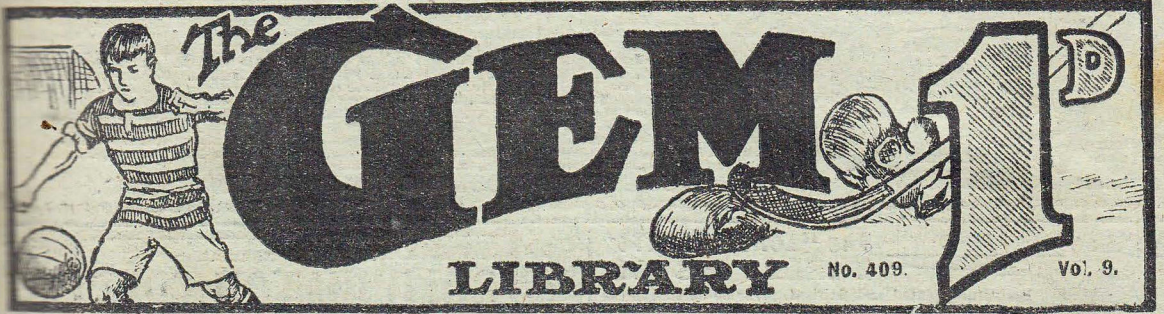


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# REDFERN'S BARRING OUT!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.  
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Mr. Rateliff came striding into the Hall, with a birch in his hand. He expected to find the delinquents there and Taggles the porter on the spot, ready to "hoist" them for punishment, but the Hall was empty.  
(See Chapter 16.)

## CHAPTER 1. An Untimely Call!

"COME in, fathead!"  
Tom Merry called out thus politely, as a tap came at the door of his study in the School House at St. Jim's.

The door opened, and Fatty Wynn looked in. Now, Fatty Wynn of the Fourth belonged to the New House; and the Terrible Three—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—were busy with the latest number of "Tom Merry's Weekly." So three pens pointed to the door by which Fatty Wynn had just entered, and three voices said in chorus:

"Buzz!"

"I've just come——" said Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth-Former was interrupted.

"Travel!" said Tom Merry.

"Can't you see we're busy?" demanded Manners. "How is a chap to do a photographic article when a porpoise rolls in interrupting him?"

"Blow your silly photographic article!" said Fatty Wynn crossly. "I've come——"

"Well, what about my comic column?" said Monty Lowther. "I sha'n't get it done in time!"

"Tell the chaps to read 'Chuckles,' and then they needn't bother about your comic column!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "Comes to the same thing."

Monty Lowther rose in wrath.

"You New House fathead!"

"You School House ass!" retorted Fatty Wynn.

Next Wednesday:

"TALBOT'S RESCUE!" AND "COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"



"If you say that I pinch my jokes from 'Chuckles' you'll go down that passage on your New House neck!" said Lowther wrathfully. "There may sometimes be a slight resemblance—very slight—"

"Great minds run in grooves," suggested Tom Merry.

"Exactly. But as for pinching jokes—"

"And the resemblance isn't so jolly close, either," said Manners. "For instance, 'Chuckles' jokes are funny, and yours ain't, are they Monty?"

"Why, you silly fathead!" said Lowther ungratefully.

"Look here, I haven't come here to jaw about Lowther's rotten jokes!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I've come—"

"Rotten jokes, by Jove! Why, they're above your head, you New House duffer!" said the exasperated humorist. "You're as big an ass as Piggins! There was my ripping pun on 'houseboat' and 'boathouse.' Piggins couldn't see that."

"Blessed if I could, either," said Manners. "I knew it was a joke, of course, because it was in the comic column. But—"

"If you're going to talk like an idiot, Manners—"

"Not at all, old chap! I'm not going to poach on your preserves," said Manners affably.

"Look here, Manners—"

"Order!" rapped out Tom Merry. "How's an editor to do a leading article with two silly asses ragging one another? Shut up!"

"I say—" recommenced Fatty Wynn.

"Don't you say anything," urged Tom Merry. "These two duffers say enough—too much, in fact! Haven't you seen the notice on the door—No admittance except on business?"

"Yes; but—"

"Then buzz off! Call later; look in another time. Go and eat coke! Rats!"

"'Chuckles,' indeed!" said Monty Lowther indignantly. "Why, my comic column is better than anything in 'Chuckles'—as much better than 'Chuckles' as 'Chuckles' is better than all the rest of the comic papers put together! Look at this limerick!"

"Bow-wow! Limericks are out of date."

"Good stuff," said Lowther loftily, "is never out of date. Just listen to this—"

"And a good combined toning and fixing solution—" murmured Manners, intent upon his article.

"It is with much pleasure that we present this special number to our readers," murmured Tom Merry.

"Look here!" howled Fatty Wynn.

"For goodness' sake shut up a minute!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Just listen to this, and tell me whether it's anything like 'Chuckles,' you duffers. It's about a New House bouncer, and it goes—"

"Cheese it! Combined toning and fixing solution—"

"Dry up! This special number—"

But Monty Lowther neither cheese'd it nor dried up. Lowther was too generous to keep a good thing to himself. When he had perpetrated an extra good joke, he was always keen to delight the study with it. The study, as a rule, was not so delighted as Lowther expected.

"There was a fat duffer named Wynn,

Who feared he might some day grow thin,

So each day he devoured

Quite enough for a crowd,

Till he almost burst out of his skin!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"Is that your fatheaded limerick?"

"Jolly good limerick, and true to life!" said Monty Lowther.

"What do you think of that, you chaps?"

"Does devoured rhyme with crowd?" asked Manners.

"Of course it does! If it doesn't sound like good rhyme to you, Manners, it's your ear that's at fault. You never had much of an ear."

Now, Manners was musical, and he prided himself on having a good ear. Naturally, he snorted.

"Well, I haven't such big ears as you have, I know," he admitted. "Nature doesn't deal with us all alike—thank goodness!"

"What's the matter with my ears?" bawled Lowther.

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"Nothing—nothing," said Manners soothingly. "They're first-rate—would do credit to an elephant, in fact."

"You silly ass!"

"Same to you, and many of them!"

"If you want a thick ear, Manners—"

"My ears are all right, thanks," said Manners, unmoved. "I can tell you that devoured don't rhyme with crowd, anyway. But have it your own way, so long as you let me get on with my article."

"Blow your silly article! Howling rot—"

"Well, I like that!" said Manners warmly. "What about your own comic column? I've seen chaps crying over it!"

"You haven't!" roared Lowther.

"I have!"

"I tell you you haven't!"

"And I tell you I have!"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Peace, peace!" roared Tom Merry. "Shut up, you duffers! Is this the lofty calm and repose suitable to an editorial office?"

"That idiot, Manners—"

"That fathead, Lowther—"

"Order! Let's chuck the New House bouncer out, and get on with the washing," said Tom Merry. "It's all Wynn's fault. He started the argument. Chuck him out!"

"Look here!" shouted Fatty Wynn, who had been vainly endeavouring to make his voice heard for some minutes. "I tell you I've come—"

"We know you've come, fathead. Now you're going!"

"Why, you rotters—leggo! Chuck it! I tell you I've come to—yoooop! I say—whoop!" roared Fatty Wynn, as the editorial three grasped him and spun him into the passage.

Bump!

"Now buzz off!" said Tom Merry severely. "Don't you know better than to interrupt editors at their weighty task?"

Fatty Wynn sat up and gasped.

"You silly idiots! I tell you I've come—"

"Blessed if he isn't beginning again!" exclaimed Tom Merry, quite exasperated. "Here, hand me that ink!"

Fatty Wynn did not wait for the ink. He picked himself up, shook a fat fist at the study generally, and retreated. Tom Merry slammed the door, with a sigh of relief.

"Now, let's get on!" he said.

"That's all very well," said Lowther; "but that idiot Manners says he's seen chaps crying over my jokes!"

"Crying with laughter, I meant," said Manners amicably.

"Oh!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Now, cheese it, and get on with the washing!" he said.

Monty Lowther, thus propitiated by the soft answer that turneth away wrath, sat down to his comic column. He scratched his nose thoughtfully.

"P'raps 'devoured' and 'crowd' ain't a very good rhyme," he said at last. "I'll alter those lines. Thanks—ahem!—for the tip, Manners, old man!"

So all was calm and bright once more in the editorial office.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Raiders.

**W**ATHAH nice, bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form made that remark in Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus was standing before the looking-glass, trying on a new necktie. The expression upon his noble countenance showed that he was pleased with the effect. He nodded to his reflection in the glass in a very satisfied way.

"Wathah nobbay, I must say!" he went on. "I weally wish Blake and Hewvies and Dig would be a little more careful with their neckties! You know a



chap by the way his necktie is tied. Hallo, deah boy! Come in! What do you think of this necktie?"

Fatty Wynn, a little dusty, had looked in at the door. Arthur Augustus greeted him with his usual urbanity. Blake and Herries and Digby were down at the footer practice, keeping it up manfully, though the dusk was thickening over the playing-fields of St. Jim's. The days were very short now, but footer was footer, and could not be neglected. Arthur Augustus was really pleased that somebody had dropped in. He wanted to have an opinion on his new necktie.

"Wathah nobbay, don't you think so, Wynn?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" said Fatty absently. "I've looked in, Gussy—"

"You think that a pale blue necktie with black babs goes vewy well with a waistcoat this colour?" asked Arthur Augustus anxiously.

"Ripping! I've come to—"

"Or do you think this one with the crimson spots would look a little better?"

"Yes, certainly! I've come—"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Look here! Will you let a chap speak, and blow your old neckties?" exclaimed the New House junior warmly.

"They are not old neckties, Wynn; they are quite new!"

"Oh, blow 'em!"

"Howevah, I pwesume that a New House boundah won't know vewy much about decent neckties!" said the swell of the School House stiffly. "You chaps nevah dweess, vewy well. Figgins' neckties would disgwace a Hun!"

"Hang Figgins' neckties! Look here, D'Arcy—"

"As a mattah of fact, Wynn, Figgins' neckties woally look as if he had been twyin' to hang himself!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"I've come to—"

"If you want to speak to me, deah boy, wun on, while I'm twyin' on this othah tie. Then you can give me your opinion of it."

"I've just looked in to see these Shell bounders, and they've played the giddy ox, as per usual!" said Fatty Wynn, in an aggrieved tone. "I want a chap to help me, and I want you, D'Arcy!"

"Certainly, deah boy! You are goin' to buy a new hat?"

"No!" roared Fatty.

"If it is a mattah of selectin' a new waistcoat, Wynn, I am entially at your service. Your waistcoats are wathah—ahem—"

"Tain't anything of the kind!"

"You are goin' to get a new necktie, pewwaps? It is weally high time. I will come with you with pleasure!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Will you let a chap speak? It's Ratty!"

"Watty? What has Watty been doin', deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus was very sympathetic, though he went on with the necktie. Mr. Ratcliff, the House-master of the New House, was as heartily disliked on the School House side as in his own House.

"He's been a beast, as usual!" growled Fatty Wynn. "Confiscated my grub, you know! I had a lot of tarts and a whole pudding, and the awful beast said I was a greedy young rascal, and took them away from the study. He's always poking his blessed long nose into our study! One of these days," added Fatty fiercely, "I shall dot him on it with a stump!"

"Bai Jove! As a mattah of fact, Wynn, pewwaps Watty was wight for once," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "You do scoff wathah a lot of pastwy, you know! Blake says if you don't chuck it, you won't be able to keep goal any longah, because you won't be able to squeeze between the posts, you know. I wergedard that remark of Blake's as wathah funnary!"

Fatty Wynn snorted. He did not seem to see anything funny in that remark of Blake's.

"Look here! I didn't come here to listen to Blake's rotten jokes at second-hand," he exclaimed. "I want a chap to help me. I can't ask Figgins or Kerr or Red-

fern, or any New House chap, because I don't want to risk gettin' 'em into a row with Ratty. A School House chap would be all right—Ratty can't come over here looking for him. But if you don't want to take the risk, I'll look for somebody else. I dare say Reilly would do it, if I can find him."

"The wisk is nothin', Wynn. I should be vewy pleased to help you. But what are you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to raid the larder," said Fatty Wynn ferociously. "Ratty's taken my tarts and pudding, and sent 'em down to the larder. I've asked Mrs. Kenwigg to hand 'em back, but she says she must see Mr. Ratcliff's orders are obeyed."

"That is quite wight, Wynn."

"Oh, bosh! Who's Ratty? Anyway, she won't hand 'em over, and I'm going to take them. They're mine!"

"Yaas, I wathah think you would be justified in takin' that step, Wynn," assented D'Arcy. "Watty is wathah a Hun. If we had a Housemastah like that in the School House—"

"You'd put up with him, same as we have to!" growled Wynn.

"Pewwaps we should," agreed Arthur Augustus, on second thoughts. "Yaas, pewwaps we should, deah boy. We are vewy lucky to have old Waitton instead of that wottah. I am quite at your service, deah boy!"

"Come on, then!"

"Wait a minute! What do you think of this necktie?"

"Haven't I said it's ripping?" grunted Fatty.

"But this is the othah one!"

"Oh, dear! That's ripping, too!"

"I am afraid, Wynn, that you are not vewy interwested in neckties," said Arthur Augustus severely. "You New House boundahs are wathah slovenly! Howevah, I will come with you now. Where are you goin'?"

"I'm goin' to raid the larder!"

"Yaas, but isn't it kept locked?"

"The window," explained Fatty Wynn. "I've nosed it all out. I can get to the larder window if a chap bunks me up."

"Bai Jove! I'd better not put on a toppah, then!"

"Well, I might kneel on your hat!"

"I should certainly wofuse to allow anybody to kneel on my hat, Wynn. If I am going to bunk you up, I will put on a cap—pewwaps I'd better take Blake's cap, as it may get feahfully wumped! Bai Jove! And I'll put on one of Dig's jackets, as you may wub your hoots against it. I won't keep you a minute!"

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!"

"What's the huwvy?"

"I'm hungry!"

"Oh, all wight!"

Arthur Augustus, arrayed in Blake's cap and Digby's jacket, accompanied the fat Fourth-Former from the study. They descended the stairs together, and went out into the dusky quadrangle. Blake and Herries and Digby were coming in from the footer, and they hailed Arthur Augustus at once.

"Tea ready?" called out Blake.

"Bai Jove! I forgot tea! I have been twyin' on neckties!"

"Fathead! Come and lend a hand, then!"

"Pway excuse me, Blake! I am goin' to help Wynn."

"What's the little game?" demanded Herries.

"Pewwaps it would be better to say nothin' about it, Hewwies. Wynn would get into a feahful wow if it came out that he was waidin' the lardah!"

"Cheese it!" growled Fatty Wynn, with an uneasy glance round.

"All sewene, Wynn! I am not goin' to tell them anythin'," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Come on, deah boy!"

The swell of St. Jim's walked off with Fatty Wynn, leaving his chums chuckling. Arthur Augustus' way of keeping anything secret never failed to cause hilarity in Study No. 6.

In the dusk the two juniors slipped round to the rear of the New House. Lights were burning in the kitchen and the house-dame's room, but the windows were screened with dark curtains. Fatty Wynn stopped



under a square dark window with a stone sill covered with wire-netting.

"Is that the lardah-window, deah boy?"

"That's it!"

"But you will nevah be able to get through the wiah."

