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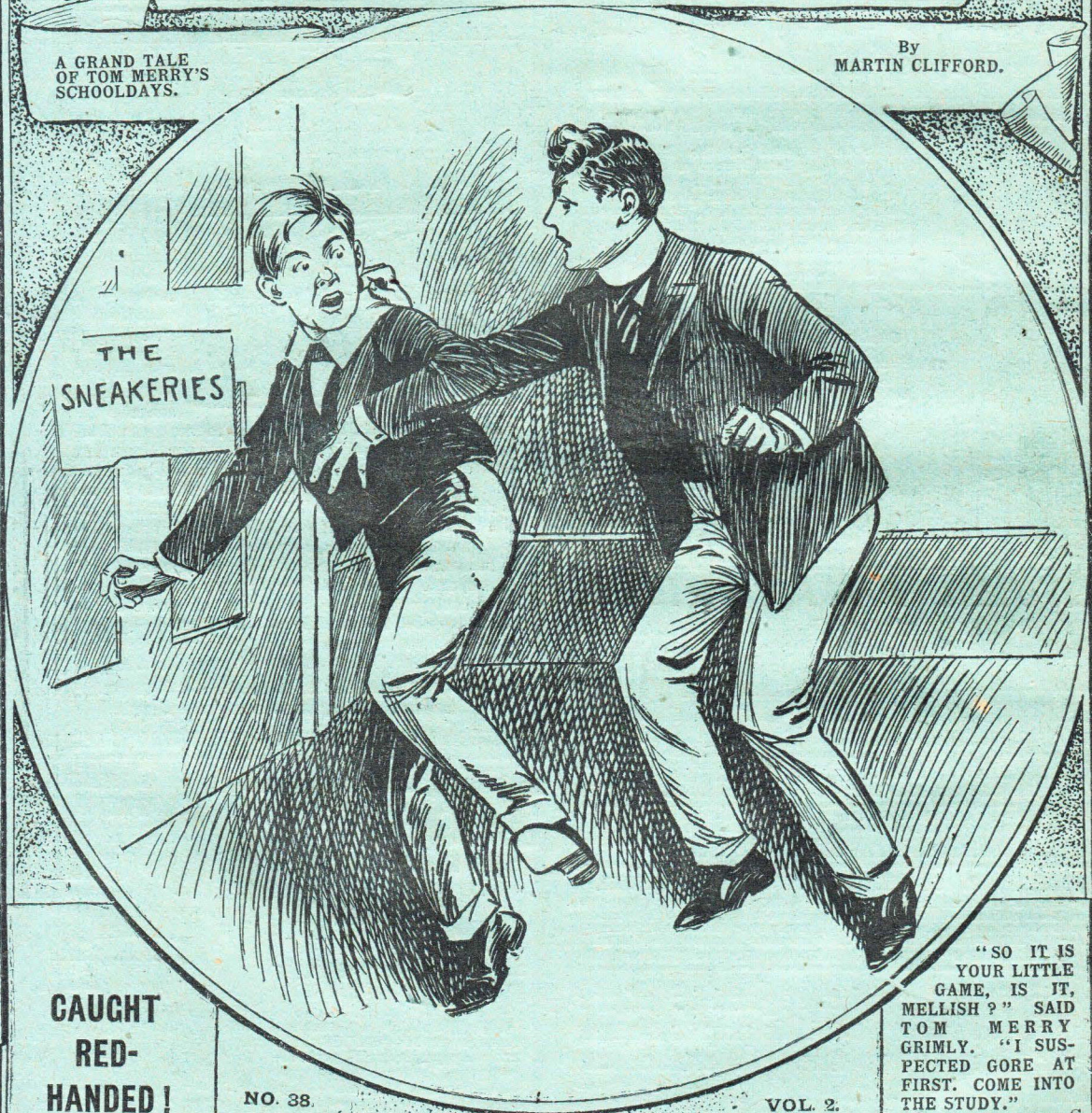
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**A SNEAK!**

A GRAND TALE  
OF TOM MERRY'S  
SCHOOLDAYS.

By  
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



**CAUGHT  
RED-  
HANDED!**

NO. 38.

VOL. 2.

"SO IT IS  
YOUR LITTLE  
GAME, IS IT,  
MELLISH?" SAID  
TOM MERRY  
GRIMLY. "I SUS-  
PECTED GORE AT  
FIRST. COME INTO  
THE STUDY."

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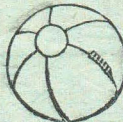
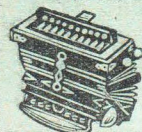
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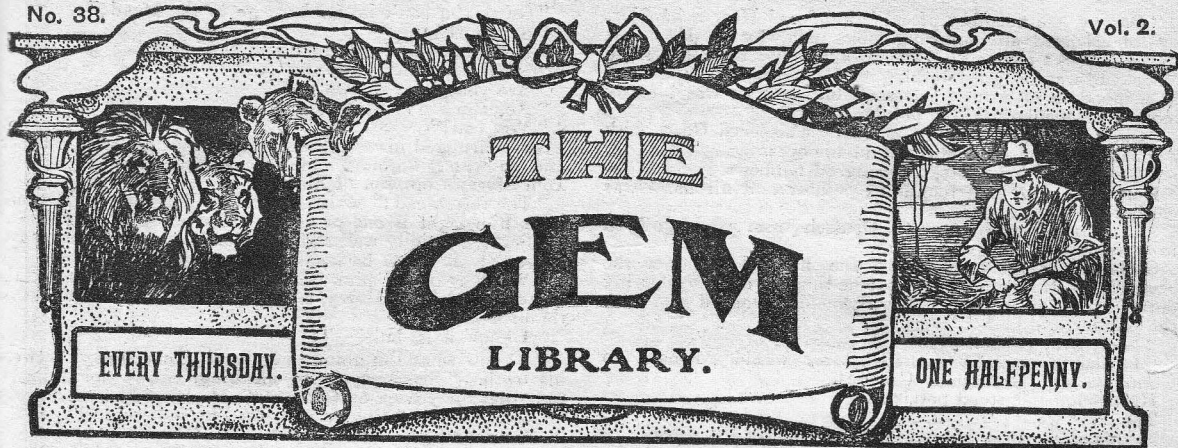
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# A SNEAK!

A Splendid Complete Tale of Tom Merry's Schooldays.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER I.

### Tom Merry Speaks Out!

**H**ERR SCHNEIDER was growing exasperated. There was nothing new or surprising in that.

The boys of the Shell at St. Jim's frequently succeeded in exasperating Herr Schneider before the German lesson was over.

Tom Merry gave him trouble sometimes. Tom was one of the brightest boys in the class, but Herr Schneider was usually down upon him, and so Tom sometimes indulged himself in the pastime of ragging the German master. But on the present occasion it was not Tom Merry who was at fault. Herr Schneider was trying to drive his beautiful Deutch into the head of Gibbins, the slowest-witted boy in the Shell, and he was finding it a thankless task.

"Dis class," said Herr Schneider, with exasperated deliberation—"dis class is te most stupid that I nefer saw pefore. Mein Gott! Vill you nefer understand after? It is like trying to teach te blocks of wood. Gore, you vas laugh!"

"I, sir? Certainly not, sir!" said Gore, who never had any conscientious scruples about departing from the straight path of veracity.

"Tat vas vun untroot, Gore. You vill take fifty lines of Schiller."

"But, sir—"

"Silence! Tom Merry, you vill read out te line vich I write on te plackboard."

"Yes, sir!"

Herr Schneider took his chalk and wrote. The class grinned at one another when his back was turned. They took a wicked delight in seeing the German master growing more and more exasperated, so long as he stopped short of using his pointer upon their knuckles.

"The old duffer is getting quite wild," Gore remarked, in a whisper to Gibbins, who sat next to him. "He'll have

to lick somebody soon, to let off steam, or he'll explode, I think."

"He, he, he!" said Gibbins.

Herr Schneider's head popped round.

"You vas find te lesson a laughing-matter, Gibbins, hein! I tink tat perhaps you not so stupid as you pretend to be. Ve shall see."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Gibbins. "I'm in for it now. He's been picking on me all through the lesson because I can't get on to his silly Deutch. I believe the brute's concocting that sentence on the blackboard for my special benefit."

"Very likely," said Gore comfortingly; "and it's a jolly long one, too, and has some beastly long words in it."

"I say, you'll tell me what it means, if he asks me, won't you?" whispered Gibbins.

"H'm, perhaps!"

"That's the worst of old Schneider," murmured Tom Merry to Manners and Lowther, who were on either side of him. "The more you rag him the harder he makes the lesson. He's putting down some stuff there difficult enough for the Fifth. He seems to forget that we're only tender young lambs in the Shell."

Herr Schneider finished his scrawling and laid down his chalk. He turned round with a frowning brow, and his little eyes glistening behind his spectacles.

"Now, Merry!"

Tom Merry stood up and looked at the line written on the board. As it happened, Tom Merry was not only a bright scholar, but he had a taste for German literature, and frequently read Goethe and Schiller for his own pleasure, and so he was seldom found wanting in the German class.

"Es reden und traumen die Menschen viel von bessern kunstigen Tagen," read out Tom Merry from the sprawling characters, without a fault.

"Goot! You may sit down, Merry. Gibbins, you vill kindly construe tat line pefore."

Gibbins scratched his head. Gibbins shifted in his seat. Gibbins turned red and pale. But Gibbins did not speak.

"Did you vas hear vat I say mit meinself, Gibbins?"

"Ye-e-e-es, sir!"

"Den vy you not obey after?" thundered Herr Schneider. Gibbons fixed an imploring look upon Gore. He knew that Gore was clever at German, and could help him if he chose. It was no good talking to Herr Schneider; he was in a mood to be utterly unreasonable, and he was already looking on his desk for his pointer.

"Shall I tell you what it means?" whispered Gore, with a gleam of ill-natured mischief in his eyes.

"Yes, do, please, Gore," murmured Gibbons.

Herr Schneider had found his pointer and his hand was closing upon it.

"It means, 'I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany,'" whispered Gore.

Gibbons was too simple and too flurried to notice the absurdity of Gore's information; he thought only of blurring out the translation before Herr Schneider reached him with the pointer.

"Now, den, Gibbons; you vill construe, or—"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir!" exclaimed Gibbons.

Herr Schneider stood petrified.

The class were petrified, too, for a moment. Tom Merry, who was at the desk behind Gore, had heard his whisper to Gibbons, but had never dreamed that Gibbons would be stupid enough to take it seriously. Only for a moment were the boys dumbfounded. Then a yell of laughter went up that rang through the Form-room.

"Mein Gott!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Vat—vat did you say, Gibbons?"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir."

"You—you dare to speak so to your master, Gibbons! You—you—"

Words failed Herr Schneider, and he stood trembling with rage and glaring at the unfortunate dunce of the class.

Gibbons was dismayed and astounded. He had no idea of the trick Gore had played upon him, and he couldn't understand why Herr Schneider had lost his temper.

"You say, Gibbons—you haf said—tat—tat—"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir."

"Mein Gott! Stand out here, Gibbons!"

The dunce of the Shell rose reluctantly.

"What—what for, sir?" he stammered.

"Stand out here, ain't it!" roared Herr Schneider.

Gibbons reluctantly left his place and stood out before the class. The boys were almost in convulsions. Those who had heard Gore's whisper to Gibbons knew the joke, while the rest imagined that Gibbons was deliberately "cheeking" the German master; or else that he had taken leave of his senses.

"Now, Gibbons, I will deal mit you. You speak of your master as 'old shosser,' do you? You vish he go pack mit himself to Shermany after? Mein Gott! If te class not stop laughing, I detain efery poy here for vun hour dis afternoon."

The almost hysterical merriment of the Shell died away. It was a half-holiday that day, and a fine winter day. They didn't want to be detained, but Herr Schneider was quite capable of carrying out his threat in his present mood.

Tom Merry leaned over the desk and whispered to Gore.

"You've got Gibbons into a fearful row, Gore."

Gore was looking rather pale. He had acted in a spirit of ill-natured mischief, which was his amiable way. Now that trouble had come of it, he wished he had not taken such an advantage of Gibbons's simplicity. But it was too late to think of that now.

"Shut up!" he whispered.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

He saw that Gore had no intention of owning up, but meant to leave the unfortunate Gibbons to bear the brunt of the incensed master's anger.

"Gibbons, I not deal mit you meinsel after. I vill send you to te doctor. You vill take dis note and vait. Such insolence is not for me to deal mit pefore."

"But I—sir—I—I—"

"Silence!"

Gibbons relapsed into worried silence. The German master rapidly scrawled a note for the delinquent to take in to the headmaster of St. Jim's. It was pretty certain that that note would get Gibbons a flogging—merely a caning would not meet the case. Tom Merry exchanged glances with Manners and Lowther. Both were looking wrathful. For Gibbons to take the licking was too bad, and any decent fellow would have owned up to the joke at once. But it was evidently Gore's intention not to do so. Taking advantage of Herr Schneider being busy with the note, Tom Merry reached across and tapped Gore on the shoulder. Gore shook his hand off savagely. Tom bent forward and whispered:

"Gore, you can't let Gibbons go to the Head!"

"Shut up!"

"You know he'll get an awful licking."

"Mind your own business!"

"Are you going to own up?"

"No, I'm not!"

"You cad!"

Gore shrugged his shoulders. Hard words break no bones, and he was not going to take a flogging for the sake of Tom Merry's opinion of him.

"The rotten cad!" whispered Monty Lowther. "It would serve him right if one of us gave him away to Schneider."

"Serve him jolly well right, rather!" said Manners. "But we can't! It would be sneaking."

"What is it of him, then, letting Gibbons go to the Head?" said Tom Merry, his eyes flashing. "That's worse than sneaking."

"I know it is, but—"

"I know what I'm going to do," said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "Sneaking or no sneaking, Gore's not going to play that dirty trick on Gibbons!" He leaned forward again.

"Gore, are you going to own up like a decent chap?"

"Confound you, hold your tongue!"

"Are you going to own up?"

"No; I tell you."

"Very well. If you don't own up before Gibbons leaves the room I shall do it for you," said Tom Merry, between his teeth.

Gore started.

"You won't! You daren't sneak! The whole Form would cut you!" he muttered savagely.

"I'll risk that! Mind, you'll own up, or I'll stand up and explain to Schneider."

"Sneak!"

