide running lengthwise across the centre from the two carved supports at the end.

"That's lucky! Topping place!" Marjory said. "Cut the string, Linky, and slip the brown paper off. Quick! I don't want to be seen."

Linky was gently amused by the whole performance, of course. So far as he could make out the box which was revealed when he took off the paper was exactly the same as the one Marjory had slipped on the under-shelf of the table, or, at all events, there was precious little difference. It was fastened at the front by two brass hooks in the way that most boxes of this sort are secured.

But as Marjory put it on the table in the same position as the box she had removed, Linky noticed that along the sides of this second box a lot of little holes had been bored. He was just wondering what they were for when Marjory interrupted his thoughts.

"Now we'll get out!" she commanded. "Keep quite close to me if anyone passes us, Linky. Lord Velwood—I mean, no one must know I've been here."

They got out of Big Hall quite safely, with Linky still pushing the brown paper which he had taken from the box into his pocket. A soul did they meet in the entrance hall, but the lights were switched on even as they walked through.

"It's lucky!" Marjory gasped when they were in the quad. "Can I get out by the drive? Will anyone stop me? You come to the end of the drive with me, Linky, and if anyone does meet us they'll think I'm one of the boys."

There wasn't any difficulty at all in Marjory leaving by the main entrance to the school.

"But why did you have to change the boxes?" Linky asked. "And aren't you coming to the show to-night? Mean to say—"

"No, I'm not coming," Marjory answered decisively. "And don't breathe a word to a living soul about my going into Big Hall or about that box, will you?"

"Sure!" Linky agreed. "Nobody saw us, anyway. But what's the—"

"You can tell Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis and Washy that you've seen me," Marjory conceded, "but they mustn't say anything about it either. But I'd like them to guess— You'll tell me all about the meeting later on, won't you? It ought to be quite interesting!"

Following Linky's advice, Marjory slipped past the porter's lodge at the gates quite easily. Then Linky strolled back and up to Study 7, where he took the brown paper from his pocket. He noticed that this was carefully perforated with many holes, just as the box had been.

Just as he was flinging this paper into the waste basket Dexter, Curtis and Washy Beck came in.

"About time we got down to Big Hall, isn't it?" Curtis suggested. "What have you been doing, Linky?"

"You'd be surprised!" Linky smiled. "Marjory's been here. Fact! Said I could tell you, but you mustn't tell anyone else. Been on some little job for Lord Velwood. Couldn't make out who it was when she crept in here. She's bolted now, because she isn't coming to the meeting. She's a first-class brick, and if she lived in America—"

The Kid asked a few questions, but Linky didn't know anything more. He could only repeat that nobody was supposed to know she'd been to the school.

Ten minutes later they'd all forgotten about the queer visit of Marjory Frayne. There was a cheery row in Big Hall, and there was quite a lot of fun going until the pots began to come in. Then the row died

down a bit, though the visitors in the front row and the distinguished mob on the platform made a fair old buzz among themselves.

Now Lord Velwood was on his feet and the noise died away while he told them how pleased the governors were with themselves, with the masters, the boys, and the whole world generally. After that Jolly Roger said a piece, and then the admiral got up and gave his well-known imitation of a destroyer in action.

Then they had a little song, just to let the boys exercise their lungs. When that was finished Lord Velwood had another innings. He wanted to tell them all about the hospital, and how they'd make quite a lot of money this year, chiefly because Mrs. Roger Blunt had taken the job in hand. He knew that the boys of the school had helped her, and he was sure they would be pleased.

"In presenting this—ah—small, but—ah—I trust this suitable token of—ah—the esteem—" Lord Velwood said, and slipped back the catches of the box which lay on the table in front of him. He meant to open it gently and then take out the silver casket—but there was a sudden scream from some lady sitting on the platform, and Admiral Rawson was jumping to his feet!

As Lord Velwood opened the box about half a dozen white mice began to hop out on to the table, and then darted and tumbled over the edge to the floor!