"I've got a pair of wire-cutters!"

"Bai Jove! Wynn, there will be a feahful wow if the lardah is burgled like that!" said Arthur Augustus, in some alarm.

"That's why I haven't got a New House chap to help me," said Fatty. "It won't come out about you lending a hand."

"I was not thinkin' of that, Wynn. But it will come out about you, and Watty will come down on you like a hundred of bwicks. He will know it is you if you take your own gwub."

"Can't be helped. Gimme a bunk up!"

"Pway allow me to give you a word of advice, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "You cannot do bettah than be advised by a fellah of tact and judgment. I wathah pwide myself upon my tact and judgment, you know. The fellahs in my studay—"

"Ring off, old chap, and gimme a bunk up."

"The fellahs in my studay," pursued Arthur Augustus calmly, "do not wely on my tact and judgment, and they get into all sorts of scwapes. I twust you will take my advice. I wecommend you—"

"Oh, dear!"

"Anythin' the mattah, Wynn?"

"No; only suffering from too much jaw!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Are you going to bunk me up?" demanded Wynn.

"Yaas, but pway allow me to give you a word of advice first. If you collah your own gwub, Watty will know it is you. Why not collah somethin' else of the same value, which would be quite justifiable? Then Watty will not have any clue."

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn, quite struck by that sage advice. "You're not such an idiot as they make out, Gussy."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"I'll jolly well do it," said Fatty. "There's lots in the larder, I know that, once I'm within reach of it. Thanks, old scout. Now bunk me up."

"Certainly, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy planted himself close to the wall, and Fatty Wynn clambered on his back. There was a loud gasp from Arthur Augustus.

"Whatter marrer?" mumbled Wynn breathlessly.

"Gwooooh! I—I forgot you weighed twentay stone, Wynn."

"I don't weigh twenty stone, you fathead!"

"I—I feah I shall collapse. Gwooh! Oh, bai Jove!"

"Don't let me down!" yelled Fatty Wynn. "Stick it out! Oh, crumbs! Yah!"

Bump!

Arthur Augustus had fairly collapsed under the fat Fourth-Former's weight. He staggered, and Fatty Wynn came down with a rush. He sat on the hard, unsympathetic ground, and roared.

"Yow-ow! Oh, you fathead! Yoo-hoooh!"

"Gwooooh!"

"Oh, you idiot! Oh, my bones! Yow-ow!"

"Oh, deah!" panted Arthur Augustus. "I am weally vewy sowwy, Wynn. But weally I am not an elephant, you know. I twust you are not hurt. Oh, deah!"

"Yaroooh!"

"If you make that wow, Fatty, Watty may heah you."

Fatty Wynn choked back the sounds of anguish. He did not wish to be caught under the larder window, frequenting with felonious intent, so to speak. He limped to his feet, mumbling.

"Bai Jove! How vewy luckay!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"Lucky, you dummy!" breathed Fatty Wynn sulphurously.

"I was wewerrin' to this jacket, deah boy. You have wubbed your mudday boots all ovah it. It was vewy luckay I put on Dig's jacket."

"Bunk me up—"

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"Oh, deah!"

"Look here, I'll bunk you up!" said Fatty Wynn. "I can stand your weight all right. Get on my shoulders."

"Bai Jove! But—but I don't want to wob the lardah!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, vewy well!" said Arthur Augustus resignedly.

"Pway give me a back, Wynn."

Fatty Wynn planted himself firmly close to the wall, and Arthur Augustus climbed on his back. The Welsh junior stood like a rock. Arthur Augustus, kneeling on his shoulders, easily reached the stone sill above.

"All serene!" murmured Fatty. "Here's the wire-cutters. Just rip it open, anyhow; it don't matter if you damage it."

"I should be sowwy to do unneecesawwy damage, Wynn."

"For goodness' sake, don't jaw so much, old chap!" said Wynn. "You're like a sheep's head, you know—nearly all jaw. The cook may come out any minute."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus set to work rapidly with the wire-cutters. In a few minutes the wire-netting over the window was in ruins. Inside the netting was the window, which, however, was open for ventilation. Arthur Augustus put in his head and shoulders, resting his weight on the sill.

"All right?" asked Fatty anxiously.

"Yawoooh!"

"What's the matter now?"

"Gwooooh! I've knocked my beastlay head!"

"Never mind your head, old chap. Hand out the grub—all you can reach."

"Yow-ow!"

"I'm waiting, you know. Suppose Monteith should come nosing round, or Sefton? For goodness' sake, buck up!"

It was very dark inside the larder, but as Arthur Augustus' eyes became used to the gloom, he could see various articles within his reach.

"What shall I pass you, Wynn? There is a cold wabbit heah."

"Yes, yes!"

"And a tongue."

"Good!"

"And a numbah of sausages."

"Ripping!"

"And a meat-pie."

"Hurrah!"

"Yaas; but which of them shall I pass to you, Wynn?"

"The lot—quick!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus handed out the articles one after another. Fatty Wynn received them from him and laid them on the ground. Arthur Augustus wriggled out backwards from the window, and dropped to the ground, gasping. He rubbed his noble "napper" rather ruefully.

"I have given my head a feahful knock," he remarked.

"Never mind. You have this meat-pie," said Fatty generously. "The rabbit and tongue and sosses will do me."

"Thank you, deah boy. I was not burgin' on my own account. I am wathah dustay and gwubbay. It was vewy fortunate I put Dig's jacket on. Bettah deah off befoah you are spotted wourd heah."

"You bet! Thanks awfully!"

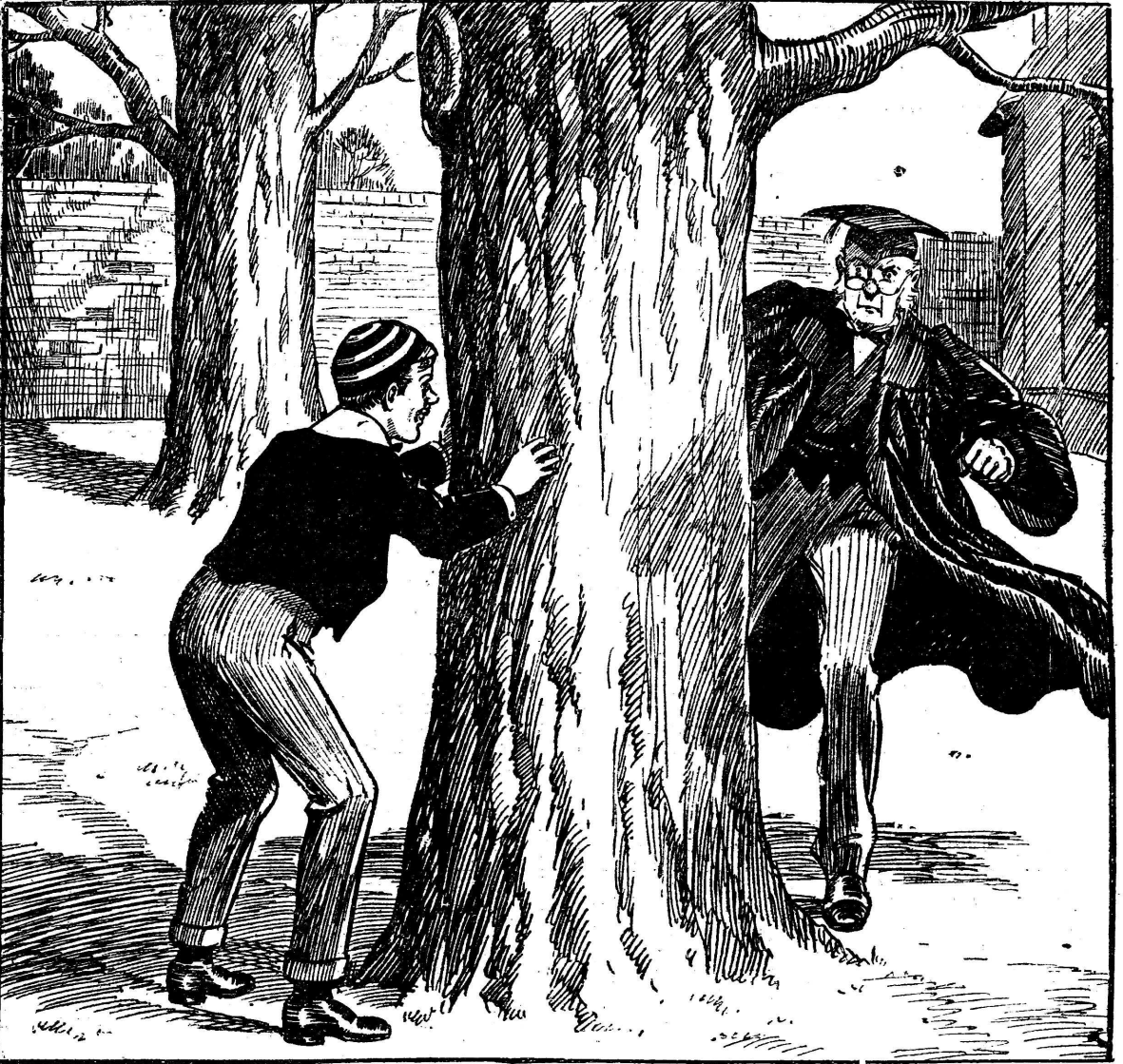
"Don't mench, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. And he walked off to the School House, while Fatty Wynn collected up his plunder with a gleeful countenance, which shone with satisfaction like unto a full moon.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Corn in Egypt!

THERE was a sound of voices raised in warm argument in Study No. 6 as the Terrible Three came along the passage. Tom Merry kicked the door open, and looked in. The four Fourth-Formers were there, and they seemed a little excited.





Redfern dodged round a tree. Mr. Ratcliff dodged after him, and Redfern promptly dodged round another. It was like a game; and Mr. Ratcliff, realising what a ridiculous figure he was cutting, stopped, panting for breath. "Do you refuse to follow me, Redfern?" he gasped. "Yes, sir," said Redfern quietly. (See Chapter 11.)

Herries was grinning, but Blake and Digby were talking to Arthur Augustus in extremely emphatic tones.

"Trouble in the family?" said Tom Merry soothingly.

"Tell your Uncle Tom all about it."

"Let not your angry passions rise," chided Monty Lowther. "Be good, and I'll read you my latest limerick for the 'Weekly.'"

"We've come to tea," hinted Manners.

"I twust, you fellows, that you will leave off waggin' now that our guests have awwived," said Arthur Augustus, with stately dignity.

"Look at my jacket!" hooted Digby. "Covered with mud!"

"Look at my cap!" growled Blake. "Smothered!"

"It weally was not my fault, Blake. I could not wefuse to give Wynn a bunk up. I wegard it as vewy grewt presence of mind on my part to put on your cap and Dig's jacket. I noticed that the fat boundah's boots were mudday."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Next time I play footer on a muddy day," said Blake ferociously, "I'll put on Gussy's Sunday topper and his best bags!"

"Bai Jove, Blake——"

"What about tea?" murmured Manners. "We've been editing a long time, and editing makes you hungry."

"Pway stop waggin', deah boys. Let's have tea," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy to say that I have not yet weceived the wemittance I was expectin'."

"Then what are we going to have for tea?" demanded Blake. "The cupboard's as empty as the Kaiser's brain box."

"Bai Jove! It appeahs that I have wequested your companay to tea at a wathah awkward moment, you fellahs."

"It do—it does!" agreed Tom Merry. "We forgive you, but what about tea? Our study cupboard is as empty as the safe of a house where the Crown Prince has stayed."

"Better all go together, and make somebody stand us tea," said Blake reflectively. "Who's in funds along the passage? They can't refuse seven of us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—— Bai Jove, heah is that boundah Wynn again!"

Fatty Wynn came into the study, followed by Figgins and Kerr. All three of the New House juniors were grinning.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete-School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



There was a large bag in Fatty Wynn's plump hand, and he laid it on the table. The School House juniors regarded it in surprise.

"What the dickens——" began Tom Merry.

"You fellows haven't had tea?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"No fear! There isn't any tea going in this study."

"Good! We've come to tea!"

"The merry dickens you have!" ejaculated Blake.

"Well, you're welcome to a whack in one of Tower's dog-biscuits. That's all we've got!"

"We've brought the feed with us," exclaimed Figgins.

"If you chaps don't mind, we'll stand the feed, if we can have it in your study."

"Come to my arms!" said Blake affectionately.

"Bai Jove, that's wippin', Figgay, deah boy!"

"Fatty's simply rolling in tuck," said Figgins. "He won't tell us where he got it from, but he's simply reeking with it. For some weird reason I don't pretend to understand, he wants to have the feed over here. Ratty confiscated some of his stuff this afternoon, but he wouldn't worry us at tea-time. But there it is!"

"Corn in Egypt!" said Monty Lowther, as Fatty Wynn opened the bag. "My hat, what do my aged eyes behold? Sosses, rabbit, meat-pie, tongue! Fatty, my plump tulip, let me kiss thee on thy baby brow!"

"Oh, come off!" said Fatty. "Lend me a frying-pan, somebody. I'll have these things ready in a jiff. I suppose you've got salt and pepper, and some bread. That's all we want now."

"We'll borrow a loaf along the passage," said Blake. "As for the giddy condiments, we've got lots. That's all we had for tea before you came. By Jove, we'll let you sing a Welsh song after tea, if you like, Fatty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn did not answer: he was already busy with the frying-pan. His fat face beamed as the sausages began to sizzle.

The clouds had rolled by, so to speak, in Study No. 6. It was too late for tea in Hall, and seven hungry juniors would have been reduced to the necessity of raiding along the passage but for the timely arrival of Figgins & Co. It was like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years.

All hands set to work at once. Where Fatty Wynn had mysteriously obtained that timely supply did not matter very much, compared with the much more important fact that he had obtained it. The table was laid, the crocks were handed out, while a beneficent scent of cooking filled the study, and pervaded the passage outside.

"Begin with the rabbit!" beamed Fatty Wynn. "Better have that cold. It's a ripping rabbit—I've had some. Never mind where it came from—pile in!"

"Blessed if I quite catch on," said Tom Merry. "What's the giddy mystery, anyway?"

"I catch on, though!" grinned Blake. "This is what that fathead was bunking Wynn up for, I suppose."

"What's that?" exclaimed Figgins.

"Shut up!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn hastily, turning a ruddy face from the fire. "They're not to know!"

"We're not to know!" exclaimed Kerr.

"No! Not a word!"

"Why not, you fat image?"

"Safer not!" said Fatty Wynn mysteriously. "That's all right. Don't you ask any questions. The grub's mine, that's enough. Exchange is no robbery, is it?"

"No, but——"

"Pile in! The sosses are nearly done."

Most of the juniors were already piling in. They were all hungry. Blake & Co. were fresh from the footer, and the Terrible Three had been editing so busily that they had forgotten tea-time. So full justice was done to that handsome spread so unexpectedly "stood" by Fatty Wynn.

"Bai Jove! I must remark that this is wippin' of you chaps!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But if Watty knew——"

"What's Ratty got to do with it?" asked Figgins, mystified.

"Nothing!" jerked in Fatty Wynn. "Cheese it, Gussy!"

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NO. 4. "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2D. OUT TO-DAY. BUY IT AT ONCE!

"Wely on me, deah boy! I am not goin' to say a word about the lardah——"

"The larder!" ejaculated Figgins. "What larder?"