Tom Merry's cheek burned red at the taunt, but it did not alter his decision. He had never been called a sneak before, and the bitter word struck deep. But he felt that he was doing right. He had not much time to think. But to see the fool of the class suffer for the fault of one who should never have taken advantage of his simplicity—that was what Tom Merry could not stand.

"Dere is te note," exclaimed Herr Schneider, handing it to Gibbons. "Take tat to te headmaster, you insolent poy. No; you need not gry here, you vill haf reason to gry when te doctor reads tat note."

Gibbons' eyes were filling. He took the note and started for the door. Tom Merry gave one more fierce whisper to Gore:

"Are you going to speak?"

Gore did not move.

The hero of the Shell rose to his feet. His face was pale now, but determined. The eyes of the whole class were upon him, but he never faltered.

"Stop, Gibbons!" Gibbons stopped and turned round in sheer surprise. Herr Schneider stared at Tom Merry. "If you please, sir, may I explain—"

"Vat do you vish to explain, Merry?"

"Gibbons was not to blame, sir. He thought he was constructing that sentence on the board when he said what he did!"

Herr Schneider glared at the speaker through his spectacles.

"Ach! So tat vas anoder of your little jokes, Merry! You tink you make me pelieve tat Gibbons tink I write such a sentence for te class, hein?"

"He was told so, sir."

"Ach! I tink I see—you tell him so, ain't it, for vun shoke mit yourself?"

"No, sir, I did not tell him so."

"Den who vas tell him?" exclaimed Herr Schneider angrily.

Tom Merry was silent.

"If tis is not vun of your little jokes, Merry, tell me who told Gibbons tat tat sentence mean such nonsense."

Tom Merry looked at Gore. The latter kept his eyes fixed on the desk before him.

"Answer me, Merry! I will not question Gibbons, because tat poy is too stupid as nefer vas. If vat you say is true, who vas te rascal?"

"It was Gore, sir."

It was out now. Tom Merry had had no alternative. Gore started, in spite of all, he had not expected Tom Merry to speak his name. There was a buzz in the class, and some of Gore's friends ventured upon a faint hiss.

"Gore, stand out pefore te class after."

Gore, scowling like a demon, left his seat. There was little need to inquire now, for his look showed plainly enough that Tom Merry's assertion was correct. The German master fixed a stern and grim glance upon him.

"So, Gore, you vas put dose vords into Gibbons's mout, yas you, after?"

Gore was sullenly silent.

"Answer me!" thundered Herr Schneider. "Did you fell Gibbons to say tat?"

"I—I—I—"

"Yes or no?"

"It was a joke, sir," stammered Gore. "I didn't really think he would say it to you, sir."

Herr Schneider's brow set grimly.

"Very well, Gore, I tink you must be taught tat it is not correct to allude to your master as a shosser, even for a joke. Gibbons, you may return me tat note, and go pack to your seat. Gore, do you prefer to be bunished by me, or sent to te headmaster?"

"By you, sir, please," said Gore hastily. "But—but I—"

"Tat is enough. You vill hold out your hands—six each."

Gore received six on each hand from the pointer. It was not so much for the joke that Herr Schneider caned him, as for so nearly causing an innocent boy to be flogged. For that, George Gore certainly deserved a licking—and he had it. He was wriggling with pain when Herr Schneider had finished making play with the pointer.

"Now go pack to your seat, Gore. You vill copy tat line on te plackboard, and write it out two hundred times this afternoon before. You vill stay in te class-room mit your-self after. Go pack to your place! Not a vord!"

Gore resumed his seat with a face like a thundercloud. He gave Tom Merry a glance of hatred, which did not trouble the hero of the Shell much. His hands were paining a great deal, for the pointer was hard—and Herr Schneider had not laid the blows on lightly. But the master's eye was upon him now, and he was not permitted to be sullen or slack during the remainder of the lesson. In fact, Herr Schneider gave Gore his most particular attention, and he led him on a personally-conducted tour among German conjugations, till the cad of the Shell felt as if his head were turning round.

He was glad enough when the lesson was over. So was Herr Schneider. A half-holiday gave the German master a good opportunity of getting to the experiments in the school laboratory which were the delight of his heart. He dismissed the class, with obvious relief to himself and them. As Tom Merry went out with his chums, Gore passed close to him.

"Sneak!" hissed Gore in his ear.

Tom coloured, and his teeth clicked together. But he walked on with Manners and Lowther without replying. He could make allowances for Gore's feelings at that moment. Gore was feeling very sore—in a double sense. But the word was taken up by others, and it rang again in Tom Merry's ear as he went out into the quadrangle:

"Sneak!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### Tom Merry Loses His Temper.

"SAY, deah boys!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House at St. Jim's, who spoke. He came up to Blake and Herries in the quadrangle, looking as if he had heard news.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake. "Are you coming to football practice?"

"Yaas—wathah! But—"

"Then go and bury that eyeglass, and get into your things."

Arthur Augustus screwed the offending eyeglass into his eye, and took a lofty survey of Jack Blake through it.

"My dear fellow, pway get off that subject. I weally wish you would not make so many wude wemarks in weward to my monacle."

"Oh, blow your monacle! Go, and get ready!"

"But I've somethin' to tell you, deah boys."

"What's the great news? Have you thought out a new design in waistcoats? Have you invented a plan for introducing all the colours of the rainbow into a single garment?"

"Pway do not be personal, Blake!" said D'Arcy, who prided himself very much upon his fancy waistcoats. "This news concerns Tom Mewwy."

"Don't say he's got any new ideas. We're fed up with them."

"Not at all. It's what they're saying about him."

"Eh! What's that?" exclaimed Blake, instantly serious. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House, might be at war with the chums of the Shell, and they generally were, but at the bottom there was a real liking and respect on both sides, and at the suggestion

of anybody "saying things" about Tom Merry, Blake fired up at once.

"What have they been saying, Gussy?"

"Some of the fellows are calling him a sneak, deah boy."

"What rot! That's the last name that should be stuck on Tom Merry."

"Yaas, wathah, but that's what they're sayin'—Mellish, and Gore, you know. Gore's detained for the afternoon at German, because Tom Mewwy told the German master somethin' about him, you know. So the chaps are sayin'!"

"Rot!" said Herries.

"Rank rot!" assented Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I was inclined to chawactewise the statement as wank wot myself," remarked Arthur Augustus, "but Goah is in the class-room all on his lonesome, swottin' away at Schillah, and so it looks as if there might be somethin' in the thing, you know."

"We'll look into this," said Blake. "If the fellows started talking rot of that kind, Tom Merry would let it pass without a word. He'd be too proud to say anything. We'll look into the matter and set it right."

"What about the football?" said Herries.

"The football can wait. I'm going to see Gore. You can come with me if you like."

"Righto, I'm coming!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of the Fourth proceeded at once to the class-room where the unlucky cad of the Shell was sitting at his lonely desk. He looked up with a scowl as they came in. Blake had ascertained in passing that the German master was in the laboratory, and so the visit to the detained boy was not likely to be noticed.

"Hallo, Gore, I hear you're kept in!" said Blake. "What's the row?"

"I'm kept in, that's all!" scowled Gore. "And all through your precious friend Tom Merry. He sneaked of me."

"Liar!" said Blake cheerfully.

Gore scowled, and dropped his eyes to his work again. Blake came closer to his desk.

"Now, you may as well tell us the truth, Gore. It may have been through Tom Merry that you were detained, but he never sneaked of you or anybody else."

"Well, we don't enjoy your company enough to stay," snarled Gore. "Ask any fellow in the Shell. Get out and leave me alone."

"Well, we don't enjoy your company enough to stay," said Herries. "You're an ill-conditioned pig, Gore. I expect it was all your own fault!"

"Yaas, wathah! There is no doubt that Gore is an ill-conditioned pig," remarked D'Arcy. "He spilt some gwavy on my waistcoat yesterday on purpose, and a fellah who would do that is capable of anythin'."

The chums of the Fourth, considerably puzzled, quitted the class-room. Gore continued his weary scribbling from Schiller. In the quadrangle, the juniors encountered Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House. Figgins stopped them.

"I say, what's this they're saying about Tom Merry?" he exclaimed. "It can't be possible that he has been sneaking."

"Of course, it isn't," said Blake promptly. "Have you come this way to look for a thick ear, Figgins?"

"Pax!" exclaimed Figgins, grinning. "We don't want to row you now—we're just going down to the footer. French told us, he says Tom Merry gave Gore away to the German master."

"And so he did!" exclaimed French, joining them, "I heard him!"

"We all know about it," said Mellish. "Tom Merry stood up and peached on Gore, and got him detained for the afternoon. In my opinion the fellow should be cut."

"Hadn't you better tell him so," suggested Blake, with a grin.

"Yaas, wathah! I should weally like to wemark the shape of Mellish's nose aftah he had told Tom Mewwy so, deah boys."

"I think he ought to be ragged for it," said Mellish hotly. "He won't explain, either. One of the fellows asked him to explain, and he punched his nose."

"He did—did he?" said Blake. "Well, I dare say it served him right."

"There the bounder is now!" exclaimed French. "Let's make him explain. Not that there's much to explain—he gave Gore away right enough."

The group of juniors turned towards Tom Merry, who was coming out of the School House. Tom's face had lost something of its usual sunny expression. He had acted rightly, as he believed, in the class-room that morning. But there was a great deal of feeling shown on the subject, hostile to

him. All who had been his enemies, open or secret, had seen their chance now.

"I say, Merry!" called out French. "Stop a minute, will you?"

Tom Merry stopped. A steely look came into his eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"You sneaked about Gore this morning. We want—"

Biff! Tom Merry's left came out like lightning, and the astonished French found himself lying on his back in the quadrangle.

"Is that what you want?" asked Tom Merry icily. "If so, you've only got to get up and have some more. There's lots."

French had plenty of pluck. He jumped up and went for Tom Merry like a bull. But he was no match for the hero of the Shell. Tom let out with right and left, and French went down again with a bump.

Tom Merry looked at him, and as he did not rise in a hurry, he turned his glance upon the silent group of juniors.

"That's enough for French," he said. "That's my answer to anybody who speaks to me as he did."

His glance roved over the group challengingly. Blake and Figgins exchanged glances. This hot and hasty temper was not much like Tom Merry. But the boy had been galled to the quick by the accusation of "sneaking," and his usually pleasant and sunny temper was gone for the time.

"All right, old chap, keep your wool on!" said Blake slowly. "Nobody here has accused you of being a sneak so far."

"French did!" said Tom Merry.

"You didn't give him much time to accuse you of anything. We wouldn't believe a thing like that of you if we could help it. But there's a lot being said, and I think you might as well explain, so that your friends can stand up for you."

"I don't want anybody to stand up for me," said Tom sharply. "If I have any friends, they know I am not a sneak, and that's enough without talk."

"I know, but they are saying—"

"I don't care what they are saying. You can think what you like. If you think I'm a sneak, think so, and be hanged! I don't care a rap for any of you!"

And Tom Merry put his hands into his pockets and walked away.

"My only hat!" murmured Blake. "I've never seen Tom Merry in a tantrum before. But if this isn't a first-class, double-back-action tantrum, I'm a giddy Dutchman!"

"It's true—plain enough!" said Mellish. "I always said Tom Merry was a—"

"Oh, you shut up!" said Figgins.

And the gleam in Figgys' eye warned Mellish that he had better do so. He walked away with French, who was rubbing his nose ruefully.

"Well, this is a rotten business," said Figgins. "I should hate to think badly of Tom Merry, but I think he might explain. No good flying into a tantrum, that I can see, and refusing to say a word on the subject."

"Not at all, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with an air of superior knowledge. "I can perfectly understand the feelin' of a fellah of honah on such a mattah. He feels feahfully insulted at anybody thinkin' for a moment that he could be guilty of a dishonourable action, and it becomes a question of dig not to explain. Undah the same circs, I weally think I should act in the same mannah."

"There's something in what Gussy says," remarked Kerr, the Scottish partner in Figgins & Co. "But the matter ought to be thrashed out, all the same."

"Yaas—wathah! Let us thwash it out, deah boys!"

"I say, you kids!" exclaimed Jimson of the Shell, coming up, "you're wanted in the Form-room after tea. We're going to look into this matter of Tom Merry and Gore, and see the rights of it. All the Shell and the Fourth are going to be there."

"Good wheeze!" said Blake heartily. "We'll be there!"

"Yaas—wathah!"

CHAPTER 3.

Herr Schneider's Loss.

"MEIN GOTT! I tink tat I have te ting after!"

Herr Schneider's eyes were blazing with excitement behind his spectacles. For two solid hours he had been busy in the laboratory, and fellows who had looked in had seen him immersed in the midst of mysterious smells, oblivious to everything but the experiment he was engaged upon.

Now he was jotting down something in pencil upon a fragment of paper, the first that came to hand, and his looks showed that he considered that he had made a discovery.

"Tat is all right pefore," he murmured. "How many times haf I made tat experiment, ain't it, and haf never hit upon it exactly. Now I haf write down the proportions, I nefer make vun mistake again. It is vun great nuisance tat I haf te pad memory, but now tat I have it written down, eferying in te yard is peautiful, as te English say."

And, with a look of the most supreme satisfaction, the German master thrust the paper into his pocket, and then pulled out his handkerchief to mop his brow.

The experiment, whatever it was, was completed to his satisfaction. He proceeded to wash his hands, and they required some washing, too, for his fingers were deeply stained by the chemicals he had been using.

"Mein Gott! I haf succeeded at last, and te peautiful dye vich I have invented vill soon pe known all over te world!" he murmured. "It is a great triumph of science, and Otto Friedrich Schneider alone knows te great secret."

He left the laboratory. As he went away he remembered the detained boy in the Shell class-room, and he was in such a good humour that he resolved to take pity on Gore. He went into the class-room, and found the cad of the Shell scrawling wearily away.

"Gore," said Herr Schneider—Gore looked up sullenly—"Gore, you haf been a pad poy, but I vill let you off te remainder of your imposition."

George Gore's face brightened considerably. He rose with alacrity from his desk.

"Thank you, Herr Schneider!"

"I haf succeeded," said Herr Schneider, beaming upon Gore, "in ascertaining the correct formula, and soon te name of Otto Friedrich Schneider vill be— But, of course, you do not understand. But on such an occasion as te present I cannot punish even a pad boy. You vas forgiven, Gore, but don't do it again."

"Yes, sir," said Gore, wondering what the German master was driving at, and what had put him into such an unusually good temper.