CHAPTER 17.

The Head's Decision!

INSIDE twenty seconds the excitement raged furiously on the platform. Mrs. Roger Blunt hated white mice, and one of the little brutes was actually running towards her.

"Oh!" she cried, and jumped up just as Roger made a swift grab at it. General Margetts was trying his hand at the job of catching those on the table, but they were nippy little fellows and promptly hopped off to the floor.

Lord Velwood was calling out and stammering and stuttering and trying to look impressive and yet very angry all in the same moment.

The visitors in front were laughing at the humour of the thing, and the lads at the back were standing on forms trying to get a clear view of the performance on the platform. The truth flashed like wireless round the Hall.

"White mice! Mice! Nothing in the box but white mice! What a lark!"

"There's another box!" Someone spotted the second box which had been dislodged from the shelf beneath the table, and they picked it up. Opening it, the real silver casket was discovered quite safe and sound inside.

But the hunt for the mice went on until the whole lot were captured.

"I—ah—very much regret—some boy's extremely ill-timed practical joke!" Lord Velwood jerked out. "Most discourteous and inappropriate. I am sure that—ah—the headmaster will discover the boy or boys who are responsible for this—ah—most ill-considered jest, and—ah—I need not assure him that the Governors will support him in any—ah—action he may take!"

"Hear, hear!" said Admiral Rawson and General Margetts, and nodded to Roger. "Find the boy—expel him!"

As a matter of fact, Roger was feeling pretty sick about this performance himself. There were jokes and jokes, but he didn't like the idea that any boy in the school was keen on making the Head's wife look foolish at a moment when a very pleasant and kind compliment was being paid her. And before the Governors, too! There was no room at St. Katie's for that kind of boy!

Lord Velwood handled the matter pretty well, however, and the silver casket was duly presented to Mrs. Roger Blunt, though one couldn't help feeling a bit sorry for her when she had to say "Thank you!" and try to add something kind about the boys who'd helped her. One boy in the school, if not more, hadn't helped her in the least!

Still, once the incident had passed and died down, everything passed off quite nicely, despite the silly practical joke with the white mice. Roger hadn't much time for making inquiry that night because he was entertaining some of the Governors to dinner.

He managed, however, to see Butt, the porter, and questioned him.

"Yes, sir! I remember now, sir!" Butt answered, quite steadily. "It would be about half-past five and I was in my office when I saw two boys enter Big Hall. One of them I recognised as the elder Beck. The other was a smaller boy, and I think he had rather a lot of fair hair, sir, but he was wearing a cap and a big mackintosh, sir, and he was carrying a brown-paper parcel. Who he was I couldn't say."

"Very good, Butt!" Roger said, and, after a few more questions, dismissed the porter.

Roger ran through the names of all the smallish fair-haired boys in the school who would be likely to join Beck in a prank of that kind. The most obvious was Richard Dexter of the *Transitus*, Beck's own particular chum.

That was why almost as soon as morning school had begun the next day Dexter had a summons to the Beak's study.

Roger didn't waste much time in getting to the point with Dexter.

"Ah, Dexter!" he began, and the Kid could see that he was wearing his well-known Wellington-Napoleon ice-cold steel glitter in his eyes. "I want to get at the truth of a certain matter, and you will be well advised to answer my questions very carefully, and without any attempt to deceive me. Tell me exactly what part you took in that white-mice hoax last evening!"

"I, sir?" Dexter stared at the Head in amazement. "I took no part whatever, sir! I know nothing about it at all, sir."

"Did you not go into Big Hall at about half-past five last evening, Dexter?"

"No, sir! It would be just on six o'clock when I went in with Curtis and Beck minor, sir, and I think Brown and Frenshaw—"

"I see!" Roger had become quite mild. "Was Beck major there, too?"

Dexter suddenly felt he was on dangerous ground, and funny little suspicions jumped into his mind.

"I—I don't just remember, sir," he answered. "At least, I wouldn't like to be sure, sir."