"Pway excuse me if I do not weply to that question, Figgins. If you do not know anythin' about it, you will be able to say so to Watty when he makes inquiries."

"Blessed if I understand," said Figgins. "But these sosses are a treat—just like those we had for breakfast this morning. Might be some of the same lot, by Jove, only better cooked. Pass me another, Fatty."

"Here you are, Figgay."

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, holding up his tea-cup, "here's to the founder of the feast, and may his shadow never grow whiskers!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Heah, heah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Heah's to the foundah of the feast—old Watty! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ratty!" repeated Figgins, with a stare.

"Shut up!" roared Wynn

"Weally, Wynn, I was not goin'——"

"Shove a soss into his mouth, and keep him quiet!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I wefuse to have a soss shoved into my mouth, Fatty Wynn, and I wegard you as an ass!"

Figgins and Kerr were decidedly mystified, but Fatty's evident uneasiness made them forbear to ask questions. Tea in Study No. 6 finished amid general satisfaction.

Just after the juniors had finished, the door of the study opened, and Redfern of the New House looked in.

"Oh, you're here!" he exclaimed. "I've been looking for you. Come on!"

"What's the row?" asked Figgins.

"Ratty! The whole House is called up, and you were missing, so I've scouted for you. Come on, or Ratty will warn you!"

"The whole House!" repeated Kerr. "What's wrong, then?"

"Goodness knows!" Redfern shrugged his shoulders. "Ratty in his tantrums again, I suppose. Follow on, kids!"

Redfern hurried away, and Figgins & Co. followed him. There was no time to be wasted, when Mr. Ratcliff had ordered the House to be assembled. Mr. Ratcliff did not like being kept waiting.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the New House fellows had gone. "I feah there is going to be twouble. Watty is lookin' for the waidah."

"What raider?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Pway keep it dark, deah boys. Fatty has been waidin' the lardah, because Watty confiscated his gwub."

"And that's where the feed came from?" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I wegard Fatty as bein' quite justified, othahwise I should not have bunked him up. But Watty will be vewy wild, I think. I twust Fatty will keep it dark. Pway we had bettah go evah and see how they're gettin' on."

"Perhaps we hadn't!" grunted Blake. "You'd give Fatty away as safe as houses?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Well, it was a good feed" remarked Monty Lowther. "It was worth a licking, especially if Fatty gets the licking. But it had better be kept awfully dark, and I suggest that Gussy be promptly sat upon every time he opens his mouth."

To which the whole study replied unanimously:

"Hear, hear!"

## CHAPTER 4.

### Mr. Ratcliff is Ratty!

THERE was considerable surprise, and in some quarters alarm in the New House at St. Jim's. The order had gone forth for the whole House to be assembled in Hall, by order of the House-master. Even the high and mighty Sixth were not exempt. Monteith and Baker and Sefton and the rest of the New House Sixth-Formers looked very cross when they came in. They did not like being bothered. Such



alarm as was felt was among the juniors. They did not know what delinquencies might have come to light, and the matter was evidently serious.

Figgins and Kerr looked very curiously at Fatty Wynn, as the Co. took their places in the ranks of the Fourth. The references to "Ratty" in Study No. 6 recurred to their minds, and they wondered whether the fat Fourth-Former was the cause of this unusual proceeding on Ratty's part. Fatty Wynn's plump face expressed nothing whatever. He maintained an appearance of unconcern.

"Anybody know what the row is?" whispered Redfern.

"Blessed if I do," said Figgins.

"It's a giddy mystery," said Lawrence. "Something to do with Mrs. Kenwigg, I think."

"Mrs. Kenwigg?"

"Well, Ratty went to see her in her room, and came away looking like a Hun!" said Lawrence. "I saw him. He's been down in the kitchen, too. Something gone wrong below stairs."

"What's that got to do with us?" said Owen.

"Goodness knows."

"Silence!" rapped out Monteith irritably, as Mr. Ratcliff came in.

There was silence at once, and all eyes were turned upon Mr. Ratcliff. That gentleman's thin and meagre face was not pleasant in its expression. His brow was like thunder. Ratty was evidently in one of what the juniors disrespectfully termed his "tantrums."

Mr. Ratcliff's small, bright eyes, which reminded one of a rat, gleamed upon the anxious assembly. Some of the prefects assumed an air of elaborate unconcern. They wanted Mr. Ratcliff to be aware that his "tantrums" did not disturb the serenity of the Sixth.

"Boys," said Mr. Ratcliff, in a voice like a file, "a most unprecedented thing has occurred in this House. An act of flagrant dishonesty has been committed."

A thrill ran through the assembly.

Clampe of the Shell turned quite pale. He wondered wildly whether Mr. Ratcliff had discovered, at last, any of his secret dealings with a certain "bookie," whose "dead certs" accounted for a good deal of Clampe's pocket-money.

Sefton of the Sixth looked uneasy, too. He had certain little secrets, which he was very careful to keep to himself, but which might have been brought to light.

Mr. Ratcliff paused, to allow his words to sink in, perhaps to give the assembled consciences time to work.

"A robbery has been perpetrated!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Figgins, in dismay.

"Somebody's been burgling Ratty's desk again!" murmured Redfern. "Oh, dear! The School House will chip us over this."

"I don't believe it," muttered Kerr angrily. "The old donkey is making some idiotic mistake. There aren't any thieves in the New House."

"Silence!" growled Monteith.

"Some time this afternoon," resumed Mr. Ratcliff, "the House larder was broken into, and a quantity of eatables abstracted."

There was a buzz in the Hall. Monteith looked at Mr. Ratcliff as if he would like to hit him. So that was it. After giving them that shock, it turned out that somebody had taken "tuck" from the larder. That was all! Mr. Ratcliff talked as if a burglary had been committed.

"The old duffer!" growled Figgins, in relief. "I knew it was all rot. Somebody's taken a currant bun, I suppose."

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, as the murmur of voices rose—a murmur of anger and indignation.

The buzz died away.

"Some unknown boy," went on the Housemaster, "has broken into the larder. The wire-netting over the window has been cut. A meat-pie, a tongue, a number of sausages, and a cold rabbit have been taken."

"My hat!" murmured Kerr and Figgins together.

Their eyes turned involuntarily upon Fatty Wynn.

Fatty closed one eye for a moment.

"The House has been assembled, in order that the culprit may be discovered at once," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Some boy in this House has been guilty of this theft. It is possible that the boy in question does not regard the action in the light of a theft. I take the most serious

view of the matter, however. The culprit will be severely flogged, and a bill will be sent to his parents for payment. I call upon the boy in question to come forward!"

Some of the juniors grinned.

The prospect of being severely flogged, and of having a bill sent to his parents, was not exactly enticing to any boy. No one was surprised to see that nobody came forward.

Mr. Ratcliff waited a full minute. There was no movement and no reply. His brow grew darker.

"There is no clue, at present, to the culprit," he said. "If the boy refuses to admit his guilt, his punishment will be all the more severe when he is discovered. He may even be expelled from the school. Boys, I appeal to you! There is a dishonest lad in your midst. Anyone who knows or suspects him is bound to come forward and speak."

"Chance for a sneak!" said Figgins. "What offers?"

There was a chuckle in the Fourth.

Mr. Ratcliff's cold eye turned upon the Fourth-Formers. The chuckle died away suddenly.

"I am waiting," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I am perfectly assured that this outrage has not been committed without the knowledge of other boys."

Mr. Ratcliff waited. He was likely to wait. If any fellow there had known or suspected the identity of the raider, he was not likely to come forward and acquaint Mr. Ratcliff with it. His life would hardly have been worth living in the New House afterwards.

Darker and darker grew the brow of the Housemaster. To his narrow and prejudiced mind a refusal to "sneak" seemed like a defiance of his authority.

"Very well," said Mr. Ratcliff, at last. "It appears that the whole House associates itself with the dishonest boy who has robbed the larder. Until the guilty party is discovered, therefore, punishment will fall upon the whole House. I except, of course, the senior boys. The culprit is undoubtedly a boy in the Shell, the Fourth, or the Third Form. I give him one more opportunity to speak."

Silence.

"Very well—very well indeed!" Mr. Ratcliff could not conceal his irritation and chagrin. "The juniors of this House are evidently in a conspiracy against the authority of their Housemaster. It is my duty to make my authority respected. I shall not fail to do so. Since the larder has undoubtedly been robbed in order to provide for an orgy of over-feeding in some junior study, I have little doubt that a discovery will be made. Unless it is made, and at once, the junior portion of this House will be placed upon short commons until the culprit is known. Monteith!"

"Yes, sir!" said the head prefect of the New House, with a grim look.

"You and the other prefects will kindly make inquiries as to the recent consumption of food in the junior studies. You will ascertain in which of the studies has been consumed a meat-pie, a tongue, a rabbit, and a quantity of sausages. Kindly report to me at once. Dismiss!"

The assembly broke up, grinning. Monteith's face was a study. To make a round of the juniors' studies inquiring after lost meat-pies and sausages was not exactly a task that pleased the great man of the Sixth.

"Get to your studies, you young rascals," said Monteith gruffly.

And the juniors departed smiling.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Sausage Hunters!

"TURN out your pockets!" grinned Redfern.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were in their study, awaiting the call of the prefects.

Those great personages had indulged in a considerable amount of grumbling among themselves, and in strict privacy had passed remarks about Mr. Ratcliff which would have made his scanty hair curl if he had heard them.

But the Housemaster's behest had to be obeyed, and Monteith and Baker and Webb and Sefton started on their rounds.

Monteith looked frowningly into Redfern's study, and

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his frown grew deeper as he heard Redfern's humorous remark.

"Now then," snapped the prefect, "what did you kids have for tea?"

"Ginger-beer," said Redfern.

"Nothing else?"

"No; we ran out of tea, and drank ginger-beer instead."

"I mean, what did you have to eat? You know very well what I mean, you young rascal!"

"Let's see," said Redfern meditatively. "I had a rasher."

"I had an egg," said Lawrence cheerfully.

"I had a bloater," said Owen. "You can still scent it in the study, Monteith."

"No meat-pies?"

"No, worse luck!"

"Or sausages, or rabbit?"

"Divil a one!"

"And no tongue?"

"Well, I had a tongue," said Redfern.

"Ah! Well, you'll have to account for it, I suppose," growled Monteith. "Did you get it at the tuckshop?"

"No!"

"At Rylecombe?"

"No."

"Did it come in a hamper?"

"No."

"Oh!" said Monteith. "Then you can kindly explain where you got it? Did one of the other fellows give it to you?"

"No."

"Then where did you get it?"

"I brought it to St. Jim's with me."

Monteith stared.

"You brought that tongue to St. Jim's with you!" he ejaculated. "Do you mean to say that a tongue has kept good all that time?"

"Yes, Monteith."

"It's impossible—unless it was tinned tongue, of course."

Was it in a tin?"

"No."

"Very well, you will follow me to Mr. Ratcliff."

"I—I say, Monteith, it was mine, you know," said Redfern.

"You can prove that to Mr. Ratcliff. He may believe that you have an untinned tongue that's kept good for whole terms—perhaps."

"But—but it kept good all right, Monteith. I've used it every day. I—I kept it in a safe place, you see."

"Oh! And where did you keep it?"

"In my mouth."

"Your mouth?" yelled Monteith.

"Certainly! Where could I keep it? You see, it's fixed there," explained Redfern. "It—it's my own tongue I'm speaking about, you know. I—I was born with it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lawrence and Owen.

Monteith simply gasped as he realised that the Fourth-Former was pulling his leg. The cheerful Reddy had been alluding to his own tongue, which certainly he had brought to St. Jim's with him.

Monteith did not laugh. He grasped Redfern by the collar.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he roared.

"Here, I say, Monteith! Yow-ow! Leggo! I say, you know— Oh, crumbs! Yah!"

Monteith shook the junior till the study spun round him. Then he dropped him on the rug, and stamped out of the study. Redfern sat up and gasped.

"Oh, my hat! The silly ass! Lot of good working off first-class humour on a giddy prefect!" he groaned.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monteith stamped along to Figgins' study. Figgins & Co. looked very demure as he came in, frowning.

"We had tea over in the School House, Monteith," said Kerr. "But you can look in the cupboard if you like."

"Hang your cupboard!" said Monteith.

But he looked in, and satisfied himself that there were no meat-pies, rabbits, sausages, or tongue there. He came out of the study and met Baker, who was making for the stairs.

"Finished?" he asked.

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Baker snorted.

"Yes; I've asked the kids."

"Taken their word—what?"

"Yes Why not? If Ratty wants to track down sausages and rabbits, he can track 'em down himself."

Baker went down to his study, grunting. Monteith hesitated a moment, and followed him. Webb followed, too. Only Sefton was left to carry on the inquiry. The bully of the Sixth was keener on the search than the other prefects.

But Sefton failed to make any discovery. He came into Monteith's study to tell the head prefect so.

"Some of the young rascals have had the stuff," said Sefton. "But I fancy they've hidden it away somewhere."

"I don't care if they have," said Monteith. "I know we've been made to look idiots to the whole House. Some cheeky young rascal has nicknamed us already the sausage-hunters."

"I'm fed up with it," growled Baker.

"Same here," said Monteith. "I'll go and tell Ratty there's nothing doing. He can send for a detective if he likes. Perhaps Sexton Blake or Ferrers Locke might be able to track down his lost rabbit. I know I'm jolly well not going to do it!"

And Monteith repaired to Mr. Ratcliff's study with his report.

The Housemaster heard it, with a black brow.

"Then the stolen goods cannot be discovered!" he exclaimed.

"No, sir. As a matter of fact," said Monteith, speaking out more plainly than he usually ventured to do with his Housemaster, "it was very likely only a lark of some kid, and it seems rather strong to call it a theft."

"I did not ask your opinion about that, Monteith."

"Very well, sir," said the prefect, greatly discomfited, and he quitted the study without another word.

Mr. Ratcliff remained alone with a moody brow.

The matter was not done with yet, by any means. The New House fellows did not expect Mr. Ratcliff to let it drop; they knew him too well for that. They were curious to know what step he would take next.

He had spoken of punishing the whole House unless the delinquent was discovered—an act of injustice which would be rather "thick" even for Ratty.

There were two juniors who knew who the real culprit was. After the prefect's visit to their study, Figgins and Kerr taxed Fatty Wynn on the subject. Fatty Wynn was non-committal.

"Don't you ask questions," he said. "The less you know about it the better; old Ratty may get on your track."

"But that feed over the way!" exclaimed Figgins.

"There was a meat-pie, a rabbit, a tongue, and sausages."

"There was!" agreed Fatty.

"Then you burgled the larder. And I suppose you got Gussy to help you. That's what he was chortling about," said Kerr.

"You oughtn't to have done it, Fatty," said Figgins seriously. "You might have known that Ratty would call it stealing."

Fatty Wynn snorted.

"If I had anything, it was only what I was entitled to," he replied. "Ratty took my jam-tarts and cake, didn't he? Exchange is no robbery! I didn't call him a thief when he took my cake."

"Ahem! Housemasters do these things," said Figgins.

"He's put it among the House stores," said Fatty. "That will save him money on the bills. I suppose a chap in the Fourth ain't supposed to supply the House with jam-tarts and cake, is he? One good turn deserves another. He's got my jam-tarts and my cake in exchange for his stuff. What more does he want?"