Herr Schneider turned to the door. He drew out his handkerchief as he went to the door, and a fragment of paper fluttered to the floor. Gore noticed it, but he was too bitter against the German master, in spite of his pardon, to draw his attention to it.

Herr Schneider did not notice his loss. He went out of the class-room, his fat face beaming with the satisfaction he was feeling. Gore picked up the paper and looked at it curiously. It was scribbled on in pencil in German calligraphy, and the words—most of them abbreviations—were like Sanskrit to Gore. But a flash came into his eyes as he looked at the incomprehensible document.

"That's what he was speaking about. It's a giddy recipe."

Gore thrust the paper hastily into his pocket. Like all the boys of the School House, he knew that the German master carried on experiments in the school laboratory and in his study, the secret of which he did not confide to anybody at the school.

His unusual good humour and satisfaction that afternoon, and his reference to having discovered the "correct formula," showed Gore what a value this fragment of paper had in the German master's eyes. The fruits of his experiments were written down here, and the paper was in Gore's hands.

"My hat!" murmured Gore. "Here's the chance I want. I'll make him sit up, the old brute! I'll teach him to detain me for a half-holiday! I shouldn't wonder if he forgets the thing, whatever it is, now he's lost the recipe. He's got a memory like a sieve for everything but impositions. My hat! I'll lead him a dance for this!"

And Gore put his books under his arm, and quitted the class-room. He met Herr Schneider coming back along the passage. The German master's look and manner showed that he had already discovered his loss. He stopped as he saw Gore.

"Gore, mein poy, have you seen a paper lying about?"

"Yes, sir," said Gore.



POLLIE GREEN

IS IN

This Week's

"Girls' Friend."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Herr made a gesture of relief and joy.

"Vere, Gore? Tell me vere instantly?"

"In Mr. Railton's study, sir."

"Vat! You mistake. It could not possibly be in Mr. Railton's study!" said Herr Schneider, shaking his head.

"Yes, sir, it was. Mr. Railton was reading it, sir."

The German master gave a jump.

"Reading it—reading it! Are you sure, Gore?"

"Certainly, sir! I saw him."

The German master turned to stride off to the house-master's study, and Gore grinned. Glad enough he would have been to see Herr Schneider rush off to Mr. Railton in quest of his missing paper, and demand it at the house-master's hands; but Herr Schneider was suspicious of Gore. He turned back.

"Ven did you see dis?" he demanded. "It is not many minutes since I lost mein baper. Ven did you see Mr. Railton reading tat baper, Gore?"

"This morning, sir."

"Ten it could not have been mein baper!" exclaimed the German angrily.

"You haven't told me what paper you mean, sir," said Gore. "You said a paper. The paper Mr. Railton was reading was the 'Daily Mail,' sir."

The German master's brows contracted darkly.

"Gore, I believe tat tat is a deliberate misunderstanding. Te baper vich I have lost is a small piece of paper written on in pencil before."

"Oh, is it, sir? You didn't say so. If you had asked me if I had seen that, I should have told you no at once."

"Den you have not seen such a piece of baper? It is fery annoying, because I had it in my bocket a few minutes ago, and I must haf dropped it in dis passage or in te room. Look for it for me, Gore. Your eyes are petter tan mine."

"Certainly, sir!" said Gore, with a silent chuckle.

He accompanied the German master along the passage back to the class-room. They searched and peered in every corner, and then made an examination of the class-room, but in vain, which was not surprising, considering that the missing paper was buttoned up inside Gore's jacket all the time.

Herr Schneider was deeply troubled, that was evident. Gore saw it, and was pleased. The paper was more valuable than he had thought. While the document containing the great secret was lost, Gore held the German's peace of mind at his mercy.

"Perhaps you left it in the laboratory, sir," suggested Gore, the examination of the class-room having failed to produce the missing paper.

"It is possible. I will see."

Herr Schneider hurried away. Gore chuckled, and went his own way. It was close on tea-time, and such of the boys as were not having tea in their own studies were crowding into the hall.

"Hallo, Gore!" exclaimed Wayne. "So you've finished?"

"Old Schneider let me off."

"Did he? Unusually nice of him, I must say."

"He was in a specially good temper about something, I think," said Gore carelessly.

"I say, we want you in the Form-room after tea. There's a meeting of the juniors of the School House to see into this affair between you and Tom Merry."

"All right!" said Gore viciously. "Tom Merry sneaked about me, and got me into that row, and I'll tell him so to his face before the whole Form!"

"Well," said Wayne, who was in the Fourth, "I don't know much about it, but we're going to see into the matter. It isn't much like Merry, but you never know."

They went in to tea. Meanwhile, Herr Schneider had searched the laboratory in vain. He made a trip along the passage again, and had another look in the class-room.

Then he looked in his study, and then he gave it up. He was in a state bordering upon distraction now. The formula he had written upon the paper was the result of a long and difficult experiment, which he might not be able to repeat with success.

Besides, the valuable secret—valuable in the eyes of the German, at least—was at the mercy of whomsoever found the paper.

The German master finally rushed off to Mr. Railton's study. The master of the School House was there, and he looked in surprise at Herr Schneider's flushed, excited face.

In a few words the German master explained the facts. Mr. Railton listened sympathetically. He knew that Herr Schneider believed himself to be on the track of a great chemical discovery, and whether his belief was well-founded or not, the loss of the paper was equally serious to an enthusiastic savant.

"Dear me," said Mr. Railton, "this is very unfortunate! But the paper will surely be found, Herr Schneider. I will send for the house prefects, and instruct them to inform the

whole house of your loss, and the paper will certainly be found and brought to you."

It was all that could be done. The house prefects received their instructions, and ere long the whole School House knew that the German master had lost a paper written upon in German, which was a sufficient description for its identification.

But no one came forward with it, and though some of the juniors were stimulated to a search by the offer of a reward of five shillings to the finder, the paper remained missing. Gore chuckled when he saw the youngsters hunting through the rooms and passages. The paper was in his inside pocket, and safe enough till he chose that it should see the light again.

## CHAPTER 4.

### The Form Meeting.

"MERRY!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Come into mein study, mein poy."

Tom Merry obediently entered the German master's study. He wondered what was wanted. He had been passing to go up to his own quarters when Herr Schneider called him in. He could not think of any recent delinquency which might have come to the German master's ears.

Herr Schneider was looking awfully serious. He stood aside for Tom Merry to pass in, and then closed the door. The next step would have been to take down a cane, but he did not do so. He stood looking at Tom Merry with the gravity of an owl.

Tom Merry was surprised at first, and then a little alarmed. He wondered vaguely whether Herr Schneider had a screw loose somewhere.

"You wanted to speak to me, sir," he ventured at last.

"Ja, mein poy," said the German master, "I wish to speak mit you meinself after. You vas a pad poy sometimes, Merry, ain't it—"

"I hope not, sir!" said Tom demurely.

"Not as pad as some of tem," said Herr Schneider. "Not like Gore or Mellish. But you are as full of mischief as te monkey in te trees. You play dricks on your master sometime. Merry, I haf bunished you many times."

"I know you have, sir," said Tom, his wonder growing.

"But I not tink you are te kind of poy to injure your master because of tat, hein?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Den," said Herr Schneider persuasively, "if you haf taken mein baper you vill return him to me before, and noting shall be said about te matter. You play a drick, but I forgive him if you return me te baper."

"What paper, sir?"

"Te baper vich I have lost mit meinself, vich contain te formula—vat you call te recipe, Merry."

"Oh, I know what you mean, sir. Some of the fellows are looking for it in the corridors."

"Ja, ja! Merry, if you have taken tat baper—"

"But I haven't, sir," said Tom Merry, turning red.

"Why should you think I have taken it? I had never heard of its existence till the prefects told us it was lost."

"And you have not seen it, Merry?" asked Herr Schneider, looking at him intently.

"No, sir. If I had found it, I should have brought it to you at once."

"I pelieve you, Merry. Mein poy, tat is a most important baper, more important tan you can understand. It is ein great trouble to me to lose him. I tink to meinself, tat Merry is te great joker of te house, and perhaps he steal him as a joke on his master, not tinkng tat te matter so serious."

"I understand, sir. I might have picked up the paper for a joke, if I had seen it," said Tom Merry frankly; "but I should have returned it to you undamaged, sir. But, as it happens, I never saw it or heard of it till an hour ago."

"I pelieve you, Merry. You vas a mischievous poy, but you nefer tell vun lie. But I trust to you, Merry, if you find te baper to bring it to me."

"If I find it I shall certainly return it to you, sir."

"Thank you, mein poy. Tat is all. You may go. But vunce more, remember tat tat baper is of te greatest importance, and I shall have no beace of mind till it is restored to me."

"I will remember, sir."

And Tom Merry quitted the study, rather relieved that the incident had ended so amicably. His little talks with the German master were not usually in so friendly a strain.

Tom Merry had had many little rubs with Herr Schneider, but he had a generous heart, and he was really concerned for the loss that so sorely troubled the German. He would have taken a great deal of trouble to find the missing paper,

had it been possible, and restore it to its owner; but he had not the faintest idea where to look for it.

As he left the German master's study, French, of the Shell, came along the passage. Tom was rather surprised to see him there, as French belonged to the New House. French stopped and stared at him.

"You're wanted in the Form-room, Merry," he said.

"Am I," said Tom. "Who wants me, French?"

"We all do. Most of the Form are there, and a good many of the Fourth, too."

"What's going on? Is it a Form meeting?"

"Yes. Are you coming?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Tom wonderingly. He didn't know any reason why a Form meeting should have been called, and he wondered why he had not been consulted about it, as he was the head of the Shell. Still, he walked along with French to the Shell class-room.

The room was crowded. There was a buzz as Tom Merry entered with French.

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry looked round in amazement.

It was evident that the meeting had been expecting him, and in no friendly spirit, either. Boys of both Houses were there, and among the Shell members he saw his chums, Monty Lowther and Manners, who had entered a minute or two previously. They at once came towards him. Among the Fourth Formers were Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, of Study No. 6 in the School House, and Figgins & Co of the New House.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Gore. "Here's the sneak!"

Tom Merry turned crimson. He walked straight up to Gore.

"Did you call me a sneak, Gore?"

"Yes, I did," said Gore defiantly, "and so you are."

Tom Merry's right hand went up. Jimson caught his wrist and dragged it back. Tom Merry turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Nuff of that, Merry!" said Jimson decisively. "No good hitting out at Gore. You've got to answer the charge."

"What charge?"

"The charge of having sneaked to a master. The whole Form are going to look into it. That is what we're here for."

Tom Merry's lip curled disdainfully.

"And that's why French brought me here, is it?"

"Yes, it is. I don't see why you should be above answering for yourself, any more than anybody else," said French tartly. "And I tell you, Tom Merry, you're a little too previous with that punching business. If a fellow can't give any answer but a slog on the nose, it shows that he can't have much to say for himself."

"That's so!" buzzed a dozen voices.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Weally, Tom Merry, I advise you as a friend to keep your tempah. There is nothin' whatevah to be gained by flyin' into a tantum; and besides, it is so beastly ungentlemanly, don't you know, deah boy."

"If you've got anything to say to me," said Tom Merry, looking round, "say it, and have done. I haven't much time to waste over this fooling."

It was not a politic speech. The juniors did not care to have their proceedings characterised as fooling. But Tom Merry was not in a conciliatory mood just then.

"I say, Merry, don't be hasty," said Blake, aside. "The fellows have a right to know the rights of the matter, you know."

"That's it," said Figgins. "It's no earthly good riding the high horse, Merry."

Tom Merry made no reply.

"Rot!" broke out Monty Lowther. "Most of us heard the affair ourselves, and know why Tom Merry spoke out to old Schneider. I'd have done the same myself."

"So would I," said Manners, with equal warmth.

"Birds of a feather," sneered George Gore.

"You shut up!" said Blake. "I feel awfully tempted to give you one in the eye myself. You have been asking for it for a long time."

"Oh, don't start rowing!" exclaimed Jimson. "Let's get the matter settled. Stand back there, you fellows! Now, Gore, just say out plainly what you've got to say against Tom Merry."

Gore stepped forward before the expectant crowd, with his hands in his pockets, and a sneer on his sallow face.

"I say Tom Merry sneaked on me in the class this morning," he said. "He gave me away to old Schneider, and got me licked and detained for the afternoon."

"Now, Merry, what have you got to say?"

"Nothing," said Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Nothing."

"You admit—"

"I admit nothing. There are a good many fellows here who heard all that passed. They know whether I sneaked or not."

"I was there," said Monty Lowther, glaring at Gore; "I can tell you all about it, if you want to know. Gore played a dirty trick on Gibbons. He got him into a row with Schneider, and Gibbons was just going to the Head to take a flogging. Gore ought to have owned up."

"Of course he ought!" exclaimed Figgins. "A New House fellow would have owned up like a shot."

"Oh, dry up!" said Jimson. "Go on, Lowther."

"Merry asked Gore to own up, and told him he'd speak if Gore didn't. Gore wouldn't, so Merry spoke out. It wasn't sneaking. Could we sit there and let Gibbons go to the Head?"

"Gibbons! Come out, fathead!"

The dunce of the Shell came forward. He was looking very nervous. He didn't want to quarrel with Gore, neither did he wish to appear ungrateful to Tom Merry.

"Now, fathead, tell us exactly what happened," commanded Jimson.

"But you were there, Jimson," said Gibbons; "you heard it all."

"What I heard isn't evidence, duffer."

"But if you heard it all—"

"I didn't hear it all. Besides, there are many gentlemen present who were not there. You are to give your evidence in a straightforward manner, or else we shall rag you till you don't know whether you're on your head or your heels."

So Gibbons told his story, with irritating slowness and hesitation, but it all came out at last.

"Now," said Jimson, with a judicial air, "it was a funny wheeze that Gore worked off on Gibbons, there's no denying that."

"It nearly got me a flogging," said Gibbons.

"Exactly. When Gibbons got into a row, Gore ought to have stood up like a little man and made a clean breast of it."

"Oh, rot!" said Gore uneasily.

"Any decent fellow would have done so," went on Jimson.

"But, of course, that's nothing to do with Gore. He never has acted like a decent fellow."

"Look here, Jimson—"

"Shut up, and don't interrupt! Gore ought to have owned up. Who agrees with me?"

"All! All!" was the general shout.

There was not a dissentient voice in the whole crowd of juniors.

"But as he didn't own up," went on Jimson, "there arises a difficult problem. Ought Tom Merry to have given him away?"