"No. All right, Dexter! Will you give me your word of honour that you know absolutely nothing whatever about the manner in which those white mice came to be there?"

"Yes, sir!" Dexter answered promptly.

"Very good! Thank you very much, Dexter! You may go now!" Roger smiled quite kindly upon the Kid. "I am quite satisfied with what you have told me."

Dexter went. It was twenty minutes before another message came to the *Trans. Form-room* to command the presence of Beck major in the Head's study. Meantime, Butt had brought to the Head a crumpled-up piece of brown paper, with many holes carefully perforated in it. It had been used for covering a box just about the size of the one which had contained the white mice. More, on the inside was a label, addressed to Mr. J. Roskillen, the live-stock dealer in Dulchester.

"And you found that in Study 7?" Roger asked, and smiled grimly. It would not be a difficult matter to get the truth from Mr. Roskillen as to which boy from the school had recently purchased white mice!

Roger adopted exactly the same attitude

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towards Linky Beck as he had done towards Dexter.

"What part did you play in that white-mice hoax last evening, Beck?" Roger rapped out, after his first warning.

"No part, sir!" Beck said quite calmly. "I didn't know anything about it till it happened, sir. That is the truth, sir."

Roger looked fixedly at him, and was inclined to believe him.

"Did you or did you not go into Big Hall at half-past five last evening, Beck?" Roger rapped out, and then he saw the little look of fear which crept into Linky's eyes.

"Yes, sir," he admitted.

"Ah! Did another boy go with you, Beck?"

"No, sir!" Linky answered, because, of course, it wasn't another boy, and, rather foolishly as it turned out, Linky clung to that straw.

"But if I tell you that you were actually seen to enter Big Hall with another boy at five-thirty last night, will you dare contradict me, Beck?"

"I—I— No, sir!" Beck admitted.

Roger began to get angry then. But he got angrier before he was through. He had thought that Beck had quite got over the foolish idea that he could lead Roger astray and had come to be as straightforward and frank as Dexter or Curtis. But now he simply contradicted himself and landed himself into a hopeless mess under Roger's cross-examination.

He didn't know anything about the hoax first of all, and he hadn't gone into Big Hall with another boy. Then he admitted that he had gone in with someone else, and that the other person was carrying a box. Then he said he didn't know anything about the white mice, but afterwards admitted that he had taken the paper off the box and stuffed it into his pocket. He didn't mean to play any trick, but he practically admitted that he'd placed the box with the white mice in on the table, and that he knew the other box was on the shelf under the table.

"You are simply playing with the truth, Beck!" Roger rapped out at last. "Who was the other boy with you? Answer me! I shall find out quite easily if you don't!"

"I—I— There wasn't another—I mean, sir, I'm very sorry, but I can't tell you the name, sir."

"Very good!" Roger spoke in that icy tone of his which meant that he was really mad. "It is now half-past ten, Beck. I will give you until half-past four this afternoon. If you refuse to make a clean breast of the whole thing, tell me exactly the part you played and the part played by your companion, you will leave this school by the first train possible. You quite understand? The full truth—or expulsion?"

"Yes, sir," Beck said sorrowfully, and wandered forth.

He never even went back to his Form-room, but as the Head had summoned him no one worried much about that. But Linky Beck was slowly gathering together his personal belongings and making preparations to quit St. Katie's!

He was like that, was Linky. You might say that he wasn't really worrying at all, though he did feel regretful at the idea of being turned out in this way. Still, there it was! He hadn't the faintest intention of telling Roger any more than he had done. In fact, he was rather sorry that he'd said so much. The best plan would be to dodge seeing Roger again, and clear out before half-past four.

When his chums came into Study 7 they were surprised to find Linky calmly packing his "grip," as he called it, and moving all his personal belongings from the study.

"What's the giddy idea?" the Kid asked in surprise.