"He wants you!" grinned Kerr.

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to tell you fellows anything about it, either."

"Well, you couldn't tell us much more than we know already," grinned Figgins. "So that's why you got a School House chap to help you, was it? Well, I don't



see what Ratty can do, so long as we keep mum. But—but I wonder what he's got in his head."

It was not till the next morning that Figgins & Co. discovered what Mr. Ratcliff had in his head. It came as a painful shock to them.

### CHAPTER 6. Short Commons!

"WHAT'S the trouble?"

The Terrible Three had come out of the School House after breakfast, for a run in the keen winter air before lessons. They found Figgins & Co. in the quadrangle, looking decidedly glum and grim. Fatty Wynn was almost in tears.

"Licked?" asked Manners.

Figgins shook his head.

"Worse than that!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Why don't some Hun drop a bomb on Ratty? That's what I want to know!"

"Ratty again!" said Monty Lowther.

"You'd hardly believe it," said Figgins, with suppressed fury. "Fairly knocked us into a cocked hat. The larder was raided yesterday—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the chap can't be discovered—"

"Rather a fat chap, wasn't it?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Well, whoever it was, he can't be found," said Figgins. "Ratty's decided to punish the whole House—the juniors, you know—till he's found. And how do you think he's going to do it?"

"Lickings or lines?"

"Worse!" groaned Fatty.

"He says the grub was raided for what he calls an orgy. What we call a study feed, Ratty calls an orgy, you know. That's like him. Well, he's going to stop our orgies. He's cut down the grub."

"My hat!"

"No rashers in the morning!" said Fatty Wynn tragically. "Only bread-and-butter and porridge."

"Well, a chap can survive on bread-and-butter and porridge," said Tom Merry comfortingly. "Lots of people live on that."

"I can't!" mumbled Fatty.

"Of course, it comes harder on Fatty," said Kerr. "Fatty could always eat enough for a dozen, you know. But that isn't all. Dinner, too—"

"He's cutting down the dinner!" said Figgins. "That's the order! All juniors in the House will have one small helping, and no pudding."

"No pudding!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Would you believe it? No pudding! N-a-no pudding!"

"Horrors on horrors' head!" said Monty Lowther sympathetically.

"And tea in the studies is going to be stopped," said Kerr. "Tea in Hall for all of us, till the chap is found out. And only bread-and-butter. No cake or jam. And the tuckshop is out of bounds now for the New House."

"Great Scott! There won't be any more orgies, that's a cert."

"We're not going to stand it!" howled Figgins.

"What are you going to do?"

"Blessed if I know," Figgins had to confess. "You see, you can't serag a Housemaster; 'tain't allowed. But we're not going to starve."

"I know my health will give way," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I sha'n't be able to keep goal any longer. I shall gradually fade away and die."

"Well, it will take you longer to fade away than the other chaps," remarked Monty Lowther. "You'll be the sole survivor in the New House, Fatty."

"Oh, don't be funny! This ain't a joke."

"It's more dangerous for Fatty, too," said Lowther commiseratingly. "When the chaps get really sharp set, they'll notice how awfully fat Fatty is, and when it comes to cannibalism, Fatty Wynn will go first. I suppose he would last the whole House till the end of the war."

"You silly ass!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling dummies——"

"Shush!" said Lowther. "I was going to say——"

"Oh, don't talk to me, you funny idiot!"

"I was going to say that——"

"Shut up!"

"That perhaps you'd like this toffee," said Lowther calmly.

Fatty Wynn's face cleared at once. He accepted the toffee, and it vanished in a moment. The bell for classes called the juniors in, and the discussion of the New House grievances was postponed.

But those grievances were very real and heavy.

At dinner-time in the New House the new regime was in force.

Every hungry junior received one small helping. Pudding did not appear on the junior tables at all.

It was true that the amount of provisions supplied was sufficient to keep the juniors in health. Even Mr. Ratcliff did not care to cut it too short for that. But a bare sufficiency for the purposes of subsistence was not quite enough for hungry fellows, and, indeed, the line was drawn very sharp. Very nearly every fellow in the House would have liked a second helping, but there were no helpings to be had. Every fellow, without exception, wanted the usual pudding. Pudding was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream.

The New House juniors were looking black and rebellious as they came out of the dining-room.

For the New House, the tuckshop had been placed out of bounds. In spite of the prohibition, however, there was a swarming in that direction.

But it was in vain.

Dame Taggies had received her orders from Mr. Ratcliff. No New House boy was to be served in the school-shop.

The applicants were turned empty away.

It was simply infuriating.

Glum were the faces of the New House fellows in class that afternoon. They could not even look forward to tea in the study. Tea in the study was banned.

At tea-time they marched into Hall, and sat down to the long tables. Frugal fare was placed before them, and even bread-and-butter was limited.

After tea they hung about in groups, hungry and savage, and confiding to one another what they would like to do to Ratty.

"What are you going to do about it?" Redfern demanded of Figgins.

Figgins grunted.

"What can I do?" he asked.

"Isn't that your business? You're leader."

"Bow-wow!"

Clampe's been talking of finding out the chap who raided the larder, and giving him away to Ratty," said Redfern.

Figgins scowled ferociously.

"Where's the rotten sneak?" he exclaimed. "I've got a thick ear for him!"

"He's got one already," said Redfern, with a grin.

"I left him dabbing his nose, too."

"Good for you, Reddy!"

"I suppose you chaps know who it was?" said Lawrence.

"Ahem!"

"Might have been some School House chap," said Lawrence.

"It wasn't," said Fatty Wynn.

"Then you know who it was?"

"Ahem!"

"Some of the fellows say that the chap ought to own up," remarked Owen.

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins. "That's all piffle! If Ratty would be reasonable, it would be different. But he makes out that it was dishonest to take a meat-pie and a rabbit in exchange for jam-tarts and a cake. He can't expect a fellow to own up if he's going to put it like that."

"To say nothing of the flogging," said Kerr. "It's rot! Ratty can't keep this up very long, anyway."

"Well, if you fellows can't find a way out of the pickle, I'm going to," said Redfern. "After all, we're top study in the New House. I've always said so."

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "TALBOT'S RESCUE!" A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"You've always talked out of your silly hat!" agreed Figgins.

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Look here, Reddy——"

"Cheese it!" said Kerr pacifically. "No good ragging one another. You think of a way out of it, Reddy, and we'll back you up."

"Done!" said Redfern.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Pratt?" asked Figgins, as Pratt of the Fourth came along wringing his hands.

"Ow-wow!" gasped Pratt. "I've been through it! Wow-wow! I—I got Blake to get me some stuff from the tuckshop, as he's a School House kid—yow-ow!—and Ratty found it out somehow—spying, as usual, I suppose—wow! I've got three on each—yow-ow!—hand, and Blake's reported to his Housemaster—yooop! Railton's given him a hundred lincs for helping me to disobey Ratty—woooooow!"

"Well, I suppose Railton had to," said Figgins considerably. "But what an awful beast Ratty is! I was thinking of getting Tom Merry to do some shopping for me."

"Licking if you do!" groaned Pratt.

"And lincs for Tommy!" said Kerr. "Not good enough, Figgy!"

"But what's going to be done?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, almost wildly. "I'm frightfully hungry now—famished, in fact. What shall I feel like to-night—what?"

"My hat! It won't be safe to be in the dorm with you," said Lawrence.

"Something's got to be done!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I tell you we're not standing it!"

"Well, it's up to us, as top study," said Redfern. "I'm going to have a big think."

"What with?" snorted Figgins.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Redfern and Owen and Lawrence walked away, Reddy's brows deeply wrinkled. Apparently he had started on the "big think."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Figgins. "We've got to toe the line, that's all!"

"But—I say——" mumbled Fatty Wynn.

"All your fault!" said Figgins. "What did you want to rob the larder for? We've got to go through it, unless some kind-hearted Hun drops a bomb on Ratty! Nice prospect!"

Fatty Wynn groaned at the prospect. He groaned many times that evening at prep in the study. After the feast the reckoning had come, and the reckoning was to last longer than the feast!

## CHAPTER 7.

### Something Like a Rag!

**T**HE next day there were clouded brows and gleaming eyes in the New House.

The juniors were fed up—more than fed up.

Rebellion was not exactly feasible, but the juniors were very nearly ripe for it.

Tom Merry & Co. were sympathetic. But the School House fellows could do little. Mr. Ratcliff was very keen. He had already discovered the "dodge" of some of the New House fellows in getting friends from the School House to make purchases for them at the tuckshop. He had come down very heavy on that dodge. Several of the School House chums had been reported to their Housemaster for trying to help the unhappy victims of Ratty's tyranny to obtain supplies, and they had been punished. Whether Mr. Railton approved of Ratty's conduct, or not, he could not allow his boys to interfere with the regulations of the other House. And that morning he issued an order forbidding his boys to make any purchases at the school-shop, excepting with their own money, and for themselves. He could do nothing less, at the demand of Mr. Ratcliff.

That resource was knocked on the head at once. But Tom Merry & Co., anxious to help their old rivals who had fallen upon such bad times, were not easily beaten.

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That day a whole crowd of School House fellows issued invitations to tea to a crowd of New House fellows.

But on that point they found that Mr. Ratcliff was equal to them. Figgins & Co. came into the School House at tea-time, looking lugubrious. They had been asked to tea, but they had not come to tea. They had come to explain that they couldn't come.

"Heah you are, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus cheerily, as they came in. "Tea's neatly weady in the studay. Come on!"

"Can't!" said Figgins.

"Why not, Figgay?"

"School House out of bounds for us, so long as the new order lasts," said Figgins. "Just dropped in to tell you. We must clear now, or we shall be spotted here. Thanks all the same, Gussy, but Ratty's done us!"

"Bai Jove! What a wotten shame!"

Figgins & Co. departed hurriedly. But brief as their visit was, they had been spotted by Sefton, who reported them to the Housemaster. They were sent for by Mr. Ratcliff at once.

"You have broken House-bounds!" said Mr. Ratcliff, taking up his cane. "Hold out your hands! You first, Figgins!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Figgins & Co. quitted Mr. Ratcliff's study, looking and feeling quite Humish. Fatty Wynn collapsed on the settee in the Hall.

Tea in Study No. 6 would have revived Fatty. He had been robbed of that happy prospect. That was worse than the caning. Life did not seem worth living to the fat Fourth-Former just then.

"I'm jolly well going to run away from school!" he groaned.

Figgins clenched his hands.

"Something will have to be done!" he said. "This can't go on much longer!"

"I—I say, Figgy, suppose I own up?"

"And get a flogging, fathead?"

"Well, a flogging wouldn't be much worse than this!" said Fatty Wynn, almost tearfully. "I'm wasting away!"

Figgins could not help grinning, angry as he was. The plump figure of David Llewellyn Wynn showed no signs, so far, of wasting away. His plump cheeks were as round and rosy as ever.

"You can grin!" mumbled Fatty. "You don't know what I'm suffering. I've got an aching void. I know now what they feel like in open boats at sea."

"You're not going to own up!" said Figgins decidedly. "We're not going to give in to Ratty like that. Look here! We'll put it to the fellows, and make a regular protest at tea-time. That ass Reddy says it's up to him. Well, I think it's up to us, and we're going to take the bull by the horns!"

"I'd rather take Ratty by the neck!" mumbled Wynn.

"There'll be a row, Figgy," said Kerr.

"Chance it!" said Figgins.

"Oh, all serene!"

Rebellion was smouldering in many breasts, and Figgins found a good many of the fellows prepared to back him up. The New House Fourth-Formers looked very determined when they went into Hall to tea. Mr. Ratcliff was there, at the senior table, where plenty reigned as usual. Figgins stood up instead of sitting down, and the rest of the Fourth followed his example. Baker, the prefect, who took the head of the Fourth-Form table, stared at them.

"Sit down!" he snapped.

The juniors remained standing.

"We want to speak to Mr. Ratcliff," said Figgins.

"Rubbish! Sit down."

Mr. Ratcliff glanced round, and rose to his feet. The look upon his face made some of the juniors wish they had sat down. But Figgins & Co. stood firm.

"What is it, Figgins?"

"If you please, sir, we wish to protest!" said Figgins, a little surprised at his own audacity.

"What?"

"We're tired of going short of food, sir. We protest."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ratcliff icily. "You protest,





"Don't let me down," yelled Fatty Wynn. "Stick it out! Oh, crumbs! Yah!" Bump! Arthur Augustus had fairly collapsed under the fat Fourth-Former's weight. He staggered, and Fatty Wynn came down with a rush, and sat on the hard, unsympathetic ground and roared. (See Chapter 2.)

Figgins? Am I to understand that all the juniors who are standing up protest also?"

"Yes, sir," said a chorus of voices.

"Very well. Each of you will stay in on Saturday afternoon and write out five hundred lines of Virgil. Now sit down."

The Fourth-Formers simply collapsed into their seats.

The frugal tea was disposed of, amid furious whispers and burning glances.

In silence the Fourth Form marched out after tea.

"Ripping wheeze—I don't think!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "Five hundred lines and a gating—my hat!"

"For goodness' sake, Figgins, don't let's have any more of your wheezes!" said Pratt.

"Of all the fatheads!" said Digs.

"Of all the duffers!"

"Of all the idiots!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Redfern. "What's the good of jawing Figgy? It was a good idea, and I backed him up. But it was N. G."

"N. blessed G.!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"I'm not going to stay in on Saturday afternoon!" said Figgins, between his teeth. "And I'm not going to write out five hundred lines."

"You've got to, ass!" said Lawrence.

"Well, I won't!"

"We'll have a strike against gatings and lines," said Kerr. "We shall have to come to grips with Ratty sooner or later. May as well be sooner."

"Blow Saturday afternoon!" said Fatty Wynn. "I shall be dead before Saturday afternoon if this goes on. I'm hungry!"

Redfern drew a deep breath.

"I've got an idea—" he began.

"Go and boil it!" said Figgins ungraciously.

"Who'll back me up?" said Redfern. "Dash it all, Figgy, don't be a pig, you know! I backed up your giddy protest, and it wasn't much good, was it? I've kept my idea back to give yours a chance."

"Let's hear it," said Figgins, more amicably; "anything up against Ratty and I'm your man."

"Gentlemen," said Redfern, looking round at the angry and excited Fourth-Formers, "I'm going down to the bunshop in Rylcombe to have the biggest tea they can provide. I invite you all to join me."

"Bunshop's been put out of bounds," said Lawrence.

"Can't be helped. I'm going. Who's coming with me? We'll have the biggest feed of the term!"

"And where will the tin come from?" asked Pratt.

"Ratty!"

"What?"

"That's the idea," said Redfern calmly. "The scheme is to order heaps of everything, first-class, as much as we can eat, and tell them to send the bill in to Ratty. We'll explain that it's Ratty's treat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha! Oh, what a rag! What a ripping rag! I'm your man!"

"Hurrah!" chortled Fatty Wynn.

"Bravo, Reddy!"

"There'll be a fearful row," said Pratt.

"Let there be! We can stand a row, with a good feed inside us, and plenty in our pockets for to-morrow. Besides, it will be worth something to see Ratty's face when the bill comes in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's game?" demanded Redfern.

"You and I and all of us," chortled Figgins. "Come on!"

"Hurrah!"