"Yes!" "No!" "Certainly!" "Rats!"

"You don't agree, gentlemen," said Jimson. "Let us sum up, and don't interrupt an honourable judge in the discharge of his duty. Gore ought to have owned up, and didn't, therefore Gore acted like a sneak. Is that agreed?"

"Yes!" "Certainly!" "Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! But ought Tom Merry to have given him away? Gibbons was going to take a licking that properly belonged to Gore. Gore wouldn't do the honest thing. Now, I don't approve of giving a chap away to a master. I don't approve of setting a dangerous precedent, which might mislead youngsters belonging to the Fourth Form—"

"What's that?" roared twenty voices.

"Don't interrupt!" shouted back the Shell.

"Tom Merry's certainly created a dangerous precedent," said Jimson. "The rule is, that a fellow shall never be given away to a master, whatever the provocation. That's a jolly good rule, and Merry himself will admit it?"

"Of course I do!" said Tom Merry.

"But it was a peculiar case. To give away a fellow under ordinary circumstances is inexcusable, but under extraordinary circumstances it may, or may not be justifiable."

"My hat! He talks like a gramophone!" said Figgins.

"But the question is," went on Jimson serenely, "is a fellow to be allowed to be his own judge in a case like that, and to decide for himself whether the circumstances justify him in giving a chap away? If we admit such a thing, the door is opened—"

"Tain't," said Herries: "the door's shut. Look!"

"I'm not alluding to the Form-room door, fathead."

"What door do you mean, then?"

"A metaphorical door."

"I've never heard of such a thing, and I'm jolly certain that there isn't one in this room."

"I was speaking metaphorically," shouted the exasperated Jimson. "Can't you shut up, and not interrupt? I say that if we admit such a principle the door is opened to wholesale sneaking, as a sneak can always find some reason for sneaking. Therefore, I say that though Tom Merry



undoubtedly acted from the best motives, his action was not wrong, but injudicious."

"Well, that's a good word, anyway," said Blake.

"But it doesn't come under the head of sneaking," went on Jimson. "Sneaking is when a fellow tells a thing for his own advantage. Merry told this thing to save an innocent fellow from getting a licking belonging to a guilty one. He acted from the best motives, and, in my opinion, cannot be called a sneak."

"Hear, hear!"

"But, as I said, the precedent is a dangerous one, and so we hereby affirm the validity of the good old rule, that a fellow must not give anybody away to a master, for good reasons or bad ones, or any reasons at all."

"Hear, hear!"

"The finding of this court," went on Jimson, who was growing more and more magisterial every moment—the finding of this court, therefore, is, that Tom Merry is not a sneak, but that he acted injudiciously, owing to Gore having acted like a cad."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To sum up," concluded Jimson, "Gore acted like a cad, Tom Merry like a duffer, and Gibbons like a howling jackass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The court is now dissolved, without a stain upon its character," said Jimson, putting his hands in his pockets.

"Who's coming to the gym?"

And the meeting broke up.

Blake slapped Tom Merry on the back.

"You see, the Form has done you justice, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "It seems to me that Jimson's summing up was first-rate. That fellow ought to be a judge."

"Good!" said Figgins. "Gore comes out worst of the lot, and that's quite right. He was a rotten cad not to own up! Any New House fellow—"

"Oh, rats to you," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think—"

"No, you don't, Gussy! You can't! Come along, Kerr and Wynn!"

And Figgins & Co. marched off. Monty Lowther and Manners took an arm each of Tom Merry, and marched him off, too. The Form meeting was over, and though Jimson's decision was not exactly gratifying to any of the three persons concerned, the general opinion was that Jimson was about right.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Tom Merry Makes a Discovery.

"HALLO! What's that?"

It was Monty Lowther who uttered the exclamation, as he came into the study with Tom Merry and Manners. It was the day after the affair in the Shell class-room, and the three chums had just come in from a slogging practice on the football field. They had cleaned up, and felt in a good-humour and a glow of health, after the hard and fast exercise.

"What's what?" asked Manners.

"That!"

Monty Lowther pointed to the table. A sheet of paper was pinned to it, and on the sheet was written, in bold, black letters, with a brush:

**SNEAK!**

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of anger.

"That is meant for me!" he exclaimed. "And it is Gore's work, I suppose."

His brow grew darker as he spoke. After the Form meeting, the fellows had generally agreed that Tom Merry's action in the class-room could not be considered as sneaking, and that he was, to repeat an old joke, "not guilty, but not to do it again!" But Gore and his friends were not inclined to let the matter drop so easily.

"I'm not going to stand this," said Tom Merry, his teeth coming together hard. "I'll take it to Gore, and ask him if he wrote it."

"And if he did," said Manners, "clean up his study with him."

"We'll come and lend a hand," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, don't; I can manage it alone."

And he picked up the insulting paper, and with it in his hand walked quickly off to Gore's study. He was too angry to stand upon ceremony, and he gave the door a kick that sent it flying open, and he walked in.

Gore jumped up. A paper fluttered from his hand to the table—a paper that he had evidently been studying carefully.

"What the—what the dickens do you mean by bursting in

on a fellow like that, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed, in a shaking voice.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

Gore had turned quite pale, and his hands were trembling. There was no reason, that Tom could see, why he should be so startled.

"What's the matter with you—Hallo, what's that?" broke off Tom Merry, as his eyes fell upon the paper Gore had dropped.

Gore had made a quick catch at it, but it had fallen out of his reach, and as he leaned over to get it, Tom Merry saw it plainly.

It was a fragment of paper, discoloured in places with some chemical dye, and written upon closely in German!

"Herr Schneider's paper!"

Tom Merry rapped the words out sharply, as Gore snatched up the paper, and thrust it into his pocket.

The cad of the Shell turned red and white.

"What do you want here, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry did not reply to the question. He came to the table, and resting his hand upon the edge, looked at Gore across it.

"Is that the paper Herr Schneider lost, Gore?"

"Mind your own business."

"Then it is Herr Schneider's paper. You found it—and you are keeping it!"

"Suppose I am? It's no business of yours."

"You know how anxious he is about the loss of it!" said Tom Merry.

"I know he gave me a licking yesterday, and that my hands are smarting from it now," said Gore viciously.

Tom Merry's brow contracted.

"That's not the way to get even, by stealing his paper."

"Who says I'm stealing it?"

"You are keeping it, at all events."

"Suppose I am? Suppose I'm keeping it to lead him a dance, and make the old brute sit up?" sneered Gore. "Suppose I lead him a dance! Why shouldn't I?"

"Because it's a cad's trick, when he's so anxious about it."

"Have you come here to preach to me?"

"No," said Tom Merry, controlling his temper with difficulty, "I haven't. No good preaching to such a hopeless cad as you are, Gore. But you're not only keeping back the paper. You were trying to decipher it, when I came in."

"That's my business."

"Herr Schneider asked me to look for the paper," said Tom Merry. "I promised to take it to him if I found it."

"Well, you haven't found it."

Tom Merry was silent. Gore was certainly right there. Tom Merry hadn't found the paper. Gore had found it, and if he kept it, was it Tom Merry's business to interfere?

Tom Merry felt a real concern for the worried state of mind Herr Schneider had fallen into. But he shrank from the merest suspicion of priggish conduct. After all, was it his business? Gore certainly ought to restore the paper, but if he chose not to do so—

Gore watched him with a sneering smile.

"Then you aren't going to give the paper back to Herr Schneider, Gore?" asked Tom Merry, at last.

"Not until I choose."

"You intend to give it back some time, then?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps I shall burn it."

"You cad!"

George Gore shrugged his shoulders.

"You had better go and speak to Herr Schneider," he said. "That's quite in your line. Go and tell him I have the paper, and get me called up before the Head. It would be like you."

Tom Merry bit his lip hard.

"I don't know whether I ought to tell him," he said slowly.

"Go and tell him, then. The fellows are making out that you didn't sneak, in telling of me yesterday. But if you give me away now, I fancy there won't be any doubt about it. Go and tell Herr Schneider! I'll guarantee that no fellow in the form will ever speak to you again, if you do."

Tom Merry was silent.

"Go and tell him!" jeered Gore. "You've found it out, by coming here, spying."

"I came here," said Tom Merry, "to show you this paper, and to ask you if you placed it in my study."

He laid the sheet of notepaper on the table. Gore grinned as he read the word "SNEAK!"

"Did you put that in my study, Gore?"

"No, I didn't. It was put there, I suppose, by somebody who knows you."

"Did you write it?"

"No, I didn't," said Gore.

"Very well. If you had, I should have wiped up your study with you. I've a good mind to do so in any case."

But you're not worth it. I think you're a cad for not returning that paper to Herr Schneider. I don't know what I shall do about it yet."

And Tom Merry left the room.

As he came back towards his own study, he observed Mellish of the Fourth at the door. The door was closed, and Mellish appeared to be gumming something to the upper panel.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed, and he trod lightly, and came upon Mellish without warning. The junior had just finished gumming the paper. It stood out white on the dark oak panel, with a couple of words on it in black lettering:

"THE SNEAKERIES!"

Tom Merry's right hand fell upon Mellish's collar, as the junior stepped back to admire his handiwork. Mellish gave a jump.

He turned quite white, as he twisted his head round and saw Tom Merry. Tom smiled grimly.

"So it is your little game, is it, Mellish? I suspected Gore at first. Come into the study."

"I—I don't want to."

"I know you don't; but that doesn't make any difference, Mellish."

"It—it was only a joke, Tom Merry——"

"Of course. It's only a joke I'm going to work off on you now."

"Look here, Merry, I—I——"

"Come in, please!"

Tom Merry threw open the door. Manners and Lowther stared at him as he marched Mellish in, with an iron grip on the back of his collar.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Lowther.

"Look at that," said Tom Merry, pointing to the gummed paper on the door. "That is a kind of attention bestowed upon us by our friend Mellish. I caught him in the act."

"It—it was only a j-j-joke!"

Manners and Lowther looked grim. It was plain that they did not take the joke in a humorous way at all.

"Will you take that paper off the door, Mellish?" asked Tom Merry sweetly.

"Certainly, Merry, with pleasure!" said Mellish nervously. The gum was not yet dry, and he easily stripped the paper off the panel.

Tom Merry shut the door. He released Mellish, and laid on the table the paper he had taken to Gore's study.

"Did you write that, Mellish, and put it here?"

"No, I didn't."

"Who did, then?"

"It was Gore."

"I've just asked Gore, and he denies it. I won't take the trouble to sort out which of you is telling lies," said Tom Merry contemptuously. He tossed the paper into the fire. "But about this little notice you were putting up on our door, Mellish, there's no doubt at all."

Mellish cast a longing glance towards the door. But there was no escape for him.

"Now, when a liar is found out," said Tom Merry, "I think it is usual to make him eat his words. That's what you are going to do, Mellish."

"W-wh-what do you mean?"

"There's the words," said Tom, pointing to the sticky paper in Mellish's fingers. "You know what you've got to do."

Mellish shuddered.

"You want me to—to——"

"You've got to eat your words," said Tom blandly. "There they are." Manners and Lowther chuckled, but Tom's face was quite serious. "Eat away, Mellish, or take a hiding, whichever you like." He took out his watch. "I give you one minute."

Mellish made a wild break for the door; but Manners and Lowther collared him in a twinkling, and dragged him back. Mellish began to whine.

"Look here, Merry, it—it was only a joke. I——"

"I'm afraid we're awfully dull, and can't see the humour of a joke like that, Mellish. Half the minute is gone. Will you hand me that dog-whip, Lowther."

"Certainly! Here you are!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, I'm not——"

"Forty-five seconds gone."

"I tell you I won't!"

"Fifty seconds."

"You—you beast! I—I—I tell you——"

"The minute's up! Now, then——"

"Hold on—hold on! I'll—I'll do it!" gasped Mellish.

He stuffed the sticky paper into his mouth, and with a horrible grimace began to masticate it. The Terrible Three burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's enough!" said Tom Merry. "You can chuck it now!"

Mellish gladly ejected the sticky paper into the fire. Tom Merry opened the door of the study, and stood aside for Mellish to pass.

"You can go," he said. "We're letting you off lightly this time. The next time you'll get what you deserve. Get out!"

Mellish hesitated. Tom Merry stood by the door with his foot half raised, with the evident intention of helping him out. Mellish took a step, and stopped.

"Are you going, Mellish?"

"I—— Look here, you see—— I——"

"Kick him out, chaps!"

Lowther and Manners started towards Mellish, and the rascal made a desperate dash. But Tom Merry was ready. As the flying junior passed through the door his foot came out, and Mellish received a football boot upon his person with a terrific shock. He fairly flew through the door, and bumped on the wall opposite.

"Goal!" yelled Monty Lowther.

Mellish turned round, red with fury.

"You—you beast! You——"

Tom Merry made a motion towards him, and he darted down the passage. Tom laughed as he came back into the study.

"I don't think we shall get any more kind attentions from Mellish," he remarked.

And he was right.

## CHAPTER 6.

### On the Horns of a Dilemma.

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, came along the passage towards Study No. 6, tenanted by Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy. The voice of Blake could be heard, raised in decided tones. The chief of No. 6 was laying down the law, as usual.

"I'm getting fed up with Herr Schneider's blessed old paper!" said Blake. "He's wailing about it all over the house. He's like a blessed Niobe, and he won't be comforted! I'm getting fed up with it. He stopped me in the passage just now, and asked me if I'd seen it."

Herries laughed.

"I heard him telling Latham that he can't remember the formula," he said. "He's tried the experiment over again, and it won't wash. He's in a terrible way. Why can't he be more careful with his rubbish, that's what I want to know?"

"Yaas, wathah! He weally ought not to wowwy hard-workin' fellahs like us with his little twoubles!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "He asked me, too, and I said I was extremely sorry, but I weally had not taken any particular notice lately of any stway sowaps of papah! Hallo, Kildare, deah boy! Pway come in!"

Kildare came in.

Blake pulled out the visitors' chair, and presented it with a bow. But Kildare shook his head, and remained standing.

"I only want to speak a word to you kids," he said.

"It's about the paper the German master has lost."

Blake gave a groan.

"Couldn't you find some other subject to talk about, Kildare?" he asked plaintively. "Let's talk about the football match next Saturday."