"It's come, Kid!" Linky bleated gently. "Poor old Linky's got the boot at last. It's me for the long, lone trail this journey, for sure! I gotta be out of Katie's before four-thirty this very afternoon, or there'll be a terrific fireworks display by Jolly Roger. The full truth—or quit, says Roger. And I'm just quitting! That's all!"

"But why? What's the row?" the Kid gasped. "I mean—oh, my hat! Were you mixed up in that white-mice affair last night? But why?"

Jimmy Curtis and Washy Beck were asking questions, and Linky smiled sadly on them all.

"Circumstantial evidence, my little play-mates," he murmured. "You're not old enough to understand what it means, but there's many a man been shot for less—"

"Look here!" said the Kid suddenly. "Marjory came here last night when we were out—"

"Sh!" Linky held up a warning

finger. "Forget that I mentioned that, children! If you breathe a word about that, I'll come back and haunt you! Forget it! Coming to the station to see me off? There's a slow train at three-fifty, and we'll drift down and have some pies at Dawson's—"

They talked and argued with him, but it was no use. Nothing could be done. They'd only make it worse by interfering. And if they dared to try and see Marjory Frayne and ask her about it, Linky would pulverise their little heads for certain before he went away. He was quitting Katie's! Finish! Salute and farewell!

But the Kid and Jimmy Curtis had a pretty clear notion of what had happened now. Marjory had come along and got Linky to help her. Linky didn't know what he was doing, really, but for some reason it was imperative that no one should guess that Marjory had any part in the hoax.

"It's rotten luck!" the Kid agreed with Curtis. "But what can we do? We can't go and beg Marjory to give herself away, even if that would do any good, which I doubt. But we ought to give old Linky a jolly good send-off. What do you think?"

Curtis didn't stop to think. He got going immediately. Inside forty minutes a good many fellows in the school knew that Linky Beck, hero of a hundred glorious jarks, had been sacked! Sacked for something he had really never done! But he wouldn't give the name of the one who had done it away, though one got a pretty good idea of who it was. It was the Head's own sister-in-law—and Linky Beck would have to suffer!

"What rotten luck!" fellows said admiringly. "But he's a sport, is old Beck! We'll join in any giddy send-off! If he's got the boot let's see he has a decent funeral! Roger's out! Saw him go! Got busy, you chaps! A royal funeral for Linky Beck!"

CHAPTER 18.

A Grand Farewell!

AS a matter of fact, Roger had gone out to interview Mr. Roskillen, the man who sold white mice and doves and rabbits. Mr. Roskillen shook his head when Roger began questioning him.

"I haven't sold any white mice to any boys from your school, sir," he assured Roger.

Roger questioned him afresh, and even told him of the hoax played last night. Mr. Roskillen merely smiled.

"Ah, yes, sir! But I shouldn't blame any of your boys! You take my word on that! Sorry I can't give you the name of the person who did buy white mice for that little job—at least, I guess that's what they were for now! But if you're keen on finding out I'll give you a clue, sir! Just make a few inquiries at Mr. Frayne's house. Don't think I'm rude, sir, but we men must protect the ladies! Good-day, sir!"

So Roger went off to the Frayne's house because he could get nothing further from Roskillen. Roger reached the Frayne's about a quarter to three, and Marjory saw him come, but she dodged off swiftly because she didn't like the steely look in his eye.

Mr. Frayne was absolutely staggered at the suggestion that he'd bought white mice, or that the affair of last night was in some way a purely family matter.

"Never heard such nonsense in my life!" he declared. "I'm perfectly certain Marjory would never dream of such an utterly stupid and— Excuse me, Roger! The telephone!"

But the call was an urgent one for Miss Marjory Frayne, and, after some hunting, Marjory came forth and answered it. The two men could hear her excited cries into the telephone quite clearly as they sat in the study.