There was hardly a fellow who hung back from Reddy's daring scheme. The juniors were all ripe for revolt. The news of Redfern's "rag" spread like wild-fire, and crowds of New House juniors rolled up to join in the army that was destined to invade the Rylecombe bunshop. Fourth and Third and Shell, and even fags of the Second, joined heartily in the scheme. Within a quarter of an hour after tea-time the New House was deserted, save by the seniors.

Redfern of the Fourth, with at least fifty fellows at his back, was marching on the bunshop.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Ratty's Treat.

MR. BUNN looked surprised. Mr. Bunn's handsome and up-to-date establishment in Rylecombe was frequently patronised by the St. Jim's fellows, and on half-holidays the juniors often came there in crowds. But fifty fellows at a time was an unusually large order. Mr. Bunn rubbed his plump hands, and smiled in anticipation of an unusual rush of business.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Bunn!" said Redfern cheerily.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen," smiled Mr. Bunn.

"Rather a lot of us—what?" said Redfern. "It's a treat, you know—a school-treat. Our Housemaster's treat."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; Mr. Ratcliff is standing us a treat," explained Redfern.

"Very kind of Mr. Ratcliff, I'm sure."

"Oh, he's kindness itself," said Redfern—"in his own way, you know. Sit down, you fellows, and order what you like."

There were a good many tables in the bunshop, but their accommodation was somewhat taxed by the numbers of the New House army.

But all the juniors found places, and they proceeded to give their orders with a liberality that delighted the heart of Mr. Bunn.

"Put it all down on one bill, please," Redfern said to that gentleman. "Now, you fellows, give your orders!"

Orders poured in.

As Mr. Ratcliff was to pay—though he was not yet aware of it—there was no reason for the feasters to stint themselves.

And they didn't stint themselves.

Mr. Bunn and Miss Bunn and the old waiter were kept very busy during the next half-hour. Fatty Wynn's face beamed like a full moon. The feasters started with solids—such as rabbit, and meat-pies, and ham and tongues, and eggs, and sausages, and saveloys. Mr. Bunn's stock of those comestibles soon ran short. The hungry juniors had long privations to make up for, and they made up for them with a vengeance.

From the more solid articles of diet they proceeded to lighter forms of pastry and preserves, fruits, and sweets and cakes.

The tables almost groaned under the weight of the good things.

The amount of cakes and jam-tarts a hungry junior could consume when the bill was going to somebody else was astonishing.

Jam-tarts ran out, and so did dough-nuts and cream

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puffs. Fortunately, there was plenty of cake. Five-shilling cakes vanished like twopenny ones. Expensive jars of preserves were emptied as if the company was composed exclusively of millionaires.

When the keen edge was taken off their appetites the juniors toyed with meringues, candied fruits, and pine-apples.

Mr. Bunn was keeping a careful account of the goods supplied.

Once he had ventured to hint to Redfern that the bill was running up to a high figure. That was when it touched five pounds. But Redfern assured him that it was a matter of not the slightest moment. Mr. Ratcliff was standing the treat, and he would say just the same whether the feed came to five pounds or fifteen. Which was certainly quite correct. But what Mr. Ratcliff was likely to say Redfern did not confide to Mr. Bunn.

"I say, old chaps, isn't this spiffing!" said Fatty Wynn dreamily, as he slowly consumed big chunks of pineapple. "I've actually eaten all I can hold—I have, really! I can hardly get rid of this pineapple. Have some pine, Reddy?"

"Thanks, I've got one—a whole one!" grinned Redfern.

"I rather like this preserved ginger," remarked Lawrence. "I believe it comes rather expensive. We're in luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"These little jars of cream are ripping," said Owen. "We can't afford them at tea, as a rule. I think they're half-a-crown each. I know we've had more than twenty of them so far. I've put two in my pocket."

"Shove some into your pockets, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn shook his head sadly.

"Can't," he said. "They're full already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's why I put on this coat," remarked Pratt. "May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and we've got the rest of the week to think of. I know I've got more than a quid's worth in these pockets."

"Who says ginger-pop?"

"Pop!"

"Jolly good mind to make it champagne," grinned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time we got moving," said Figgins presently. "We mustn't miss calling-over. We don't want to give Ratty an excuse for finding fault with us, especially after he's stood us this ripping feed."

"No fear! Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to roll Fatty home like a barrel," said Redfern. "I believe he weighs half a ton more than usual."

"I think I could do with some more jam-tarts," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "I can eat them going home, you know. A walk will set me up again."

"Don't spare the tommy!" said Redfern hospitably. "A dozen jam-tarts for Wynn, please Miss Bunn."

"Tarts have run out," said Miss Bunn, smiling. "But—"

"Oh, cream puffs and meringues will do! Fatty isn't particular, so long as there's plenty."

"Another pineapple for me," yawned Owen.

"I'll take a pound of dough-nuts."

"I'll have a couple of tins of sardines, please."

The New House juniors really showed great presence of mind. Thoroughly satisfied as they were, they realised that they would be hungry again on the morrow. By the time they prepared to leave, their pockets were nearly bursting.

Those who had been thoughtful enough to bring their coats congratulated themselves. Every pocket at that moment had a distinct value.

"Well, I suppose we'd better slide," said Redfern regretfully. "It seems a pity to leave a land of plenty like this—a land flowing in milk and honey. How much does the bill come to, Mr. Bunn?"

"Eighteen pounds ten shillings, Master Redfern," said Mr. Bunn, in almost an awed voice.

Some of the juniors gasped a little. They knew that the bill must have been going up by leaps and bounds,



But eighteen pounds ten—it was a staggering total. What would Mr. Ratcliff say?

It was rather too late to think of what Mr. Ratcliff would say. The deed had been done.

Redfern, however, was not in the least abashed.

"Is that all?" he asked, with an air of surprise. "It seems to me that we've had a jolly good feed at that figure."

"We have," said Figgins. "We shall come and see you again, Mr. Bunn."

"Yes, rather—next time Ratty stands treat!" chuckled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure that's right, Mr. Bunn?" asked Redfern. "We're not particular to a bob or two. Our generous Housemaster is paying, you know"

Mr. Bunn smiled.

"That is quite correct, Master Redfern—eighteen pounds ten shillings."

"Right-ho! Send it in to Mr. Ratcliff to-morrow."

"Ahem! You do not wish to settle now?"

"Mr. Ratcliff didn't hand us the money," explained Redfern. "You send the bill in to him. That's all right."

"Very well, Master Redfern."

"Mind he gets it by the first post in the morning," said Redfern. "Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff—is very particular about his bills. He never likes to have accounts hanging about."

"I will post it to-night, Master Redfern."

"Good! Come on, you fellows! Good-night, Mr. Bunn!"

"Good-night, young gentlemen!"

Redfern and his army marched out of the bunshop. They left it almost as bare of provisions as if the Huns had been there.

"I feel better now," remarked Redfern, as they went down the village street. "How do you feel, Fatty?"

"Lovely!" said Fatty Wyan. "Don't walk so fast, you fellows. I—I'd rather go a bit slowly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Most of the party felt inclined to go a bit slowly. They arrived at St. Jim's as Taggles was about to lock the gates, and marched in. They turned up for calling-over with smiling faces.

In the New House junior dormitories that night there was a surreptitious feed, appetites having revived by that time. But there was still a good deal left over for the morrow. And if some of the fellows suffered from indigestion they felt that they were suffering in a good cause.

But they could not help wondering what Mr. Ratcliff would say on the morrow. It was certain to be something very emphatic.

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Little Bill!

"RIDICULOUS!"

Mr. Ratcliff uttered that ejaculation at the breakfast-table.

He had been opening his letters, and among them was one from Mr. Bunn, of Rylcombe. The letter contained an account of eighteen pounds ten shillings for eatables supplied to young gentlemen of the New House at Mr. Ratcliff's order.

The Housemaster could scarcely believe his eyes at first.

Unless Mr. Bunn was intoxicated or insane, there seemed no way of accounting for that extraordinary demand.

"Ridiculous!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff angrily.

He rose from the breakfast-table and hurried to his study, and rang up Mr. Bunn on the telephone, determined to have the matter out at once. Mr. Bunn, however, was not yet up, and the Housemaster was baffled.

He had to leave the elucidation of the mystery till after lessons. During the morning Mr. Ratcliff was in a very ill-humour. That extraordinary claim for eighteen pounds ten shillings worried him. The Fifth Form, who had the honour of possessing Mr. Ratcliff

as Form-master, found him even more acid than usual that morning. Cutts of the Fifth confided to St. Leger that he would give a "pony" to "dot" the master of the Fifth on the "boko." And Cutts immediately received a hundred lines for talking in class.

After morning lessons Mr. Ratcliff rustled out of the Form-room, and hurried to his own House. A crowd of New House juniors watched him whisking across the quad, and exchanged glances. There were feelings of apprehension now. They knew that Mr. Ratcliff had received the bill for that extensive feed. What was to happen next they did not know, but they anticipated that it would be something in the nature of an earthquake.

Tom Merry & Co. had learned of Redfern's rag, and they approved highly. But they looked for trouble for their friends of the New House.

"Watty will be fearfully waxy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "It wowwies him awfully to have to part with money."

"He won't pay!" said Blake.

"He'll have to," said Redfern. "I suppose Bunn won't go without his money, will he?"

"It was Ratty's treat, you know," said Figgins.

"It was wippin'—simply wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus. "But there will be a fearful wow!"

Meanwhile, Mr. Ratcliff was on the telephone again. This time he succeeded in getting through to the bunshop. Mr. Bunn's wheezy voice answered him over the wires.

"Is that Mr. Bunn speaking?" rapped out the Housemaster.

"Yes."

"I am Mr. Ratcliff."

"Oh, good-morning, Mr. Ratcliff! I hope you are well this morning!" came Mr. Bunn's affable voice.

"You have sent me a bill."

"Yes—eighteen pounds ten shillings, sir. I hope you have found it quite correct. A list of items will be supplied if you wish."

"It is an absurd imposition, sir."

"Wha-at!"

"What do you mean by sending this ridiculous bill to me?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, in a voice that almost made the telephone jump. "I have ordered nothing from you!"

"Dear me!"

"What does it mean? I insist upon an explanation at once!"

"The goods were supplied to the young gentlemen yesterday, sir. Master Redfern informed me that you were paying."

"Master Redfern!"

"Certainly. I trust all is correct."

"Nonsense! Do you mean to say that you supplied Master Redfern with goods to the value of eighteen pounds ten shillings?"

"Master Redfern and the others, sir. There were about fifty in all."

"Fifty?" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes. I understood that it was a kind of school treat, and that all expenses were being borne by yourself."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Ratcliff was almost dazed for some moments. He could not suppose that Mr. Bunn was "pulling his leg." But it was almost incredible that Redfern & Co. had been guilty of such astounding "cheek."

"You—you should not have supplied the goods without my personal or written order!" he exclaimed at last.

"I will certainly be more careful on another occasion, Mr. Ratcliff. I naturally had no doubts in the matter, as Master Redfern assured me—"

"That is your own affair, sir! I shall not pay this bill."

"Ahem!"

"Not a shilling! Not a halfpenny, sir!"

"As the goods were ordered and supplied in your name, Mr. Ratcliff—"

"I gave the boy Redfern no authority for ordering them, and accept no responsibility—none whatever."

"Excuse me," came Mr. Bunn's voice, quietly but very firmly, "the responsibility is yours. On more than one occasion I have supplied you with goods, which were

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fetched by a boy, with a statement that they were to be charged to you."

"That is quite different. When I send a boy on an errand, sir, he has my authority. In this case, there was nothing of the kind."

"How was I to know that?" demanded Mr. Bunn. "Only last week Master Pratt came to me for biscuits, stating that he had been sent by you, and you accepted the bill in the usual way."

"That is quite different. I sent Master Pratt on that occasion."

"Very well! And I concluded that you sent Master Redfern in a similar manner."

"You were mistaken, and I shall certainly not pay for your mistakes. I will not pay one shilling."

"I trust, sir, that you will reconsider that decision. I cannot, of course, afford to lose such a sum, and I fear that it would be hopeless to attempt to recover it from the boys. I hold you responsible."

"Nonsense!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "I will pay nothing!"

"If you maintain that attitude, sir, it will only remain for the matter to be tested in the County Court."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I should be sorry to take such a step, sir, but you leave me no alternative," purred Mr. Bunn.

"Sir! How dare you! The County Court! You are a rascal!"

"Eh?"

"Rascal!" raved Mr. Ratcliff. "That, sir, is my opinion of you! You have probably concocted the whole scheme with the boys."

"Oh!" Mr. Bunn's voice was very acid now. "If you care to put that statement into writing, Mr. Ratcliff, instead of slandering me upon the telephone, I shall certainly have you served with a writ for libel. Since you take this view of the matter, I decline any further personal communication with you. You will hear from my solicitor in due course."

And Mr. Bunn rang off abruptly.

"Listen to me!" Mr. Ratcliff shouted into the telephone. "I tell you—Are you there? Mr. Bunn, do you hear me? Bless my soul, the unmitigated scoundrel has rung off!"

Mr. Ratcliff jammed the receiver savagely on the hooks. Then he paced up and down his study for some minutes, almost palpitating with rage. Evidently he was to hear from Mr. Bunn's solicitor, and a summons to the County Court would follow. The worry of such proceedings would be mendurable. In spite of his rage, Mr. Ratcliff had to acknowledge that the bunshop proprietor had a good case. On special occasions, when he had visitors, for example, Mr. Ratcliff would send a fag down to Mr. Bunn's for some delicacy, which was charged to him, and paid for in due course. He had not been accustomed to sending written orders. Therefore, Mr. Bunn had a full right to assume that Redfern's extensive orders had his Housemaster's sanction.

On the other hand Mr. Ratcliff would disclaim having authorised this especial order, so he also had a pretty good case. The decision would probably be a matter of chance, depending on the personal humour of the judge.

In any case, whether he won or lost the action, the Housemaster would become an object of ridicule. The whole county would read it in the local papers, and laugh over the trick his boys had played him.

Legal aid would be required, too, and that would cost money; and even if he won the case, he would probably not get his costs. In any event, he would be time and money out of pocket—the result of most legal proceedings for everyone concerned, excepting lawyers.

"It is infamous!" stammered Mr. Ratcliff. "I have no time for County Courts! Bless my soul! Such institutions ought to be abolished. Any idle rascal with plenty of

time on his hands may bring an action against a busy man who has no time for such things—and win it, too! It is nothing better than blackmail. The law is very seriously in need of reform—very seriously, indeed. County Court, indeed! Impudent rascal! And as for Redfern—as for that young scoundrel——"

Mr. Ratcliff almost choked.

He rang the bell violently. The House page came in answer to the summons, and he looked alarmed at the expression on Mr. Ratcliff's face.

"Find Master Redfern at once, and bring him to me!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh, lor'—I—I mean yes, sir!"

And the startled page fairly bolted.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Opea R. bellion.

"All together!" said Figgins.

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll back you up, Reddy!"

Redfern of the Fourth had received Mr. Ratcliff's summons to the study. Redfern was looking rather serious; but he was quite cool. Upon most of the fellows who had joined in the "rag" he knew that he could depend for support. Even if Mr. Ratcliff carried the matter before the Head, they could not "sack" the whole House.

"We'll all go together," said Kerr. "Back up, you fellows!"