"Or the latest thing in coats," said Arthur Augustus. "My tailah informs me that the outside pocket is coming into general fashion again, which is wathah wuff on dwessy fellahs like me, you know, as othah fellahs will be able to make their old coats look like——"

"Oh, let me speak!" said Kildare, laughing. "I've come to see you about the German master's paper. He declares that he dropped it in the Shell class-room——"

"Well, we never go there," said Blake. "Oh, yes, we did, though, to speak to Gore when he was detained. But we never saw anything of his rotten paper!"

"He has an idea that some junior must have found it, and is keeping it back for a joke," said Kildare. "As you and Tom Merry are the worst jokers in the house, he thinks——"

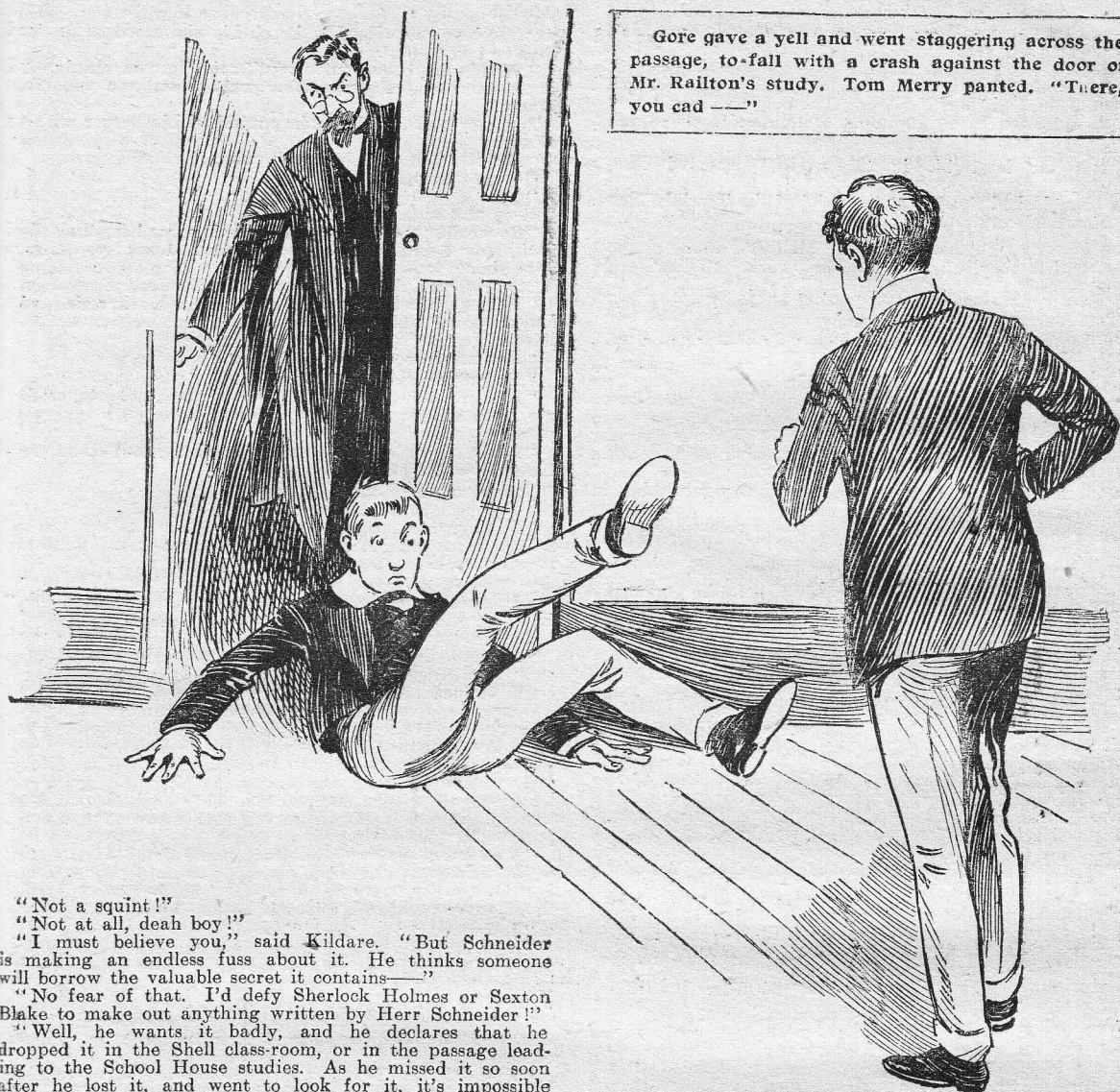
"My dear chap, if I had found his old paper I should have taken it back to him, this side up with care, without fail. So would Herries or D'Arcy."

"Righto!" said Herries. "He's rather a beast sometimes, you know; but I wouldn't like to worry the old boy."

"Yaas, wathah! I should wegard it as extremely dishonourable to wain a papah belonging to anoathah gentleman!"

"Then none of you have seen the paper?"

"Not a peep!"



Gore gave a yell and went staggering across the passage, to fall with a crash against the door of Mr. Railton's study. Tom Merry panted. "There, you cad —"

"Not a squint!"

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"I must believe you," said Kildare. "But Schneider is making an endless fuss about it. He thinks someone will borrow the valuable secret it contains—"

"No fear of that. I'd defy Sherlock Holmes or Sexton Blake to make out anything written by Herr Schneider!"

"Well, he wants it badly, and he declares that he dropped it in the Shell class-room, or in the passage leading to the School House studies. As he missed it so soon after he lost it, and went to look for it, it's impossible that it could have been swept away by the servants. Someone must have picked it up in the few minutes that elapsed between his losing it and his starting out to look for it."

Blake nodded his head in a thoughtful way.

"You've got that about right, Kildare," he remarked. "Some fellow has picked it up, I suppose, and is keeping it back for a lark."

"Not much of a lark in worrying Herr Schneider like that," said Kildare drily. "I regard it as a cad's game."

"Yaas, watah! I weally considah—"

"Mr. Railton has asked me to do what I can in the matter," said Kildare; "and I've come to ask you if you know anything about it, and, if not, to ask you if you'll try to find out something about it. Herr Schneider has asked Mr. Railton to gate the whole House until the paper is found."

"What!" shouted the three.

"Mr. Railton is not likely to do anything of the kind," smiled Kildare. "But he is bothered about the thing, and really I think that if Herr Schneider's beastly recipe is not found soon he'll turn every head in the School House grey."

"I believe mine's going already," said Blake. "I was just saying when you came in that we were getting fed up with his blessed old recipe. There's been too much of it."

"Well, will you do what you can, you youngsters? If any junior has got hold of the paper, you could see into it better than I could."

"Certainly, my boy," said Blake instantly, "we'll take

the matter up, though I really don't expect to be able to find the paper. But we'll do our best, because we love you."

Kildare laughed, and quitted the study. He went straight to the apartment sacred to the Terrible Three, and the crash of foils showed that the chums of the Shell were at home. Kildare knocked at the door and went in. Tom Merry was fencing with Manners and Lowther, sustaining an attack against the pair of them, and sustaining it well. The foils ceased their rapid play as Kildare came in.

"Hallo, Kildare! Will you take a turn with the foils?" asked Lowther cheerfully.

"No," said Kildare. "I want a word with you youngsters, and especially Tom Merry. I've just spoken to Blake on the same subject."

"Go ahead!" said the Terrible Three with one voice.

"It's about Herr Schneider's paper. I've been asked by the housemaster to see about it. Blake has promised to do his best. Now does anyone know anything about it?"

Kildare looked from face to face.

"If the paper has been kept back for a joke," he said. "Herr Schneider is willing to overlook it, and let the matter pass, if the paper is restored at once. It was undoubtedly found by someone and kept back, apparently for no purpose but to worry Herr Schneider. If anyone here has the paper, let him hand it over and I'll take it to Schneider, and the matter will be allowed to drop."

"What rot!" said Monty Lowther. "It was the day

before yesterday that Schneider lost the paper. If we had found it we should have returned it."

"I know I can take your word, you fellows," said Kildare. "If you tell me that you know nothing of the missing paper I shall believe you."

"Of course, we know nothing of it!" said Manners promptly.

"Not the least bit in the world," assented Monty Lowther.

Kildare looked steadily at the chief of the Terrible Three. "You don't say anything, Merry."

"I haven't anything to say, Kildare."  
"What do you mean? You can answer a plain question like the rest, I suppose," said the captain of St. Jim's testily. "Have you any idea what has become of the German master's paper?"

Tom Merry was silent.  
He could not tell Kildare an untruth; but could he betray Gore? Gore was guilty of a mean and caddish action in keeping the paper he had found. But it was not for Tom Merry to betray him. His previous action had caused much division of opinion in the Form, and some of the boys still persisted in regarding it as sneaking. If he spoke out now there would be no division. Every member of the Form would condemn him as a sneak.

Kildare could not, of course, guess what was passing in the boy's mind. He could only conclude that Tom Merry knew something of the missing paper, and refused to tell it.

"I am waiting for your reply, Merry."  
Still the hero of the Shell did not speak.

"Merry, I ask you plainly, do you know what has become of the paper Herr Schneider lost on Wednesday afternoon? Tell me the truth!"

"If I told you anything, Kildare, it would be the truth," said Tom Merry, the scarlet leaping into his cheeks.

"I am sure of that, Merry. You have found the paper, I presume?"

"No," said Tom Merry hastily.  
"But it has been found, I suppose? Come, Merry, this isn't worthy of you? I know that Herr Schneider has been down on you, sometimes unjustly; but he always meant well, and he is not a bad master upon the whole. But, bad or good, this is not the way to get your own back. It is little better than stealing to keep back the paper. It's cowardly."

Tom turned white from red.  
"I know that, Kildare."

"Then tell me what you know of the paper. You know something about it?"

Tom Merry did not reply. A flash of anger blazed in the eyes of Kildare.

"Then you know something of the paper, Merry, and will not speak. I shall begin to think that you have deceived me, and that that yourself are keeping back the paper to spite the German master."

Tom coloured again, but he was silent.  
"Very well, Merry, if you have nothing more to say, I need stay no longer," said Kildare angrily. "This is not what I should have expected of you. I intended to ask you three to see into the matter. That is useless, as you know all about it. I hope you will think better of it, Merry, and will let Herr Schneider have his paper. That is all I have to say at present."

There was a marked emphasis on the last word. Kildare turned abruptly and quitted the study. Lowther and Manners looked at Tom Merry in amazement.

"What does this mean, Tom?" exclaimed Monty. "You don't mean to say that you know where the paper is, and have been keeping it dark all this time?"

Tom Merry shook his head.  
"It's better not to tell you fellows anything," he said. "If you're questioned it's better for you to be able to say you know nothing."

"I—I suppose so," Manners said slowly. "But I don't understand this, Tom, and I confess that I don't half like it."

And then there was an uncomfortable silence in the study.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Tom Merry's Position.

GEORGE GORE was strolling in the quadrangle, with his hands in his pockets, when Tom Merry came up to him. Tom's face was worried, and Gore did not fail to note it, with a grin.

"I say, Gore——" Tom Merry got so far, and then he stopped.

He was about to ask a favour of Gore, in a way, and Gore was the last person in the world of whom he would willingly have asked anything.

Gore's insolent grin was not inviting, either. Tom Merry

was much more inclined to knock him down where he stood than to talk to him.

"Well, what have you to say?" said Gore carelessly. "I don't know that I particularly want to talk to you, Tom Merry."

Tom's eyes glittered, but he controlled his temper with an effort.

"It's about Herr Schneider's paper," he said quietly.

George Gore yawned.  
"Great Scott! Are you going to start on that again? I'm getting sick of it."

"So we all are, I fancy, but we shall never hear the end of it till Herr Schneider has it back again. I want you to give it to him."

"And get a licking for my pains? Thanks."  
"It can be returned quietly, without his knowing who had it, and I will keep the secret. It can be sent by post, if you like."

"I'm not done with it yet."

"Do you intend to return it at all?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps not," Gore yawned again. "Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies. I'm going to please myself entirely in the matter, Tom Merry."

"Listen to me. Kildare has asked me if I know anything about the paper."

Gore changed colour.

"You—you cad! You've told him——"

"I've told him nothing," said Tom Merry patiently; "but I don't know whether I ought to tell him or not. You have no right to keep Herr Schneider's paper."

Gore breathed freely again.

"I thought you wouldn't dare to sneak a second time," he said. "You'd be cut by the whole house if you did."

Tom Merry smiled contemptuously.

"If I thought it right to do so, all the house couldn't stop me," he replied. "But I can't make up my mind that I ought to speak. I couldn't tell Kildare a lie."

Gore was about to make a sneering remark, but Tom Merry's eyes glittered so dangerously that he thought better of it, and remained silent.

"So he knows that I know something," said Tom Merry. "He thinks that I am deliberately keeping back my knowledge to spite the German master. He's beginning to think that I have lied to him in saying that I haven't found the paper. You see the position I'm in?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Gore carelessly. "If you stick to the thorny path of truth, my son, you must expect to find it a bore every now and then. I'm not so particular. I should have satisfied Kildare if he had asked me."

"I dare say you would," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You would have lied, I suppose, as you lied when I taxed you with putting that note on my table. But I don't choose to lie. I don't claim to be better than other fellows, but a crawling, cowardly thing like that I can't do."

"You've got yourself into a fix, it appears to me," said Gore. "I suppose you haven't come to me to get you out of it?"

"Yes, I have. I want you to return the paper to Herr Schneider. Then the matter ends, and no more will be said about it."

"Well, I'm not going to do anything of the kind. If that's what you want, you're wasting your breath talking. I don't see why I should consider you."

"You see the position I am in?"

"You got yourself into it; anyway, it's no business of mine, and to speak quite frankly, I don't care a rap."

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

"Then you refuse to do the decent thing?"

"Rats! 'Nuff said. I'm sick of the subject."

And Gore thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked away whistling. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry had only rendered him more obstinate by his appeal. The thought that by his line of conduct he was causing Tom Merry trouble as well as Herr Schneider was a source of great satisfaction to George Gore.

Tom Merry's fingers itched to knock the cad of the Shell down. But that would have served no useful purpose. He turned and walked slowly to the School House. As he entered, Curley of the Third came up to him.

"Old Schneider wants to see you, Merry," he said. "He asked me to bring you to his study. And I say, he's looking awfully solemn. Look out!"

Tom Merry nodded, and walked to the German master's study.