"What? A funeral? Dulchester Station at twenty to four? Oh, I see! But—oh, my goodness! No; wait, Jimmy! What's that? Expelled because of the white mice last night? Oh, Jimmy, but he didn't know a thing about it! It's most horribly unfair! I don't care—Roger Blunt is here now! Well, I say he's a sneak! Oh, you always stick up for him! Why didn't you all tell him! But I say it's unfair! He can't find out himself, and he wants Linky to tell about me! Yes, of course, I did it! Yes, I'll come! Are you there, Jimmy? Oh, —blow!"

Then she hung up the receiver and came dashing into the study where Roger, and her father had been very quietly taking in everything she had said.

"What's this, Marjory?" Mr. Frayne

jumped to his feet as his daughter entered. "Do I understand that you had something to do with that disgraceful hoax last night? I never imagined that a daughter of mine —"

Marjory was one of those girls who never do just the thing the other person expects her to do. She rather surprised her father and Roger now by becoming quite calm and gently amused.

"Dear old daddy!" Marjory said, in kind and gentle tones. "The night before last you thought it most frightfully funny when Admiral Rawson told his tale about letting loose twenty rats, and everybody wept with joy when General Margetts related how funny it was when he freed half a dozen little snakes. And you all laughed——"

"That's quite different——" Mr. Frayne interrupted.

"Of course it is!" Marjory said gently, and then gave quite a life-like imitation of Admiral Rawson. "Oh, what a great pity it is that girls don't have the same keen sense of jolly fun that boys used to have in my day! Namby-pamby creatures they are! Couldn't play a joke—— And even Roger suggested that the most daring thing I'd ever do would be to eat another bar of chocolate. Nancy wouldn't let me speak at all. Well? Was my little joke as funny as Admiral Rawson's?"

"Ah!" said Roger. "So you induced Beck to assist you in that little affair?"

"Beck didn't know a thing," Marjory said in a tired voice. "You don't think I'd drag him into a joke of that sort? It was entirely my own idea, and I did it. I persuaded Lincoln Beck to walk with me so that everybody would think I was a Katie's boy. And somebody sneaked, I suppose, and you've expelled him! I shall write to all the papers and to Mr. Beck and to all the governors, and just tell them what I think about men's sense of honour and justice and humour! Oh, my goodness! When I think of the way they laughed at their own jokes! But don't they get upset when someone does the same thing on them? And you've expelled Beck, and he's going by the slow train this afternoon, and the school are turning out to give him a proper funeral, because they're all proud of him! And I'm going to dash down to the station now, and I shall tell everybody. Good-bye!"

"One minute, Marjory!" Roger had jumped to his feet now, and there was a

little smile twinkling round his eyes. "Beck has not been expelled! I gave him until four-thirty this afternoon in the hope that I should solve the mystery myself. He seems to have anticipated the final verdict. He's going by the three-fifty, is he? Is your car available, Mr. Frayne? We can do it easily!"

Five minutes later the three of them were in the car and whizzing down to Dulchester Station. It's a pity they didn't get an earlier start because they'd missed the most impressive part of the procession. They just caught up the tail end as it entered the station yard just on three-thirty.

Smithy, the captain of Katie's, had heard the story, and just at first he wasn't quite sure what to do. Then, when he grasped the fact that Linky was really innocent, he decided that it was a top-hole opportunity of showing the school how to play the game. Linky had played the game and he should go out with flying colours, but without any whimpering.

"Right-o! It's dead certain that Beck's getting the boot because he won't divulge the real culprit?" Smithy asked Jimmy Curtis. "That's good enough! Full musical honours! You've got Simpson's cab? We must get two or three more. No cars! It isn't dignified! Where's young Howe? We'll soon fix this up!"

In less than ten minutes everything was in hand. Boys were dashing down to Dulchester to get yards and yards of black ribbon and to buy talking tommies and any other musical instruments which would help the good work.

By three-fifteen practically the whole school was gathered in a side-street near the top end of Dulchester High Street. Black ribbon was being cut into suitable lengths and they were putting great bows about their necks. The drivers' whips—there were five cabs now, because the Sixth had rolled up in force—were decorated.