"I'm with you," said Lawrence.

"Same here!"

"And here!"

"All together!" repeated Figgins. "Lead on, Reddy! Here we go, like giddy Daniels into the lions' den!"

Twenty juniors at least followed Redfern to Mr. Ratcliff's study. They arrived in a crowd at the study door, and Redfern tapped.

"Come in!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Redfern threw open the door.

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes fairly burned at him. His glance passed Redfern, and fell blightingly upon the rest of the juniors.

"I sent for Redfern!" he snapped. "I do not require the rest at present, though you will be all severely punished. You may go."

The juniors stood their ground.

"We're all in it, sir," said Figgins.

"Everyone of us, sir," said Fatty Wynn.

"Silence! Redfern, I have received a bill from Mr. Bunn, for goods supplied to you, ordered in my name."

"Yes, sir," said Redfern.

"You used my name in ordering food from Mr. Bunn?"

"Certainly, sir!" said Redfern coolly.

"Naturally, sir, as you are my Housemaster, I told Mr. Bunn to send the bill to you. I hope it is correct, sir."

"You have dared to use my name in ordering food!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "You have the effrontery to admit it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Redfern you will be flogged for this, and the bill will be sent to your parents."

"My parents won't pay it, sir. I don't suppose they could," said Redfern calmly. "They're not rich."

"Then the sum will be equally divided among the boys who joined you in that disgusting orgy, and paid equally by their parents."

"Indeed, sir!" said Kerr. "Then I shall write to my father about it. He will have a counter claim to make."

"What! What do you mean, Kerr?"

"I mean that my father pays for my meals here, and they have been cut down, sir," said the Scottish junior calmly. "My father is a business man, sir. If he pays for what I have to get out of doors, he will expect restitution

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to be made of the money he has paid for my meals in this House."

"Kerr, how dare you?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "You shall be flogged as well as Redfern!"

Kerr shrugged his shoulders.

"Every boy who shared in this orgy shall be flogged!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "Redfern, take that pen and write down a list of their names."

Redfern did not move.

"Do you hear me, Redfern?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you intend to add disobedience to your other rascalities?" fumed Mr. Ratcliff. "Very well—very well indeed! I shall bring you to reason, Redfern. You are dangerously near being expelled from this school, Redfern."

"That rests with the Head, sir," said Redfern. "I am quite ready to go before Dr. Holmes."

"So are we all, sir," said Kerr.

"Hear, hear!" came from the passage.

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth. He certainly did not wish the matter to go before the Head. He knew how little Dr. Holmes was likely to approve of his system of cutting down meals. That kind of punishment was not at all in accordance with the Head's ideas. The juniors knew it, too.

"You will all go into Hall at once!" he said between his teeth. "Figgins, go and fetch Taggles immediately. Go!"

The juniors went.

They did not go into Hall, however. They marched out into the quadrangle.

Five minutes later, Mr. Ratcliff came striding into Hall, with a birch in his hand. He expected to find the delinquents there, and Taggles, the porter, on the spot, ready to "hoist" them for punishment.

Hall was empty!

Mr. Ratcliff stared around him, hardly believing his eyes. His orders had been disobeyed. Not a single junior had turned up for the flogging!

It was open rebellion now, and Mr. Ratcliff was a little nonplussed. Not that he thought for a moment of receding from the position he had taken up. Opposition



Monteith leaped out of the window, and grasped Mr. Ratcliff's hands. In the next moment he gave a yell, as his feet were up-ended. Figgins & Co. had not been caught napping, for Monteith was in the grasp of the rebels, and they shoved him unceremoniously through the open window, head-first. There was a loud crack as his head came in sudden contact with Mr. Ratcliff's. (See Chapter 13.)

only made him all the more obstinate. And, indeed, he had gone rather too far to recede now.

He hurried out, and called Monteith and Sefton.

"Please find Redfern at once, and bring him to me—by force, if necessary," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Bring Lawrence, Owen, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn also. The others I will deal with later. You are authorised to use force if necessary!"

"Oh!" said Monteith.

Sefton only stared.

"Don't waste time—I am waiting!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Very well, sir."

The two prefects quitted the New House and looked round the quadrangle. On the School House side there was a crowd of New House fellows talking excitedly

together. Tom Merry & Co. were with them. The two prefects approached the group.

"You're wanted," said Monteith—"Redfern, Owen, Lawrence, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. Follow me at once!"

"Sorry!" said Redfern.

"Can't be did!" said Figgins.

"What's that?"

"We're not going to be flogged!"

"What! You refuse to come?" exclaimed Monteith.

"Yes."

"We're fed up!" shouted Fatty Wynn. "We've had enough of it. Tell Ratty to go and eat coke!"

"Wynn!"

"Look here, you've got to come!" exclaimed Sefton.

"Mr. Ratcliff has told us to use force, if necessary. Are you coming?"

"Rats!"

"Buzz off, Sefton!"

Sefton promptly seized Redfern by the collar. Five or six juniors fastened upon the bully of the Sixth at once, and he was dragged away from Redfern and sent spinning. He collapsed on the ground with a roar.

"My hat!" ejaculated Monteith. "You kids are only making matters worse for yourselves, you know!"

"We'll chance that," said Figgins. "Ratty's got no right to starve us, and flog us because we go out for tommy. We're fed up. We'd rather be sacked all round than put up with it."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I quite approve. Britons nevah shall be slaves, you know. I regard Watty as a Hun!"

Sefton picked himself up, dusty and rumped, and with a face like a demon. He tramped off to the New House without seeking to try conclusions any further with the rebels. Monteith hesitated a few moments and then followed him. Mr. Ratcliff had authorised him to use force, certainly, but he had not explained how force was to be used by one prefect against a score of determined juniors.

"Well, we're in for it now!" said Redfern. "I wonder what Ratty will try next? He will have to take it to the Head."

"Bet you he won't do that!" said Tom Merry sagely. "He won't want the Head to know what he's been doing."

"Wathah not. Dr. Holmes is an old sport, deah boys, and he would not approve of Watty's tywanny!"

"Well, we're going to stick it out," said Figgins. "We're fed up. Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Hear, hear!"

"They can't sack half the House, anyway!" said Blake.

"That's one comfort," grinned Redfern.

But the New House rebels waited rather anxiously for Mr. Ratcliff's next move. They felt that they were in the right, but a defiance of constitutional authority was a decidedly serious step.

But there was no "next move" from Mr. Ratcliff.

The fact was that the New House master was puzzled and perplexed, and did not in the least know how to deal with the storm he had raised. He was taking his time to think it over. Meanwhile, the bell rang for dinner.

"Are we staying out?" Redfern asked dubiously.

"No jolly fear!" said Fatty Wynn promptly. "I'm not going to miss dinner. And, look here! We're going to have a real dinner to-day. No more short commons for me!"

"Hear, hear!"

The fact that the rebels had not yet been dealt with was a sign of weakness on the part of the New House tyrant, and the rebels realised it quite clearly. It encouraged

them, as was natural. And they marched into the New House in a determined body—fully determined that Mr. Ratcliff's new regulations concerning meals should be cast to the winds.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Mr. Ratcliff's Little Game.

MR. RATCLIFF was not in the dining-room.

Perhaps, under the peculiar circumstances, he did not care to face the fellows who had defied his orders, and who had, so far, escaped scot free.

He was taking his lunch in his study.

The rebels sat down to their tables in a truculent mood. Mr. Ratcliff's failure to deal with them gave them a sense of power in their hands.

They knew very well that Mr. Railton of the School House would have dealt very promptly with insubordination in his House—very promptly and effectively. But then Mr. Railton would never have exasperated his boys into mutiny, in the first place. He was too well respected for any School House fellow to think of defying his authority. If Mr. Ratcliff was not equally respected he had only himself to thank.

There was not the usual order and quietness at the junior tables. Dinner was accompanied by a buzz of talk and laughter. Some of the fellows sat on the tables instead of the chairs.

Monteith, as head prefect, was bound to keep order, but he did not interfere. He knew that now the juniors had broken out his orders would not be regarded.

He was very far, too, from approving of his House-master's actions. He did not feel inclined to enter into a rowdy contest with excited juniors in support of a master who had himself abandoned the task.

The other prefects followed his example, with the exception of Sefton. Sefton strode up to the Fourth-Form table:

"Get off the table at once, Lawrence!" he rapped out.

Lawrence looked at him coolly. After bearding his House-master, so to speak, he was not likely to be afraid of Sefton.

"Go and eat coke!" he replied cheerfully.

Sefton gripped him by the collar. Lawrence promptly snatched up a plate, and Sefton let him go, and dodged back just in time to escape having a plate broken on his head.

A hot potato whizzed from Figgins' hand, and caught Sefton on the nose. It was followed by a whole cauliflower from Redfern, which squashed in the Sixth-Form bully's face.

There was a yell of laughter as Sefton staggered back, spluttering.

"Pelt him!" roared Owen.

"Give him the taters!"

"Give him the gravy!"

"Hurray!"

Sefton fairly fled under a shower of missiles. Potatoes followed him in a volley, smashing all over him.

"Come back and have some more!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sefton did not come back. He did not want any more.

The juniors proceeded gleefully with their dinner. It was not a case of a single helping this time. They helped themselves—and there were many helpings; and Fatty Wynn did not leave off till the table was clear.

"Now, what price pudding?" exclaimed Redfern.

"We're jolly well going to have pudding, of course!" said Fatty Wynn. "Bag it when it comes in for the seniors."

"Good egg!"

A huge plum pudding was brought in for the senior table. There was a rush of juniors as it appeared, and it was captured, and taken to the Fourth-Form table. Fourth and Third and Shell gathered round and helped themselves.

Monteith rose to his feet. But he contented himself with ordering another pudding to be brought in for his

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table. It was past the powers of Monteith, or anyone else, to recover that pudding from the hands of the raiders. It was already disappearing at record speed.

Still Mr. Ratcliff did not appear.

The din in the dining-room must have reached his ears; but he still lay low. He was completely at a loss. The only resource that appeared open to him was to call in the authority of the Head. But he was naturally loth to take that step. He did not desire to confess that he could not keep order in his own House—which was what he was appointed for. And he was uneasily conscious of the fact that the Head would not approve of his whole line of conduct. Punishing the whole House for the fault of one unknown culprit could not be called just; and his method of punishment, too, was very questionable. Exactly what he was to do was a mystery. But he was not in the least inclined to make concessions. Punishment, and still more punishment, was all that he could think of. Mr. Ratcliff was a good deal of a Prussian in his way.

The dining-room was in an uproar. Some of the juniors were playing leap-frog among the tables. But they crowded out into the quadrangle at last, laughing and cheering, immensely encouraged by the inaction of the Housemaster.

"Hallo! You look pretty cheery," said Tom Merry, as he met them in the quad.

"We've had a ripping feed!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"All there was on the table—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the seniors' pudding," chortled Redfern—"we bagged it, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And what is Ratty doing?" demanded Blake.

"Nothing."

"My hat!"

"Pewwaps Watty realises that he is in the wong, and is wepentin'," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"No jolly fear!" said Figgins. "What the old boy realises is that he can't handle us. He's beaten to the wide."

Nothing had been seen of Mr. Ratcliff when the bell rang for afternoon classes. Clampe of the Shell suggested cutting lessons. But Figgins promptly vetoed that suggestion.

"We don't want to slack, and we don't want to put ourselves in the wrong," he said. "Get into the Form-room."

"I'm jolly well staying out," said Clampe.

"You'll stay out with a thick ear if you do," said Figgins autocratically.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Oh, come on!" said Figgins, and he took Clampe playfully by the collar and ran him to the Shell Form-room.

Clampe, on second thoughts, was glad that he had turned up to lessons. Mr. Linton the master of the Shell, was not a master to be trifled with. Figgins & Co. marched cheerily into the Fourth-Form room with Study No. 6. They were as good as gold at lessons. Mr. Lathom had no fault to find with them.

The wisdom of Figgins' advice was quite appreciated by most of his comrades. If the matter came before the Head, it had to be established that the rebels had only "backed up" against tyranny in their own House. At lessons they were on their best behaviour. Indeed, Mr. Lathom specially commended Redfern in class.

During afternoon lessons the rebels could not help wondering what Mr. Ratcliff was thinking of. It was impossible for the Housemaster to allow matters to remain as they were. He was taking the Fifth as usual that afternoon. Figgins felt compassion for the Fifth. The Fifth-Formers were pretty certain to be getting the keenest edge of Ratty's tongue.

Last lesson was in progress in the Fourth-Form room when Toby, the School House page, came in with a message for Mr. Lathom. The Fourth-Form master blinked over the class, and signed to Redfern.

"Redfern, you may leave the class. Mr. Ratcliff desires to speak to you. You will go to his study in the New House."

Redfern set his lips.

"Isn't Mr. Ratcliff taking the Fifth, sir?"

"Apparently, Redfern, Mr. Ratcliff is not taking the Fifth at this moment; as he has sent for you. Kindly go at once."

Redfern hesitated.

"It's all wight, Weddy," whispered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Watty has wepented of his wotten conduct, and is goin' to express his wegwet."

Redfern grinned. He knew how 'little likely that was. His own suspicion was that the New House master wanted to get him away from his comrades, in order to make an example of him without causing a riot. That was quite in keeping with Mr. Ratcliff's stealthy character.

Mr. Lathom looked at him in surprise. He was quite unaware of the trouble in the New House.

"You are to go at once, Redfern," he said.

"Very well, sir," said Redfern reluctantly.

Figgins caught him by the sleeve as he was moving out of the class.

"Don't go to the New House, Reddy," he whispered hurriedly. "It's a trick. Stick in the quad."

"You bet!" said Redfern.

Redfern would have preferred to remain in the Form-room, but Mr. Lathom had to be obeyed. The junior quitted the Fourth-Form room, and went down the passage to the door on the quadrangle. He strolled into the quadrangle, and a sharp voice hailed him.

"Redfern!"

It was Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir," said Redfern, keeping at a respectful distance from the Housemaster.

"Follow me, Redfern!"

"What for, sir?"

"Do not ask me impertinent questions, Redfern. Follow me at once!"

Mr. Ratcliff whisked away towards the New House. He looked back in a couple of minutes. Redfern was sauntering away under the leafless elms. Mr. Ratcliff's thin face became crimson with rage.

"Redfern!" he shouted.

Redfern did not seem to hear. He sauntered under the trees, kicking the dead leaves and whistling. Mr. Ratcliff made a rush towards him.

"Redfern, you insolent young rascal!"

The junior dodged round a tree. Mr. Ratcliff dodged after him, and Redfern promptly dodged round another. It was like a game. And Mr. Ratcliff, realising what a ridiculous figure he was cutting, stopped, panting for breath.

"Do you refuse to follow me, Redfern?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir," said Redfern quietly.

"You shall be expelled for this!"

"I'm taking my chance of that, sir."

"For the last time, Redfern—"

Redfern walked away.

Mr. Ratcliff stood for some moments nonplussed. He had laid his little plan very carefully. Redfern was to be got to his study, and unmercifully flogged, and that example would have the effect, Mr. Ratcliff anticipated, of scaring the rest of the rebels into submission.

It was like the case of the spider and the fly over again. But while Mr. Ratcliff was quite prepared to act the part of the spider, Redfern was disinclined to play up in the character of fly.