"Come in, Merry," said Herr Schneider, in a chilling voice. Tom Merry entered, and waited for the German master to speak. Herr Schneider fixed his eyes upon him with a severe expression, and there was something of scorn in his looks that cut Tom Merry to the quick.

"I have spoken with Kildare, Merry," said Herr

## CHAPTER 8.

## Study No. 6 Investigate.

Schneider. "It seems that there vas no troot in vat you said to me, tat you know noting of te missing baper?"

"I told you the exact truth, sir."

"Ach! But you know someting apout te baper now, ain't you?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Answer me, Merry! Do you know anything about mein baper?"

The hero of the Shell coloured, but his lips did not move.

"Fery vell," said Herr Schneider, with a dignity in his manner Tom Merry had never noticed about him before—

"Fery vell, Merry. You haf deceived me—"

"I did not deceive you, sir."

"You know vere to find mein baper, and you refuse to do it. You tink it a good joke to worry te old German master. I did not tink you vas tat kind of poy, Merry. So! I haf noting more to say to you."

Tom Merry started. He had expected at least a caning for what must seem like mere obstinacy to the German master. But the contemptuous manner of Herr Schneider cut far deeper than a cane could have done.

"I—I am sorry, sir. I—" Tom Merry stammered.

"What could he say? Nothing—or else the truth! And that was sneaking!"

The German master listened grimly. As Tom Merry spoke off, the master's hand rose and pointed to the door.

"You may go, Merry. I wish to have noting more to say to you."

"I—I can't explain, sir, but—"

"I know tat you cannot explain, Merry, and I know fery vell vy. You can go."

Tom Merry hesitated, but it was useless to linger, and he turned and left the room. He heard Herr Schneider give a sigh as he closed the door. Tom Merry's heart was heavy as he walked away. He had never been in such a dilemma before, and he could not think of a way out of it.

The German master's reproach cut him deeply. Kildare seemed to think that he had acted in an underhand way. His own chums had shown that they did not know what to make of him, and that his conduct made them feel uncomfortable. There was one easy way out of it all—to go back to Herr Schneider and tell him who had his paper. But that was to be branded before the whole House as a sneak. That was impossible!

Tom Merry's brows contracted as he met Gore in the passage. There was an insolent grin on Gore's face as he glanced at Tom Merry. Tom's dilemma evidently afforded him much amusement, and he knew how much the hero of the Shell was worried.

But that grin on Gore's face was the finishing touch to Tom's temper. He had stood a great deal from Gore, and this was the last straw. Tom's right fist came up like a flash of lightning, and the grin was blotted out on Gore's features by the crash of knuckles on his nose.

Gore gave a yell, and went staggering across the passage, to fall with a crash against the door of Mr. Railton's study. Tom Merry panted.

"There, you cad—"

Mr. Railton's door was only partly latched, and the commision sent it flying open. Gore fell upon his back at full length half inside the room. The housemaster jumped up from his chair, and came with a bound to the spot, a pen in his hand, and a frown upon his face. Gore was sprawling at his feet, and Tom Merry stood in the passage, his fists still clenched, his eyes still blazing.

"Merry, how dare you? Get up, Gore!"

Gore slowly and painfully rose to his feet. The housemaster looked from one to the other, and his stern glance rested upon Tom Merry.

"Merry, I do not know exactly what to say to you! Why did you strike Gore?"

"For nothing at all," whined Gore.

"Answer me, Merry!"

Tom had turned crimson.

"Because he was a rotten cad!" he said at length.

"Indeed!" said the housemaster icily. "You must learn, think, to give a little less violent expression to your feelings. You will stay in on Saturday afternoon, and write out five hundred lines from Virgil."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry quietly.

The housemaster shut his door sharply. Gore would have liked to give Tom Merry another taunt, but the look on Tom's face restrained him. Tom was in a dangerous mood just then. The cad of the Shell walked away without a word.

"JOLLY good weather, kids!" said Monty Lowther, on the following afternoon, as the Terrible Three left the dining-hall in the School House. "We'll have a go at the football, and then go down to the Ryll for some skating. The ice is still as hard as a brick."

"I can't come," said Tom Merry.

"Why not?"

"I'm gated."

"My hat! How much—how long—and who by?"

"Five hundred lines of Virgil—all the afternoon—Mr. Railton," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

Manners and Lowther gave a simultaneous whistle of dismay.

"How very rotten!" said Monty Lowther. "You didn't tell us. And we can't help you; no good trying to palm off three varieties of handwriting on a chap like Railton."

"No good at all," said a voice behind Lowther, as Mr. Railton came out of the dining-room. "It would not be of the slightest use, Lowther."

Monty whirled round like a humming-top, and turned crimson as he looked at the housemaster.

"I—I—I didn't know you—you were—" he stammered.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "There is no harm done, Lowther—as you had decided not to attempt to palm off three varieties of handwriting upon me."

And the housemaster strode on.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "Some masters would have licked a chap for less than that! I say, Railton's a good sort, though he is rather reckless with his impositions. But as I was saying, Thomas, we can't assist you."

"No, I know you can't! Anyway, I'm gated for the whole afternoon, so I may as well do the lines."

"But what was the cause of such a whacking impot, Tom? Have you been playing the giddy ox without the knowledge or assistance of your bosom pals?"

"I punched Gore's head, and he fell against Railton's door."

"Oh, yes, Mellish saw it, and he told me! You seem to be a lot on Gore's track lately. What has he been doing to ruffle the serenity of your supreme highness?"

"He's a rotten cad!" said Tom wrathfully.

"Granted; but if you're going around St. Jim's knocking down every rotten cad you meet, you'll have a lively old time. Some of them are in the Sixth, and if you start knocking down the Sixth, why—"

"Oh, don't rot, Monty! I admit I was hasty, but Gore would provoke a saint. Let it pass. You two chaps get down to the footer, and I'll go and slog at Virgil."

"Well, I suppose we can't do better; but really, Tom, the next time you want to knock Gore down, do get him into a quiet place, and don't bump him on a master's door."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom; and he parted with his chums and went up to the study.

Manners and Lowther walked out into the cold, windy quadrangle. Near the steps of the School House they encountered the chums of Study No. 6.

"I want to see you fellows," said Blake, stopping them. "Where's Tom Merry?"

"Detained for the afternoon."

"Hard cheese! But, I say, Kildare has asked us to look into the matter of that beastly missing paper—"

"Oh, mercy!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Are we never going to hear the end of that beastly paper? When I die you will find the words 'missing paper' written on my heart. I—"

"I assure you we're as sick of the subject as you are," said Blake. "That's why we want to get the thing found and restored to old Schneider. He won't be happy till he gets it."

"Yaas, wathah! Besides, it's quite certain that some boundah has found the papah, and is wetainin' it for a pwaetical joke. I considah such conduct extremely ungentlemanly, and I think that it's our duty to put a stop to it, don't you, deah boys?"

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "And the sooner the quicker. We're getting fed up with it, I can tell you."

"Well, I'm sorry we can't help you," said Lowther. "We haven't seen hide or hair of it."

"There seems to be a hint abroad that Tom Merry knows something about it," Blake remarked.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Lowther.

"Well, he might have found it, or he might know somebody who had found it, or he might know somebody who knew somebody who had found it, or he might—"

"Oh, draw it mild! You could go on for ever like that. What did Schneider want to lose his beastly paper for, that's what I want to know? What does it matter if it's lost,

# ANSWERS

anyway? I tell you what, we hear too much of old Schneider. He can find his beastly old recipe himself. Come along, Manners!"

And the chums of the Shell walked off. Blake scratched his nose thoughtfully. D'Arcy flicked a speck of dust from his nicely-creased trousers.

"Something strikes me, kids!" said Blake, "Did it occur to you—"

"Yaas, wathah! Those boundahs know somethin'!" said D'Arcy sagely.

"More likely Tom Merry knows something, as the fellows have been saying, and Manners and Lowther suspect that he's keeping it dark," said Blake.

"Yaas, it is vewy likely. As we have promised Kildare to look into the mattah, deah boys, we ought wewly to follow up this clue, you know."

"Let's follow it up," said Blake. "Come on, and have a jaw to Tom Merry. There won't be any peace in the School House till Herr Schneider has found his paper, that's certain, and so the beastly thing's got to be found."

They entered the house. Herr Schneider was in the hall, and he stopped them with a gesture of his fat finger.

"Mein poys," said the German master, "haf any of you seen vun paper lyn' about anywere in te house? You know te paper I mean, pefore. It is fery strange tat it not found."

"We've seen nothing of it, sir," said Blake. "We're on the hunt for it now, as a matter of fact. Kildare asked us."

"Tat is fery good of you," said Herr Schneider affably. "You vas goot-poys, after. You tink tat some poy haf found te baper, and is keeping tat baper pack for vun-joke, hein?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, sir," said Blake.

"And if you find him you will get tat baper for me, mein poys, and return him. I have tried to repeat te experiment, but I haf failed. I am in great trouble for te loss of mein formula. You vill do your best, mein poys."

"Certainly, sir!" said Blake. "We'll find the paper if we can, sir."

And the chums of the Fourth went on to Tom Merry's study. They found the hero of the Shell sitting at his table, with an Æneid and a heap of foolscap before him. His pen was going rapidly, but he stopped as they came in.

"Hallo, kids!" he said cheerily. "Want anything? I'm awfully busy."

"I can see you are," said Blake. "Yes, we want something. We're in search of information."

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"Are you? Do you want to know how to play football? Manners and Lowther will give you some tips. I'm gated for the afternoon."

Blake breathed hard.

"No," he said, with forced calm, "we don't want to know how to play football. We know more than any waster in the Shell could teach us already. When I see you fellows playing footer it always tickles me. Why, you don't know how to—"

"Blake you're wandewin' f'rom the point," said D'Arcy.

"Pewwaps I had bettah explain to Tom Mewwy what we have come here for, as—"

"Pewwaps you had better keep your head closed, Gussy. Now, Merry, as I said, we're here for information. We're hunting for that blessed document the German master lost."

Tom Merry's expression changed at once, and Blake did not fail to note it.

"The chaps are saying that you know something about it," he went on. "Somebody heard somebody say that Kildare said something to Herr Schneider, or something to that effect. Now, if you know where that giddy paper is, Thomas Merry, produce it."

"I can't," said Tom Merry.

"Do you know anything about it?"

"My dear chap, I always had a strong objection to being catechised."

"Do you mean that you won't answer my questions?" demanded Blake.

"Yes, something like that."

"But why won't you answer?"

"Can't explain. I don't want to be disobliging, but I've got my reasons. I don't want to talk about the matter. That finishes it."

"I don't understand this, Merry."

"I don't suppose you do. You don't often understand anything, do you?"

"It appears to me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of deep reflection, "that Tom Mewwy possesses some information on the subject, and wufuses to impart it to us."

"Go hon!" said Blake. "Have you worked all that out in your own brain-box, Gussy? Mind you don't overhear the apparatus."

"Pway do not wot, Blake! I was comin' to the point.

Tom Mewwy possesses information upon this point, and wufuses to impart it to us. As we are in deadly earnest on this mattah, it becomes our duty to scew it out of Tom Mewwy."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Blake thoughtfully.

"Tom Merry certainly ought to tell us all he knows. If he found the paper he ought to give it up when we ask him. If he won't speak out, we ought to rag him bald-headed."

"I think it's a good idea," said Herries—"a good idea and a good opportunity."

The chums of the Fourth carried on the discussion with becoming gravity, careless of the presence of the person most concerned in the result of their deliberations. Blake turned to Tom Merry again. Tom's hand had fallen upon the ink-pot.

"You hear that, Merry? You've got to impart the information to us, as Gussy so elegantly expresses it? Are you ready to do the imparting?"

"No," said Tom Merry. "Call another time. I'm busy."

"You'll be busier soon, I think. Lock the door, Herries."

Tom Merry half rose from his chair, but Herries was near the door, and he had it locked and the key in his pocket in a jiffy.

"Now, Tom Merry," said Blake persuasively, "will you have the goodness to tell us all you know about the giddy missing document?"

"Not in the least," said Tom Merry coolly.

"Then, much against our inclinations, we shall be compelled to put you through it!" said Blake. "I warn you that it will be rough!"

"Extremely wuff!" said D'Arcy. "I'm a perfect demon when I start wagging anybody. Pway welfect in time, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "Get out of my study, do!"

"For the last time!" said Blake dramatically.

"For the last time, rats!"

The chums of the Fourth waited for no more. They went for Tom Merry at once. A stream of ink spurted from the ink-pot in Tom Merry's hand, and swept across Blake's face, and then Herries's, and then D'Arcy's. The last-named gave a yell.

"My waistcoat! You have ruined my waistcoat!"

But Blake and Herries, careless of the stream of ink hurled themselves upon the hero of the Shell. Tom Merry struggled desperately, and they crashed against the table and sent it flying.

Books and papers and ink were mixed in a heap on the floor, and in the midst of the heap fell the three struggling forms.

"Dear me!" gasped D'Arcy. "How vewy wuff! Tom Mewwy, I weward your conduct as extremely violent and ungentlemanly!"

"Lend a hand, you duffer!" gasped Blake.

The chums were two to one, but they found that they had their hands full with Tom Merry.

"What did you say, Blake?" demanded D'Arcy haughtily.

"Lend a hand, you howling idiot!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as a howlin' idiot."

"Gr-r-r! Pin him down, Herries!"

"I've got him!"

Tom Merry was on his back. Foolscap was under him and around him, and a Greek lexicon was under his head, and the corner of a Latin dictionary poking in the small of his back. Jack Blake was sitting on his chest, and Herries on his legs. He was overcome at last.

"Now, then, Merry, have you got anything to say now?"

"Yes, get off my chest."

"Ha, ha!" Blake settled himself more firmly. "I'm not getting off at present. Gussy, you image, why didn't you lend a hand when I told you?"

"You cannot expect to be assisted by a gentleman when you are wude enough to chawactewise him as a howling idiot."

"Gr-r-r! Is there anything left in that ink-pot?"

"No," said D'Arcy, picking it up. "It is all over my waistcoat. Tom Mewwy has pwactically wuined my waistcoat, and I considah—"

"Never mind what you consider. Tom Merry, you know something about that blessed missing document. Tell us all about it at once."

"Rats!"

"You see that we've got you where your hair is short, and I tell you that we're going to make you squirm if you don't tell us. Now will you speak?"

"No, I won't!"

"Obstinate beast! We can't be baffled like this, chaw, when we are on the track. Tom Merry must be made to speak. How shall we work it?"