"Up you get, Linky!" Smith commanded, and he clambered after him on to the roof of the cab. Curtis and Dickie Dexter would ride inside until they reached the station.

The bobbies on duty in Dulchester had a shock when they saw the procession, because they'd never been warned to expect anything special to-day.

The noble citizens of Dulchester, too, a bit staggered by the procession at first, joined up, asking questions.

"What's it for? Who's it for?" they asked. "Has somebody won something?"

"No; it's a funeral. Fellow's got the boot—sacked—because he wouldn't sneak. We're giving him a send-off— Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!"

The cabs were drawn up now quite close to the station entrance, and there was old Linky standing up on the top of the leading one with a gorgeous grin on his bright young face. Oh, but this was a proud moment in Linky's life! If there was anything he liked more than the next thing it was to be right in the limelight, with a chance to make a speech and be the giddy hero of the moment.

And there was a first-class crowd packing the station now. People who'd been drifting on a joy-ride through Dulchester had turned round to see what the fun was; there were half a dozen cars squeezed in at the back, so that nobody noticed particularly the big, closed car which had crawled in right at the very back just as Linky held up his hand.

"Gentlemen of St. Katie's!" Linky bawled out, and felt like a twin-brother of Mark Anthony. "Standing here at this sad, but joyous moment of my life—standing here as a humble, but proud citizen of that great Republic beyond the seas, the United States of America—I want to say that, though the bolt has fallen, the Big Boot has jerked forward, and soon I shall be going forth on the long, lone trail, leaving my happy boyhood days behind me—I want to say that I am a proud man at this moment. I am proud that during this past year—"

Oh, Linky could say his piece very nicely. Probably he'd have gone on a lot longer, but Smithy pulled him back when the mob began to cheer, and Linky just stood by Smithy's side blinking and grinning gladly. Somehow he had a vague idea that away at the back Jolly Roger was peering forth from a big car, but just at present Linky was too happy to care twopence. As a matter of fact he rather hoped Roger was there!

"Gentlemen!" Smithy yelled out. "The time grows short. Soon the ancient tin kettle which drags the three-fifty over the iron rails will be creeping into the station. Before we part with our noble friend let us cheer him on his way by singing 'Bonny Linky's noo awa'—to the tune of 'Bonnie Charlie.' Band, please!"

Smithy had a jolly good idea of the right

stuff to sing at a ceremony of this sort. The talking-tommies buzzed and the air was filled with voices singing: "Bonnie Linky's noo awa', Safely o'er the friendly main—"
And when they came to the refrain: "Will ye no' come back again, Will ye no' come back again? Better lo'ed ye canna' be, Will ye no' come back again?" it seemed frightfully pathetic in a jolly cheerful sort of way, if you know what I mean?

Linky yelled out for all he was worth: "I will, boys! I'll be coming back to this old burg. And it'll be pork pies at Dawson's—"

"Hear, hear!" they cried, just as Smithy bent down from the top of the cab because someone was calling his name in a fiercely commanding manner.

It was Roger! Smithy gasped just a bit when he realised that the Head himself was standing right by the cab!

But Roger was grinning a little bit himself, though he had to shout to make himself heard.

"Tell Beck he is not to go!" Roger simply shrieked it out. "He was told to see me at four-thirty. He will return to the school because I have learned the truth. He was not responsible for that hoax. Disperse the crowd in an orderly fashion, Smith!"

Roger himself quietly slipped back into the mob then, but other fellows became aware of the fact that the Head was present, and it rather put a damper on the cheering.

Smithy, of course, was a bit staggered at first, but he was the sort of lad who quickly gets a grip of things. He managed to yell the truth into Linky's ear, and then he held up his hand for silence just as the train came puffing into the station behind them.

"Gentlemen!" Smithy yelled out. "The funeral is postponed—no, cancelled completely! Beck is innocent! We shall return to the school in our own time and in orderly manner. Three cheers for Beck!"