The Housemaster strode away at last to the School House, and Redfern grinned. Was the New House tyrant going to the Head at last? It was surely unlikely that he would explain to Dr. Holmes the stealthy trick he had tried to play, so utterly unworthy of the dignity of a Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff, in fact, was not thinking of the Head. He made his way to the Sixth-Form room, where Mr. Railton was taking the top Form. He requested Mr. Railton to release Sefton from last lesson, on a matter connected with the discipline of his House. Mr. Railton at once accorded Sefton the required permission, and the prefect followed Mr. Ratcliff from the room.

With the exception of the New House master and the prefect and the rebellious Redfern, all St. Jim's was at lessons. The quadrangle was otherwise quite deserted. Redfern whistled as he saw Sefton come out of the School House with Mr. Ratcliff. He understood now.

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"Sefton," said Mr. Ratcliff, in a grinding voice, "you will take Redfern at once to my study. Use any means that are necessary. I will assist you if needed."

"Yes, sir," said Sefton.

And the bully of the Sixth started for Redfern.

CHAPTER 12.

Rescue!

**R**EDFERN clenched his hands hard. He was quite prepared to resist, but he had little chance in a tussle with a prefect of the Sixth, and he knew it. And Mr. Ratcliff was hovering behind the prefect, ready to lend what aid was required.

"Stop!" shouted Sefton, as the junior bolted through the elms.

Redfern did not stop; he ran on at top speed, and the Sixth-Former broke into chase behind him.

Up the quadrangle they ran, and Redfern was nearly cornered at the gates. But he dodged round the porter's lodge, and doubled back, Sefton panting behind. Mr. Ratcliff jumped in his way to stop him. The junior's escape was cut off.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

Redfern came straight on. As he came close to the Housemaster, a bony hand was reached out to seize him. Redfern lowered his head, and fairly charged the Housemaster.

His hard head smote Mr. Ratcliff on his third waistcoat button. There was a terrific gasp from Mr. Ratcliff, and he went over like a skittle.

Bump! Mr. Ratcliff sat down with a thundering concussion, his long, thin legs flying in the air.

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Yooohoo!"

Redfern reeled from the shock. He made a bound to

escape, but Sefton's grasp was already upon him from behind. The prefect seized his collar, and his knuckles ground into the back of the Fourth-Former's neck.

"I've got him, sir!" panted Sefton.

Redfern struggled furiously. Mr. Ratcliff sat up, gasping and gasping, as if he were gasping for a wager.

"Gerroooh! Hold the young ruffian, Sefton! Yurrggg! Oh, dear. I—I am quite breathless! Yooohoo!"

"Yow-ow!" roared Sefton, as an upper-cut caught him on the chin. "You young villain! Wow-ow!"

"Let go, you beastly bully!" panted Redfern.

"My hat! I'll smash you!"

Senior and junior were fighting furiously now. Redfern was game to the last. Mr. Ratcliff staggered up, and grasped Redfern by the collar. In the grasp of the master and the prefect, Redfern still wriggled.

"The—the unspeakable young ruffian!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Drag him away if he will not go! Drag him!"

Redfern's boots dragged in the grass as he was hauled away. Into the New House they went, and into Mr. Ratcliff's study. Redfern was flung in, panting, and the Housemaster slammed the door, his eyes blazing.

"The young rascal shall have such a lesson as he will never forget!" he said between his teeth. "I will make an example of him. Remove your jacket, Redfern."

Redfern's reply was brief, but direct.

"Sha'n't!"

"Remove his jacket, Sefton!"

There was another tussle, and Redfern's jacket came off, split in two. Then the bully of the Sixth held him securely, while Mr. Ratcliff wielded the birch.

Lash! Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Help!" roared Redfern. "Rescue!"

"Silence, boy!"

Lash! Lash! Lash!

There was a sound of loud voices in the quadrangle. Last lesson was over at last, and the boys were swarming out of the Form-room. Figgins & Co. looked round for Redfern as soon as they were out.

"He's not here," said Figgins. "Has Ratty got him?"

"Hark!" exclaimed Blake.

From the window of Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House came an uproar. The swishing of the birch could be heard, and Redfern's voice, in stentorian tones.

"Yow-ow-ow! You beast! Help! Rescue!"

Figgins' eyes blazed.

"Rescue!" he shouted.

Figgins started at a run, and Kerr and Wynn followed him at once. Lawrence and Owen joined in, and several other fellows. They sped into the House, and rushed along the passage to Mr. Ratcliff's door.

The door was flung open wide.

Figgins rushed in. He did not pause for a moment; his blood was at boiling point. His fist, clenched hard, was dashed full into Sefton's face, and the bully of the Sixth went over with a crash.

Redfern jumped away from the lashing birch.

Mr. Ratcliff seemed transfixed for a moment.

"Figgins!" he gasped hoarsely. "How dare you? Leave my study at once!"

"I'm going," said Figgins scornfully. "Come on, Reddy! We've come to get you out of this!"

"Redfern, remain here!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Redfern.

"What! What did you say?"

"Shut up!" retorted Redfern.

Mr. Ratcliff stood rooted to the floor, the birch in his hand. It seemed to him that he must be dreaming. A junior of his House, where he was monarch of all he surveyed, had told him to shut up! After that it was time for the skies to fall.

Redfern's face was white with pain. He leaned heavily on Figgins' shoulder as he left the study.

"Redfern," panted Mr. Ratcliff, "I—I order you to come back! Figgins, I command you to leave that boy here!"

Neither of the juniors answered. Kerr slammed the

THE SWELL



OF ST. JIM'S



door, and the rescuers departed, taking Redfern with them.

Sefton picked himself up, nursing his jaw. He looked at the Housemaster very dubiously.

"Sefton, go and fetch Redfern here at once!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Sefton.

He left the study, but he did not seek Redfern. He was not inclined to tackle Figgins & Co. just then. If Mr. Ratcliff waited for him to return with the junior, he waited in vain.

There was a trampling of feet in the passage, and a roar of voices.

"Down with Ratty!"

Mr. Ratcliff started, as if he had been stung.

The rebels were parading the passage outside his own door, shouting that battle-cry. The House was evidently entirely out of hand.

The Housemaster's eyes glittered with rage. He selected his stoutest cane, and strode from the study. At all events, reckless as the mutineers were, they could not venture to lay hands upon him personally—he was sure of that. Mr. Ratcliff had decided upon drastic measures.

A fresh roar greeted him as he appeared outside the study.

"Yah! Down with Ratty!"

"Figgins!"

"Rats!" howled the excited Figgins.

"Kerr!"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Kerr.

"Come here at once!"

"Bow-wow!"

Mr. Ratcliff rushed at the rebels, brandishing the cane. Lash! Lash! Lash! He did not care where the blows fell in his rage. Monteith looked out of his study, shrugged his shoulders, and shut his door again. The rest of the prefects were carefully keeping off the scene. Mr. Ratcliff had woke up that hornet's nest, and he could have the pleasure of dealing with it—that was their idea.

Mr. Ratcliff did not find it a pleasure. He had lashed half a dozen times, when the rebels closed round him like a sea. Figgins snatched the cane away, Redfern dragged at his gown, a dozen pairs of hands seized, and pushed, and shoved. Utterly bewildered and confused, the Housemaster was rushed and hustled along to the door, where powerful shoves sent him spinning down the steps.

Mr. Ratcliff landed in the quadrangle in a sitting position.

Clang!

The big door closed loudly after him. There was a grating of a key, the clinking of a chain. Mr. Ratcliff jumped up, and bounded up the steps. He hammered furiously on the door.

But it did not open.

The New Housemaster was locked out of his own House.

## CHAPTER 13.

### The Head Steps In!

"**B**AI Jove! Extwaordinawy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eye-glass a little more tightly in his eye. It had fallen out in his astonishment.

And the Terrible Three said, with one voice:

"Great Scott!"

"What larks!" chuckled Wally of the Third.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

School House fellows were crowding in front of the New House. They were deeply interested. Mr. Ratcliff, locked out of his own House, was raging on the steps. Such a scene had certainly never been witnessed in the quadrangle at St. Jim's before. For excitement it even beat the celebrated occasion when an "Old Boy" had returned to St. Jim's for the special purpose of "whopping" his old Housemaster.

"Like a giddy lion seeking what he may devour!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Good old Figgins!"

"More power to his elbow!" chirruped Reilly of the Fourth.

"Locked out, by gum!" said Tom Merry, with a whistle. "It's come to something now. It's all Ratty's own fault."

"Yaas, wathah; but it is wathah a shoekin' spectacle," said Arthur Augustus gravely. "Mr. Watcliff is not keepin' up the dignity of his posish. A Housemaster should have a wpopah sense of his own dig."

"Give him the tip, Gussy," suggested Monty Lowther. "He looks as if he would like some good advice—I don't think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!" said Arthur Augustus. "I feah that Mr. Watcliff is not at pwsent in a humah to heah a word in season."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The infuriated Housemaster, lost to all sense of dignity or the appearance of things, was hammering savagely on the big door with his clenched fists.

"Figgins! Redfern! Kerr! Open this door at once! You shall be expelled! Monteith—where are you, Monteith? I command you to get this door open! Am I to be locked out of my own House, Monteith?"

Monteith of the Sixth looked out of his study window. There was a lurking grin on his face, which he tried to hide. The downfall of Ratty was not displeasing to the head prefect. Seniors, as well as juniors, had been very much worried by the Housemaster of late. In the privacy of their own select circle the New House prefects did not conceal their opinion that it was time Ratty had a lesson. Mr. Ratcliff fixed his eyes furiously upon the prefect at the window.

"Monteith, let me in! Do you hear?"

"The door is locked, sir."

"Then unlock it!"

"The key is gone."

"Find it!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "Do you think, Monteith, that I can remain in this ridiculous position—locked out of my own House? I command you to find the key at once!"

"Some of the juniors seem to have hidden it, sir. You might try the back door—"

Mr. Ratcliff, in his rage, had not thought of that. He whisked away with fluttering gown. But Figgins had thought of it. When Mr. Ratcliff reached the back door it was fast—locked and bolted. The enraged Housemaster hammered on it, and Mrs. Kenwigg's scared voice answered him through the window.

"The door is locked, sir—"

"Find the key!"

"The young gentlemen have taken it away. And—and they are having tea, and they have helped themselves from the pantry!" gasped Mrs. Kenwigg. "They are having tea in the passages, and on the stairs, sir! All my jams and preserves! Oh, dear! All the cake! Oh, dear!"

Mr. Ratcliff gave a snort like an angry bull. The rebels were holding high revel in the New House, while their tyrant was locked out. Short commons were evidently a thing of the past.

There was a side door to the New House, and Mr. Ratcliff whisked round to it. But the rebels had anticipated him there also. The door was locked.

Mr. Ratcliff simply panted. Unless he chose to climb in at a window, he was shut out of his House indefinitely. He whisked round to the front of the House again, to Monteith's window. The prefect was looking out, smiling. He became grave again under Mr. Ratcliff's furious eyes.

"Monteith, you are not keeping the juniors in order! Mrs. Kenwigg tells me that they have raided the pantry—"

"I can't, sir! They've collared Sefton, and locked him in the coal-cellar already! Baker is screwed up in his study! They're quite out of hand!"

"Good heavens!" Mr. Ratcliff stuttered with fury. "Monteith, help me in at your window! Lean down and give me your hand! I must come in!"

"Ahem! You see, sir—"

"Help me in at once! I command you, Monteith!"

"I don't think I could pull you up, sir," said Monteith. "I'll try, if you like. If you should fall—"

"Help me at once, I tell you!"

"Very well, sir."

Monteith leaned out of the window and grasped Mr. Ratcliff's hands. The next moment he gave a yell, as his feet were up-ended. Figgins & Co. had not been caught napping. Monteith was in the grasp of the rebels, and they shoved him unceremoniously through the open window, head-first. There was a loud crack as his head came in sudden contact with Mr. Ratcliff's.

"Yoooop!"

"Wow!"

"Lower away!" shouted Rodfern, and the unhappy prefect, with half a dozen hands grasping his ankles, was lowered, head-first, out of the window. The grinning juniors leaned out, and lowered him till his hands touched the ground, and then they let him go. Monteith rolled over at Mr. Ratcliff's feet.

"Figgins!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "Redfern, I command you—"

Slam! The window shut down, cutting off Mr. Ratcliff's commands. Figgins fastened the catch. No one had troubled to reply to Mr. Ratcliff.

Monteith scrambled up, red and angry. He gave Mr. Ratcliff a grim look, and strode away to the School House. There he went to Kildare's study, and announced that he had come to tea, and there he stayed. He was fed up with Mr. Ratcliff.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "Those New House boundahs are goin' it! I wondah what Watty will do?"

"I wonder!" grieved Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff looked round furiously at the grinning School House crowd. He waved his hand to them.

"Go back to your House at once!" he shouted. "Leave this side of the quadrangle immediately! Do you hear me?"

"Yaas, sir," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully.

The School House crowd retreated, but they did not go far. They did not mean to miss that scene. Mr. Ratcliff thundered again at the door of the New House. Not even a single voice answered him from within. The juniors of the New House were running riot, and a great spread was in progress in the passages and on the stairs. The Housemaster was almost beside himself.

"I shall do a poem about this for the 'Weekly,'" Monty Lowther remarked, amid the chuckles of his comrades. "How does this go?"

"Old Ratty came down like a wolf on the fold,  
He didn't like being left out in the cold!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Heah comes the Head!"

"Phew!"

The laughter in the School House crowd died away. Dr. Holmes, with a grave and frowning face, had come out of the School House, and with stately steps was crossing the quadrangle. The Head had evidently learned, at last, of the riot in the New House, and was coming to deal with it personally.

Mr. Ratcliff ceased to hammer on the door as he caught sight of the headmaster. He endeavoured to calm the fury in his breast. Fury and excitement were not likely to meet with the approval of the grave and reverend Head. A Housemaster was expected to be able to keep his temper.

"Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head, with great asperity, "what is the meaning of this extraordinary scene?"

Mr. Ratcliff panted.

"I have been locked out of my House, sir! The prefects have been assaulted! The juniors are quite out of hand!"

"A most extraordinary state of affairs, sir!" said the Head coldly. "Such a state has never arisen in the School House. You may give me your explanation later, Mr. Ratcliff. At present I will deal with the matter."

Dr. Holmes tapped at the door.

"Open this door at once!" he said. "It is I, Dr. Holmes, your headmaster."

"Oh, my hat!" a voice was heard to ejaculate within.

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"Is that you, Figgins? Open the door!"

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. I'm getting the key," stammered Figgins.

There was a grating of the big key in the lock, a clinking of a withdrawing chain, and the door swung back. A crowd of juniors was disclosed, looking considerably abashed, most of them with cake or other comestibles in their hands. Dr. Holmes surveyed them grimly.

"Who is the leader of this extraordinary outbreak?" he exclaimed.

"We're all in it together, sir," said Kerr.

"You answer me, Figgins! What does this mean?"

"We don't like being starved, sir," said Figgins. "We're helping ourselves. We think we're entitled to have enough to eat."

Dr. Holmes frowned thunderously.

"Is it possible, Figgins, that you have been guilty of this outrageous insubordination because you are not satisfied with the fare provided in this school?" he thundered.

"Oh, no, sir! It's because we've been cut down in the meals!"