"Shave off his beastly eyebrows!" suggested D'Arcy.

"Jump on his neck!" said Herries.

"H'm! Good ideas, my infants, but we'll try gentler

methods first. Tom Merry, unless you tell me immediately what you know about that beastly rotten recipe, I shall put you to the giddy torture. If Herries had his cornet here I'd make him play it to you—"

"Oh, I say, Blake—"

"As he hasn't it with him, we must use a less drastic method. I shall now proceed to rub soot in your hair and round your neck. When you have had enough, will you please signify the same by telling me what you know about that rotten recipe?"

"No, I won't!"

"Weally, Blake, I cannot approve of the method suggested. You will soil Tom Merry's collah, and that is a thing no gentleman—"

"Dry up, and get me a handful of soot from the chimney!"

"Get what—what?"

"A handful of soot from the chimney!" roared Blake.

"I pwesume that you are jokin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"You cannot be sewious in askin' me to plunge my hand into soot from the chimney."

"Are you going to do as I tell you, you shrieking fat-head?"

"Certainly not! I distinctly wefuse to soil my hand in any such disgustin' way. Neithah do I like bein' chawacterised as a shwiekin' fathead!"

"Can you hold this kid down, Herries, while I get the soot?" asked Blake.

"Yes, I think so. I'll try."

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He knew that a single foe could never keep him down. But Blake caught that gleam in his eye, and did not budge.

"D'Arcy, will you get that soot?"

"I am extwemely wewgetful, deah boy, that I cannot oblige you in this mattah, but weally I cannot do so."

"You—you— Oh, there ain't a word for you!" spluttered Blake. "Come and sit on Tom Merry's head while I get the soot, then."

"Yaas, wathah! I don't want to give touble, and I shall have great pleasure in obliging you, Blake."

And D'Arcy obligingly sat on Tom Merry's head. The next instant he leaped up with a fearful yell. Blake gave a growl.

"What on earth's the matter with you now, D'Arcy?"

"The howwid boundah bit me! He—he has hurt me, and pwobably wuined my twousahs!" said D'Arcy, rubbing the injured portion of his anatomy tenderly. "Tom Mewwy, I weward your action as extwemely unbecomin' in a gentleman."

"Ha, ha! When a chap sits on a fellow's head—"

"He knows what to expect, or he ought to," agreed Blake. "Come and sit on him again, Gussy, and take more care this time."

"I am sowwy, Blake, but I must wefuse to do anythin' of the kind. I—"

Crash! Bump!

It was a violent attack on the door.

"Hallo, here! Open this beastly door!"

It was the voice of Monty Lowther. He accompanied the demand with a powerful kick on the oaken panels. Blake grinned.

"Lucky we thought of locking it," he remarked. "You can't come in, kids; we're busy."

Tom Merry grinned too. He knew that Manners possessed a duplicate key to the study door, and as the key had been taken out on the inside, there was nothing to bar its admission to the lock. A click at the door followed Blake's words.

"My hat!" gasped Blake, in dismay.

The study door flew open, and Manners and Lowther rushed in.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Figgins Gives Advice.

BLAKE jumped up to defend himself, and Tom Merry jerked off Herries and sprang to his feet.

The chums of the Fourth lined up, and, for a moment it looked as if a general combat were about to commence between the Fourth-Formers and the chums of the Shell.

But Tom Merry motioned his devoted followers to hold back.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "No good rowing—though I'm much obliged to you for coming in, kids. They had me in a beastly fix."

"We heard there was something going on here," said Monty Lowther, "and we came to see. But what are you driving at, Tom? We're not going to let these kids of the Fourth make our study in this state without wiping up the floor with them."

"It wants some wiping up," grinned Blake, with a glance at the spilt ink, "and Tom Merry's imposition will want sorting out."

"Never mind," said Tom Merry, with a laugh; "the kids haven't done much harm. Let them go."

"Oh, don't trouble!" said Blake. "We're ready for a row. We'll have a regular up-and-downer if you like, and finish wrecking your old study for you."

"What's all the row about?" demanded Manners, with a warlike glare at the chums of the Fourth. "What does it mean, anyway?"

"We came here in quest of information," explained Blake. "We're investigating the mystery of the missing will—I mean the missing recipe—and Tom Merry—"

"Tom Mewwy is in possession of information on the subject, deah boys, and he wefuses to impart it to us," said D'Arcy.

"Righto!" said Herries. "We should have got it out of him nicely if you hadn't come in, you superfluous bounders!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"You wouldn't have got a word out of me that I didn't choose to utter," he replied. "But, anyway, you've lost your chance now. You'd better travel."

"That's so!" Monty Lowther remarked. "Off you go, you youngsters. You're lucky not to be kicked out of the study."

"Is there anybody here who could kick us out?" asked Blake, suavely.

"Yes, there is. I could."

"Then, don't delay on my account. I'm ready—not to say anxious—to be kicked out, if there's a chap in the Shell who's up to doing it."

"I'll jolly soon show you—you cheeky kid."

Tom Merry dragged Lowther back as he was rushing at Blake.

"Let go, Tom! I'm going to—"

"Oh, hold on!" said Tom. "Drop it, both of you. The fact is, Monty, they're in the right to some extent. They're cheeky in coming here like this, but it's true that I know something about Schneider's beastly paper, and I can't explain. There's no need for us to row. Get out, you chaps, and go quietly."

The worried look on Tom Merry's face moved Blake at once.

"Look here, Merry, tell me this much! Do you mean that you can't tell about it, because it would be giving somebody else away?"

"Yes, that's about the size of it."

"Well, that's put a different complexion on the matter. Mind, we're not giving up the hunt. We're going to have that paper. Come on, chaps!"

Study No. 6 walked out. The Terrible Three proceeded to put their study to rights—no easy task. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy went down the passage.

"Hallo, what on earth's that!" exclaimed Blake, as they passed the door of the German master's study.

A sudden report, like the bursting of a glass bottle, sounded within the study, and it was followed by a loud ejaculation.

"Ach! Mein Gott!"

Something had evidently gone wrong with Herr Schneider, who was experimenting again. It was no time to stand upon ceremony. Blake tore the door open, and the three juniors rushed into the study.

A startling sight met their gaze!

The German master's table was covered with bottles and retorts, jars and glasses. Half of them had been smashed, and dyes of different colours were running over the table and swamping on the carpet.

Fragments of glass were scattered over the table and the floor. It was evident that there had been an explosion, due to some error in mixing the chemicals.

But the strangest sight of all was Herr Schneider. His face and his clothes were dyed a purple colour, and the scanty locks on his head gleamed purple from a purple cranium. He was purple all over.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "Are you hurt, sir?"

"Mein Gott! Te ting it was egsplode. I am splash mit te dye!"

Blake giggled.

"You are, sir, and no mistake! You're splashed from head to foot! My hat!"

"Yaas—wathah! I weally twust you are not hurt, Herr Schneider! You weally pwesent a most widiculous appearance—"

"Mein Gott!" The German rubbed his empurpled brow.

"Ach! Did it all be fault of te poy tat have stolen mein recipe—te rascal! Mein Gott! Go away, poy! I am not hurt!"

The chums remained as grave as they could till they had

CHAPTER 10.

Herr Schneider is Made Happy at Last.

closed the door behind them. Then they screamed with laughter. The sight the German master had presented had been utterly ludicrous.

"But it's too bad," gasped Blake, at last. "If it's really due to the loss of the recipe, it's too rotten, and the chap who's got it ought to be scragged."

"It weally looks to me as if Tom Mewwy has got it."

"No, he hasn't," said Blake, screwing up his brow thoughtfully as they went down the passage, "he wouldn't keep it if he had."

"Then what can he know about it?" asked Herries.

"I suppose it amounts to this, that he has found out the fellow who has the paper, and he can't give him away, and the fellow refuses to give it up."

"Yaas, wathah! That seems vewy pwob. No reason why he couldn't tell us the name of the fellah, though."

"Well, if we knew, we couldn't give him away either, could we? It's a dirty trick to keep back the paper, but it's impossible to sneak. If we knew the cad's name, it would place us in a difficult position when we were questioned on the subject, and Herr Schneider is always asking if anything has been discovered yet."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of the Fourth went out into the quadrangle. They were much exercised in their minds. They had not been able to "rag" Tom Merry into telling them anything, but Blake had guessed a good deal.

Figgins & Co. came off the football field. Figgins stopped to speak to the School House chums, his attention attracted by their air of intense reflection.

"Hallo, you kids!" was his greeting. "What's the trouble? Has the order gone forth that blotted exercises are to be barred in the School House in the future?"

"Or, has Herries been playing his cornet to you, Blake?" asked Kerr.

"Or, Gussy reciting any of his poetry to you that he's written for the 'Weekly'?" Fatty Wynn wanted to know.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"Not so bad as that," he replied. "I wonder if you could give us advice, Figgy. Bring your mighty brain to bear on the subject, and—"

"Certainly. I'm always willing to help, kids."

"Oh, cheese it! Look here, we've been on the track of that beastly missing paper belonging to the Schneider-bird—"

"Scott! Hasn't that been found yet?"

"No. Schneider is raising Cain about it. He's just had an accident with his smelly old experiments on account of its loss. It's really hard on Schneider, and we want to get that paper back for him. We know somebody in the School House must have found it, and we believe Tom Merry knows that chap. But the fellow won't give it up, so we conclude, and Merry feels that he can't sneak about him."

Figgins nodded thoughtfully.

"It's rather a difficult position," he remarked. "It's impossible to give a chap away to a master. At the same time, the fellow must be an awful cad to keep the paper, and it comes mighty rough on Schneider."

"That's so. Now, what would you do in our place?"

Figgins reflected deeply. There was a long silence, and the School House chums waited for the result of the cogitations of the great Figgins. The New House chief spoke at last.

"Well, I think I'd know what to do," he said slowly. "I'd find out the name of the chap who has found the paper."

"But we couldn't give him away to the masters."

"No, I know you couldn't. But you could lick him till he gave up the paper, and then take it back to Schneider, and hand it over to him."

Blake and Herries and D'Arcy looked at one another.

The plan was simple—and drastic.

But there was no reason why it should not work excellently. The wonder was that they had not thought of it themselves.

"My only Aunt Matilda!" exclaimed Blake. "That's a ripping idea. If we can spot the fellow, we can easily give him the hiding of his life. He must be a junior, because a Sixth-Form fellow wouldn't play such a trick."

"Of course, he's a junior. You'll find him in the Fourth Form or the Shell. If he's in the Shell, he may be a bit above your weight."

"Oh, we'll tackle him, never fear!"

"We wouldn't mind lending a hand," said Figgins. "Look here, suppose you put it to Tom Merry. It's a jolly good idea, and he would agree, I expect. Let's all go to him and talk it over, and if he knows the chap, we'll all drop on him."

And as soon as Figgins & Co. had changed out of their football things, the six juniors marched off in a body to Tom Merry's study.

TOM MERRY looked up very alertly as the door of his study opened. He was ready for another hostile visit. Manners and Lowther, who were still with him, jumped up at the sight of Blake. But Blake warmed his hand peacefully.

"Peace, my infants!" he exclaimed. "Rows are off-right off. Figgins has given us some golden advice, and we've come—"

"Yes, I can see you've come," said Tom Merry. "Now if you'll kindly go—"

"Wait a bit," said Figgins; "don't be in a hurry. We're going to get you out of a fix, Merry. Explain to the bouncer, Blake."

"Listen to me, Merry. We have come to the conclusion that you have found out the chap who has got hold of Herr Schneider's mysterious document—"

"Have you? Same old topic!"

"And that you can't give him away to the masters, and that he won't give up the paper, of his own accord," said Blake. "Now, is that the case?"

"Come, Tom, no harm in telling that much," said Lowther.

"Well, yes, if you want to know," said Tom Merry, "that is the case. I know the chap who has the paper, and he refuses to give it up. If I tell you his name, you'll be in an awkward fix if you are questioned again, as you're pretty certain to be."

"Wait a bit. This is where Figgy's great idea comes in. We can't possibly peach on the cad, whoever he is, as that's against the rules—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But Figgins has proposed, and I have seconded, and we have all passed unanimously that we go in a body to the rotter in question, and give him the choice of giving up the paper to us, or being thrashed within an inch of his life."

"Yaas, wathah! A feahful thwashin'—"

"Then we can take it back to the German master ourselves. He'll be glad enough to get it without asking questions."

Monty Lowther gave Blake a terrific thump on the back. "You howling idiot," yelled Blake, staggering, "what do you mean? If you want a row—"

"Rats! I was only showing my approval—"

"You'd better show it a little more gently next time," gasped Blake. "I've killed people for less than that. Now, Merry, what do you think of the idea?"

Tom Merry laughed. "I think it's a jolly good one, and I wonder I didn't think of it myself. Figgins, old boy, you're a giddy genius, and you ought to have a tin medal."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then tell us the name of the rotter," said Blake, "and let's get on his track."

"It's Gore."

"Gore! Of course! We might have guessed it. That's what you slogged him on the nose for yesterday, I suppose, when he bumped on Mr. Raitton's door."

"Yes, it was, as a matter of fact."

"Good! We'll give him some more. Come along, we're all in this together. Does anybody know where Gore is?"

"We'll soon hunt him up."

The juniors left the study together. The Terrible Three joined in the idea keenly enough. It was a simple way out of the difficulty.

They visited Gore's study, but he was not there. They looked into the gym, but he was not to be seen. Finally they spotted him just going to the bicycle shed, and they ran him down at the door.

George Gore looked a little alarmed to see nine juniors closing in round him. He looked from one to another, and changed colour slightly.

"Glad to see you, Gore," said Blake affably. "Where's that paper?"

"Eh? What paper?"

"The valuable document Herr Schneider lost mit himself before."

"Yaas, wathah! Hand it ovah, Goah!"

Gore gave Tom Merry a spiteful glance.

"So Tom Merry's told you—"

"Yes, certainly," said Tom Merry quietly; "I have told them that you have the paper, Gore. There was no reason why I shouldn't. It was impossible for me to give you away to Herr Schneider, and you have taken advantage of that fact to give me trouble. You know both Kildam and Herr Schneider consider that I have acted meanly in the matter, and you refuse to clear me. But Figgins has suggested a way of getting out of the difficulty—"



"Yaas, wathah! We are goin' to give you a feaful thwashin', Gore."

Gore scowled savagely.