They cheered; they laughed; then they cheered again, and began to laugh still more. It had been a great ceremony, and after all there wasn't anything really pathetic about it, because Beck hadn't got the boot. Reprieved at the last moment! Quite the sort of thing you read about in books, and to-day it had put the gilt edging on a jolly fine rug. And nobody would get into a row over it, because even the Beak himself had had to come to tell Beck he wasn't being sacked!

The motor-cars sounded their horns, and there was quite a fierce row in the station yard as the crowd began to drift forth again—to Dawson's, where they make the pork pies, to Miller's, where they have a topping soda-fountain, or even to the Cloister's, where they do the thing in first-class style.

It took Smithy and Beck and their own particular pals some time to get clear because they had to arrange a few details with the cabmen. Just casually it may be added that it was Mr. Cyrus Beck, Linky's father, who eventually paid for the lot. But the big, closed car belonging to Mr. Frayne was still standing there when Smith, Beck, Dickie Dexter, Jimmy Curtis, and one or two others wandered out, though they couldn't see who was sitting inside.

Then someone suddenly dashed across and hailed Lincoln Beck. It was Marjory Frayne,

"Oh, Linky! Wasn't it splendid! You made a topping speech! Oh, how do you do, Captain Smith? You know who really did put the white mice in that box? I did, of course! And you wouldn't blame me one little bit if you'd heard the tales some of the governors told about the tricks they played when they were boys! I'd like to tell you——"

"Come and have tea with us, Marjory!" Linky suggested, because he felt there ought to be some sort of celebration for an affair such as this. "We're going to the Cloisters——"

"I'll come!" Marjory said. "I'd better not go through the town with you, or Roger will kick up a fuss, and people will be writing to the papers about it, and saying that such things didn't happen when they were young. They were ever such a lot better, or a lot worse, than we can ever hope to be. But I'm coming to the Cloisters! I'll see you there!"

And she did. It was a first-rate little party which gathered there to celebrate Linky's farewell and return. Mr. Roger Blunt had drifted back in the car with Mr. Frayne, and you can take it for granted that he enjoyed the show just as much as anybody else.

Nor was Jolly Roger afraid that this sort of thing would upset the bright lads under his care, because he would soon bring them back to earth with a bump if they began to show signs of too much excitement, or got any wrong notions that life at Katie's meant anything else but hard work!

No; they could finish to-day out with such peaceful amusements as they desired. To-morrow——

When the morrow came the joke about the white mice and the glorious rag which had taken place over the great send-off to Lincoln Beck had both taken their rightful place in the history of things which had happened. There was no fuss and no excitement on the morrow.

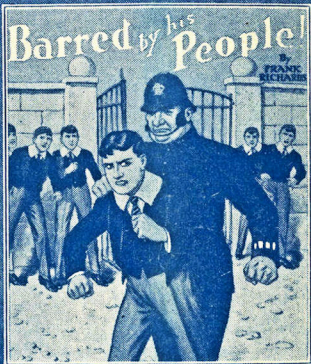
Even Linky's final interview with Roger over the affair was quite a tame business.

"You are inclined to butt in, to use your own expression, a little too much, Beck," Roger said. "On several occasions during this term you have butted in, and I must ask you to be a little more careful in the future. You should have kept your appointment at four-thirty with me yesterday and waited for my final decision."

Linky was ticked off, quietly crushed back into his proper place. He wasn't a giddy hero, or anything like that. On the other hand, he was certainly no longer the butt of the school. He was just Beck major of the Transitus Form at St. Katie's, who was being mildly reprov'd for butting in too much on other people's plans! That was Roger's little way, and even Linky Beck would cease to butt in too much by the time Roger had finished with him!



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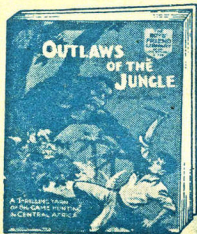
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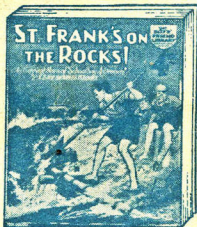
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