"You'd better not touch me. I'll—"

He looked round like a cornered cat for a way of escape, but the juniors were in a circle round him, and there was no room to pass. They evidently meant business.

"You can't get away," said Tom Merry scornfully; "you are going to give up that paper, Gore. That's what Figgins suggested—making you give up the paper, and taking it back to Herr Schneider ourselves."

"If you mean to sneak—"

"There will be no sneaking in the matter. We sha'n't mention your name, or anything else, for that matter. We shall just return the paper to Herr Schneider."

"I—I haven't it now; I—"

"Don't tell lies. You wouldn't trust it out of your hands. You've got it about you, and you're going to hand it over."

"I'm going to do nothing of the sort," said Gore defiantly.

"You rotten ruffians, if you start any hooliganism, I'll—"

"Hooliganism or not, you're going to give up that paper. You're little better than a thief for keeping it. Now, hand it over."

"I won't!"

"Very well." Tom Merry set his teeth. "You refuse? We're going to have it, whether you like it or not. I know you've got it about you, and if you won't give it up, a search will pretty soon place it in our hands."

"You dare not—"

"You'll see. Are you going to hand over the paper?"

"No!" yelled Gore.

He made a desperate dash to break through the ring and escape. In an instant Figgins and Blake grasped him and dragged him back. He went reeling to the ground.

The next moment the search would have commenced, but just then an athletic figure stepped out of the door of the bicycle shed. The juniors paused as they saw the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare's face was very stern and set.

"You did not know I was there," he remarked. "I did not, of course, intend to overhear anything not intended for my ears, but I could not help it in this case. I am glad it has happened, however, as it shows me that I did you an injustice, Merry."

"I couldn't explain, Kildare," said Tom.

"No, I understand that now, and I am sorry. Gore, get up!"

Kildare's voice was sharp and contemptuous as he addressed the cad of the Shell. George Gore was very pale as he rose to his feet.

"Hand me that paper belonging to Herr Schneider, Gore."

"I—I—"

"At once!" rapped out Kildare.

Without another word Gore drew the document from his inner pocket and handed it to the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare glanced at it, and then put it into his pocket.

"I—I—it was a joke," stammered Gore. "I—I meant to return it some time, Kildare. Of course, I wouldn't have kept it for good. I—"

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare, with cutting scorn.

"As I became aware of your rascality in this manner by accident, I cannot very well punish you, Gore, or report your conduct to the housemaster." Gore looked considerably relieved. "But I shall have my eye on you in the future. If Tom Merry were to give you a thrashing for the harm you did him, I should not blame him."

There was a general grin among the juniors.

"I shall take this paper back to Herr Schneider," resumed Kildare, "and I shall explain to him that an injustice was done to Tom Merry, so as to set that matter right. You can rely on that, Merry."

And the captain of St. Jim's walked away to the School House. Gore would have followed, but Blake passed an arm through his.

"Don't buzz off like that, Gore," said Blake sweetly; "Merry wants to speak to you."

"Come into the gym, Gore, will you?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"No, I won't—I—"

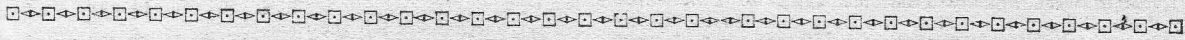
"Do you prefer with or without gloves?"

"I—I won't—"

But even while he was objecting they marched him into the gym. There was no escape for the cad of the Shell, and though he chose to have the gloves on, his punishment was a pretty severe one, and D'Arcy was quite correct in describing it afterwards as a "feaful thwashin'."

THE END.

(Another tale dealing with Tom Merry next Thursday. Order your copies in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)



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# TEMPEST HEADLAND

A SPLENDID NEW SCHOOL TALE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

READ THIS FIRST!

Tempest Headland is a large school standing in an exposed position of Britain's coast. It contains some six hundred odd boys. Some of them, as will presently be seen, were very odd.

A fearful storm is raging outside, when Cyril Conway tells Herr Ludvig, who is taking the class for German, that he can see from the window a ship being driven ashore. Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, Herr Ludvig, and the boys immediately make their way to the cliff, but in reaching there they find that the ship has sunk. However, the Head is instrumental in saving a little black boy. He is taken to the school, and money to the amount of £1,000, with a request that it may be used for his up-bringing, is found on him. A medical man examines the boy, and he finds the boy has had such a shock to his system as to affect all memory of the past. He does not even remember his name, so the Head leaves it to the boys to re-christen him. After a lengthy discussion, Billy Barnes and Cyril decide

on naming their new schoolmate Snowy White Adonis Venus.

On the first night Venus is awakened by Cyril, who tells him that he has a great scheme on, and wants his help.

(Now go on with the story.)

**A Shock for Snigg.**

"Right you are; but ain't it mighty dark, and it ain't near so hot as I hab felt it," answered Venus.

"I've got a dark-lantern here. Mind you come silently, because the masters may wake. The servants have gone up, so we shall be all right in that respect."

The worthy Cyril led the way into the kitchen, and then he ventured to turn on his lantern, then he placed a fishing-line and a large needle on the table, and also a pocket-knife.

"We shall need this little lot presently," he said. "Come this way!"

"Now you see, my dear Venus!" exclaimed Cyril. "What I want is a chunk of raw beef."

NEXT THURSDAY,

"THE DIABOLISTS!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

(Continued).



THE TEMPEST HEADLAND

The Only New and Original School Tale. By S. CLARKE HOOK.

"Golly! Are you so hungry as all dat?" "I am not at all hungry, and if I were I wouldn't eat raw beef. Here's a joint. We must cut a chunk out of it. I only want about two solid square inches."

Cyril's knife was very sharp, and he cut off a piece about twice the size he mentioned; then, replacing the joint, went back into the kitchen.

"Now, you see, this beef wants a little manipulation." "If dat's cooking, it is just what it looks to want," observed Venus.

"Rats! We want it raw and red." "It's all dat," observed Venus, getting as near to the grate as he could, because there was still some warmth there.

Cyril was busy cutting at that piece of meat. He did not appear to feel the cold, so intent was he upon his work. "Now, what does that look like?" he inquired, with much satisfaction.

"I dunno, unless it's a good-sized worm dat's been obereating itself."

"Rats!" "Oh, I must say it don't look much like dem!" "Snowy White Adonis Venus, don't try to be stupid, because it comes quite natural to you. Can't you see that is a nose—a human nose?" "Yah, yah, yah!"

"Oh, stop that guffawing, else we shall get our caning in our nightshirts, and that would hurt. It is a nose—a badly-damaged nose. See, I've carved the nostrils and all!"

"Well, I hab got rader a fool ob a nose, but I must say I wouldn't exchange it wid dat one. Looks rader inflamed."

"It's Snigg's nose—after you have punched it. If luck favours us, Snigg will think that is his nose when he wakes to-morrow morning. But, look here, Venus, you must not guffaw in the dormitory, or else you will give the show away. I don't think even your laugh would wake him; all the same, we don't want to chance it. Now, here's the needle, and here's the fishing-line. Nice and fine, so it won't show."

"Strikes me it will feel if you go sewing dat nose on his face."

"I am not going to do anything so silly. I want the needle to draw the line through the beefy nose, top and bottom, each side. See? Thus."

"Looks simple." "It is simple. It is nearly as simple as Snigg. Now I tie it, thus. That thin line will never show. Do you think a nose like that will surprise him when he wakes?"

"Golly! I should say dat it ought to do all dat."

"Well, we will creep up again, You take the lantern, and turn it slightly on in the dormitory. I sha'n't want much light, and you must be sure that you do not shine it in the sleeper's eyes. He requires a big shake before you can wake him, and I sha'n't give him anything like that."

They reached the dormitory without noise, and if ever a boy was soundly asleep it was Snigg. He was lying on his side, and Cyril approached his back, then he gradually passed the lines on one

side of the awful-looking nose between the sleeper's head and the pillow. Snigg did not so much as move in his sleep. He was snoring and the snoring never ceased; but then, Cyril was doing his work very dextrally.

He got the beefy nose on the top of Snigg's natural one, then tied the fishing-lines firmly at the back of his head. He did not make the slightest noise, nor did the light, which was very faint, wake any of the other boys, though Cyril did not care much about that, because he knew they would remain silent. Snigg was detested by all, and feared by most of them, and they would have been quite ready to play any sort of trick upon him.

"Splendid!" murmured Cyril, blowing out the light, and getting into bed; an example that Venus was only too glad to follow.

In about three minutes he was fast asleep, nor did he awake till the first bell rang, and he would not have done so then had it not been for Cyril shaking him.

"It's half-past six, Venus," said Cyril. "I think I had an appointment wid Graff at six," observed Venus.

"Never mind him this morning. If you are to be his fag, as he says, you will mind him quite enough later on. It's ten to one if he gets up. His early rising is a myth, something like his cold baths. He is always boasting about breaking the ice on his cold bath, and I'm morally certain he never has one; at any rate, not this time of the year. He just goes in and has a wash in hot water, then comes out, saying how refreshing a cold bath is. He makes me all boasting to everyone he meets about his cold baths, but I'll get level with him before so long. You see if I don't. Wait a bit! I'll just send the message round about Snigg's nose."

"Golly!—It looks mighty awful—don't it?" "Yes, and the fishing-line doesn't show. He will never notice it when he looks into the glass; especially by the light we shall have by the time he wakes."

Then Cyril went from bed to bed, telling them something of what had happened.

"We have all to give a horrified 'Oh!' added Cyril, to each one; "and we've got to keep it up. Let's get up and begin dressing, so that Herr Ludvig won't take much notice. So long as he sees us getting up he only just glances into the room."

In due course Herr Ludvig made his appearance, and when he saw the youngsters busily dressing he gave a grunt of satisfaction and left the room.

Snigg slept on, and they let him sleep. He always had a fearful rush to get into the hall in time for the roll-call; but the youngest boy in the room had strict orders to wake him at the last moment. This morning that youth received peremptory orders to do nothing of the sort.

"I won't let him hurt you, Willie. You can go down, and that will be an excuse for not waking him. You can tell him that I promised to do so, and so I will; but we are all going to be late this morning."

"You won't let him bully me?" inquired Willie.

"Well, not more than he does now. Put it all on my shoulders, and I will settle the brute's hash. Go on! Don't be so beastly nervous!"

Willie went, so did the second bell; and then Cyril, who, like the rest of the boys, was fully dressed, awoke the heavy sleeper.

There was a dead silence in the room as Snigg sat up in bed. Cyril stood in front of him with gaping jaws, while his left hand clutched at the regions of his heart. The expression on Cyril's face did him credit, and gave the impression that in after life he would make an excellent actor. Hamlet gazing at the ghost was as nothing to it.

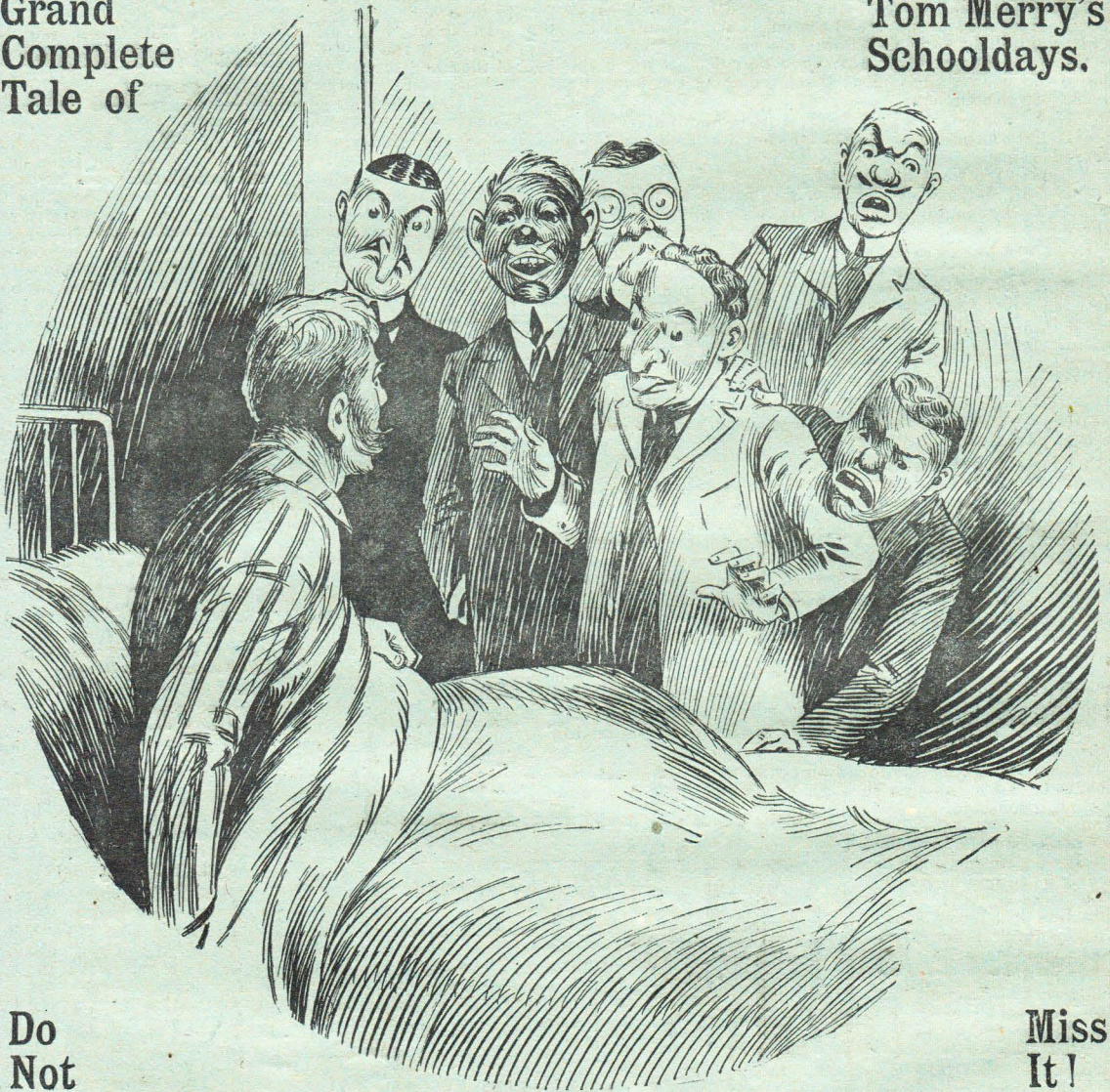
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