"Only one helping, sir," stammered Fatty Wynn—"one small one! And no pudding! And no bacon for brekker! And no cake or jam for tea, sir! Flesh and blood couldn't stand it, sir!"

"We knew you wouldn't approve of taking away our meals, sir," said Redfern.

"What nonsense is this? In this House the fare is precisely the same as that provided in the School House," exclaimed the Head, in perplexity.

"But it's been stopped, sir—cut down!"

"I do not understand this! Surely, Mr. Ratcliff, no such alteration has been made in the boys' diet?"

Mr. Ratcliff mumbled a little.

"Not—not permanently, sir," he said uneasily. "Certainly not! This new regulation was made as a punishment."

The Head looked fixedly at Mr. Ratcliff. He did not pursue the subject, however, in the presence of the juniors. But his face told strongly enough of his disapproval. He turned to Figgins & Co.

"I shall inquire into this matter strictly," he said. "For the present, I order you to return to your duty at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said Redfern. "We shouldn't think of disobeying you, sir!"

"I trust not!" said the Head drily.

He walked away to the School House, accompanied by Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master was not looking happy. In the Head's study he had the most uncomfortable ten minutes of his life-time. Dr. Holmes exacted a full account of the whole trouble, listening very attentively.

"It appears, then, that for the fault of one boy, who may not have belonged to your House at all, you punished the whole House, Mr. Ratcliff. And the method of punishment was by cutting down the meals—a dangerous thing with healthy and growing boys. You cannot expect me to approve of this. You seem to me to have acted very hastily and very harshly. I cannot say less. The action of the boys in ordering food from Mr. Bunn was inexcusable, doubtless. Yet, if they were kept short of food, I can easily understand even so reckless a proceeding. As for the boys refusing to be flogged, you are well aware, sir, that floggings are only administered in this school on the special order of the headmaster. And you did not even consult me in the matter. Mr. Ratcliff, I cannot help finding very serious fault with you, and laying at your door the greater part of the responsibility of this disgraceful outbreak!"

Mr. Ratcliff turned almost green.

"I will deal with the juniors myself," resumed the Head. "And I shall deal with them with severity. The money due to Mr. Bunn shall be paid, and it shall be stopped out of their pocket-money. I shall also cane them. Meanwhile, I think it would be judicious for you to leave the school for a few weeks, and take a holiday. It will not be easy for you to regain authority in your House till this outbreak has been to some extent



forgotten. For the present, I will ask Mr. Carrington to take charge of the New House."

Mr. Ratcliff was almost speechless.

"Very well, sir," he stammered at last—"very well, indeed!"

For a moment it trembled on his lips to add: "I resign my position in this school, Dr. Holmes!" But he did not utter the words. He was only too well aware that the Head would have received and accepted his resignation with great equanimity. And that would not have suited Mr. Ratcliff at all.

He left the study without another word. And the Head, with a sigh, proceeded to deal with the troubles the New House master had brought upon his shoulders.

"All wigh, deah boys?"

"How is it, umpire?"

"What's the giddy verdict?"

Tom Merry & Co. showered questions on the rebels as they crowded out of the School House after their interview with the Head. Most of them were rubbing their hands. But all of them looked quite cheery. Figgins grinned.

"Not so bad!" he said. "Two cuts each. I think the Head was a bit fagged when he had finished."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And our pocket-money stopped to pay Bunn," said Redfern. "We don't mind that. We had the stuff, you know."

"And it was a ripping feed!" said Fatty Wynn reminiscently. "Those pineapples——"

"And Ratty's leaving for a holiday!" chuckled Kerr. "And Carrington is taking over the New House while he's gone!"

"Hurrah!"

"And the new regulations are all off, and we're going to have the usual grub!" said Fatty Wynn. "That's the main point, of course! So we've all told the Head we're sorry. Of course, we are sorry Ratty played the giddy ox!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Tom Merry, "it seems to me that you've had the best of it. But you'd better toe the line rather carefully with Carrington—the Head will have his eye on you after this. Hallo! There goes Ratty!"

In the winter dusk the trap drove out with Mr. Ratcliff sitting in it, his face like a thundercloud. The juniors smiled after him. For some weeks, at least, they were to be spared the presence of Ratty, which all agreed was a very happy ending to Redfern's Rag.

THE END.

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# Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

### TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

Two lads, one the possessor of a special permit, were fishing in the waters of a certain large estate.

Suddenly a gamekeeper darted from a thicket towards them, and the lad with the permit uttered a startled cry, dropped his rod, and ran off at top speed.

The boy drew the gamekeeper on until utterly worn out, and then stopped abruptly.

Seizing him by the arm, the man said, between pants of exhaustion:

"Have you a permit to fish on this estate?"

"Yes, of course," said the boy.

"Then show it to me!"

The boy drew the permit from his pocket, and the gamekeeper, examining it, frowned in perplexity and anger.

"Why did you run away when you had a permit?" angrily demanded the man.

"My friend hadn't got one!" was the reply.—Sent in by Harold Cawthrat, A. C., Bradford, Yorks.

### SOME SLIDE.

First Junior: "They tell me that in New York there are buildings twenty storeys high."

Second Ditto: "My hat! What a fine time a fellow could have sliding down the banisters."—Sent in by Charles Stride, Bournemouth.

### WHO? AH, WHO?

A small boy was waiting outside a picture-palace waiting for his friend who had promised to go inside with him. After a long wait he became exasperated, and exclaimed loudly:

"The booby isn't coming!"

A policeman, who happened to be passing at the time, caught the boy by the shoulder, and said:

"Whom do you mean by the booby?"

"Why, my friend Michael," answered the boy. "He promised to meet me here, but he hasn't turned up."

The policeman had imagined that the remark was meant for him; but he accepted the boy's explanation and released him.

Putting a respectable distance between himself and the constable, the boy yelled derisively:

"And who did you mean by 'the booby'?"—Sent in by R. Livingstone, Wimbledon, S.W.

### EASILY "DONE."

Amongst the crowd of soldiers in a canteen was a fellow who kept bragging of his manifold accomplishments.

Becoming exasperated, one of the company remarked sarcastically:

"Now, we have heard so much about what you can do. Tell us what there is you can't do, and I'll undertake to do it myself."

"Well," said the braggart, with a yawn. "I can't pay my account here, and I'm very glad to have found a man who can do it for me."

Collapse of critic.—Sent in by James Porter, Junr., Bristol.

### QUITE TRUE.

A visitor was being shown over a big cotton mill by the proprietor, who proudly displayed some of the magnificent fabrics produced there. Holding up a piece of calico, he said:

"Our latest pattern. Excellent work, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, it's all right!" exclaimed the visitor. "But you can't hold a candle to the goods we turn out at our works."

"Same line?" asked the mill-owner, somewhat offended.

"No," replied the other; "ours is gunpowder."—Sent in by G. McDonald, Batley.

### A TELLING ADMONITION.

Mother: "Johnny, you told me a lie when you said you hadn't been at the jam. Do you know what happens to bad little boys who tell lies?"

Johnny (sheepishly): "No, mamma."

Mother: "Well, a big black man with one large eye in the middle of his forehead comes and takes them away, and then chops them up to eat for his dinner. Now, you won't tell me any more lies, will you? I don't like people who tell lies."—Sent in by J. Bolland, Glasgow.

### AN UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL.

"I really don't know whether to make use of this testimonial for the purpose of advertisement or not," murmured the inventor of a patent hair-restorer.

"Why are you in doubt over the matter?" asked his friend.

"Well, I'll read it out to you:

"Dear Sir,—Before using your hair-restorer I had three bald spots on my head, but now I have only one."—Sent in by J. Telfer, Heads Nook, near Carlisle.

### TOO SMART!

Recently a well-known ventriloquist had occasion to make a hurried train journey. Arriving at the station just as the train was starting, he had no time to take a ticket for his dog.

When the cry "All tickets ready!" was heard at a certain station, the ventriloquist dropped his dog into a hamper, which was labelled in bold letters, "Professor Jones, Ventriloquist."

Eventually the ticket-collector reached the carriage, and at the same time the dog began to bark.

With a wry smile, the collector glanced at the label on the hamper, and then, turning to the ventriloquist, said:

"All right, mister! That's very clever, but you can't fool me. I've had the same trick played on me before."—Sent in by Alfred G. Feakes, Bristol.

### "PROMISING."

Father: "I promised to buy you a bicycle if you passed your examination at school; but you have failed in everything. What have you been doing?"

Johnnie: "Learning to ride a bicycle, dad."—Sent in by C. Storey, W. Boldon.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

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# OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL!

# COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

### The Previous Instalments told how:—

ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's School to continue her education.

Upon arrival, she is kindly received by MISS PENFOLD, the principal.

DOLORES PELHAM, a handsome dark girl, being in disgrace at the school, is very unhappy. Ethel, however, is sympathetic towards her, and tries to be friendly.

ENID CRAVEN, a sneak, who is largely responsible for Dolores' unhappy position at the school, is urgently in need of money with which to settle a dress bill.

Dolores attempts to run away from the school in the middle of the night, and is brought back, against her will, by Ethel. In the morning, however, Dolores is found to be missing; but she is eventually caught and brought back to the school.

Miss Penfold accuses Dolores of having stolen a five-pound note, which is missing from a desk in her room.

Dolores declares that she did not take the note, and to this Miss Penfold replies:

"I cannot believe you."

(Now read on.)

### Guilty or Innocent?

There was a long silence in the room.

Miss Penfold sat cold and stern, her face very hard and pale. She did not believe Dolores; she could not believe her. Dolores seemed to be stunned.

Her handsome, dusky face was pale and almost haggard. The terrible accusation had burst like a thunderbolt upon her.

She had been prepared to face her punishment for running away; she had expected that, and she was ready to be defiant, whatever was inflicted. But this—

This was disgrace—this was shame. The girl's brain seemed to reel as she thought of it.

She realised how she had placed herself under suspicion. Her flight, coinciding with the theft from the principal's desk, had made it inevitable that she should be suspected. And how was she to prove her innocence?

That was impossible.

She would be expelled from St. Freda's—as a thief!

And at the thought of it, the Spanish girl's stubborn pride broke down, and the tears came into her eyes and ran down her cheeks.

Miss Penfold watched her severely.

"Well, Dolores?" she said, at length.

"I am innocent!"

"Come, come!"

"You will not believe me?"

"I cannot!"

"Oh, but I am innocent! You may search if you like; you will not find the money!" the Spanish girl exclaimed.

"You must be searched, Dolores, if you do not give up the money," said Miss Penfold. "Think, you foolish child! Even if you have parted with the money, it can be traced, and the theft brought home to you. I had, fortunately, not left any gold in the desk; there were two banknotes for five

pounds each. One was taken. I suppose you are aware that banknotes are numbered? It will be quite easy for the police to trace the one you took, if you have parted with it."

"But I did not take it."

"Dolores!"

"I did not take it."

The headmistress was silent.

Dolores sobbed, and then dashed her tears angrily away.

"I am innocent," she said. "I had no thought of taking money. I have money of my own, which I have saved—three or four pounds. You know my father sends me a great deal of money."

"I know it. But—"

"I did not need to take any. But I would have died rather than take it, if I had been starving!" exclaimed Dolores passionately. "Oh, it is wicked, wicked, to accuse me! You know that I did not take the money!"

Miss Penfold's cheeks burned.

"Dolores! How dare you speak to me like that!"

"How dare you accuse me of being a thief!" exclaimed Dolores. "I am not one; I would have died first! If the money is gone, someone else has taken it."

"It is impossible! I tell you there were two banknotes, and only one was taken. It is childish to suppose that a burglar would have taken one and not the other."

"He may not have seen the other," said Dolores.

"They were folded up together."

"I—I do not know what happened; I only know that I did not go to your desk."

"You went to my room."

"I had to go to the room, as it was the only window I could open."

"And you ask me to believe that you did not go to the desk? It is absurd, Dolores. You cannot expect me to believe you."

"I am speaking the truth."

Miss Penfold shook her head.

Dolores sobbed again. In the hard, unbelieving face before her now, she read what the rest would think of her. All St. Freda's would know—would believe—that she was a thief.

It was one thing to leave St. Freda's because she had too stubborn a pride to bend to the restraints of discipline. It was quite another to go because she was a thief—because she was unfit for the other girls to speak to.

Dolores realised that.

The more she disliked St. Freda's, the more she despised the other girls there, the more bitterly humiliated she felt at the thought that they would now despise her.

Despise her!

It made the blood flame in her cheeks to think of it. Dolly Carew would despise her, and greedy little Milly Pratt, and even Enid Craven, the mean Enid, would be able to despise her now.

A dry sob shook Dolores.

With a sudden impulse she threw herself at Miss Penfold's feet, clasping the elder lady's dress with convulsive hands. Her white, tear-stained face was turned up to the stern countenance of the St. Freda's Head.

"Oh, Miss Penfold, I am innocent—I am innocent!" she panted, her voice broken and husky. "Will you not believe

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "TALBOT'S RESCUE!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

me? It is the truth! Oh, it is the truth! You have never known me to tell a lie, though I have been bad in other ways, Miss Penfold. I know I have done wrong, I can see it now; but—but I am not a thief. Oh, believe me!"

The passionate outburst strangely moved Miss Penfold. "If I could only believe you, Dolores!" she said, in a low voice.

"It is true—true!"

Miss Penfold hesitated.

In spite of herself, a feeling was growing within her that circumstances might have conspired to cast this black suspicion upon the Spanish girl.

She raised Dolores gently enough.

"Sit down, dear," she said quietly. "Let us talk this over. Calm yourself!"

"But you believe me?"

"I will try to believe you," said Miss Penfold, with a sigh. "But, Dolores, the banknote was taken. That you no longer have it is nothing. You may have passed it, or thrown it away after you were caught. Can you give me any reason to suppose that someone else may have taken it? Goodness knows, my only desire is to do justice in the matter!"

Dolores started.

"Ethel!"

Miss Penfold looked puzzled.

"Ethel! What do you mean?"

"Ethel Cleveland knows that I did not take it!" cried Dolores.

"What! How can Ethel Cleveland know anything about it?"

"Send for her; she will tell you," exclaimed Dolores triumphantly.

Miss Penfold looked very puzzled.

"Very well; I will send for her," she said. "But I really cannot see how a new girl at St. Freda's can throw any light upon the matter."

She touched a bell.

The maid who answered it was told to fetch Ethel, and in a couple of minutes Ethel Cleveland appeared at the door of Miss Penfold's study.

"Come in, my dear!" said Miss Penfold, as Cousin Ethel hesitated. "You may sit down. Dolores thinks that your evidence may be of some use to her. It appears that you knew something of her movements last night."

Cousin Ethel coloured.

"Yes," she said quietly.

Her glance rested upon Dolores a moment. She had not expected the Spanish girl to draw her into the matter. But she had no thought but to tell the exact truth. Dolores understood her look, and broke out passionately.

"You do not understand, Ethel—you don't understand yet! I am accused of stealing a banknote from Miss Penfold's desk when I ran away last night."

Ethel gave a start of horror.

"Stealing a banknote?" she said faintly.

"Yes."

"Impossible!"

"I hope it is impossible," said Miss Penfold quietly. "That is what we are to find out. Tell me what you know about the matter, Ethel."

Cousin Ethel glanced at Dolores.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the Spanish girl eagerly. "Tell Miss Penfold all about the matter—everything as it happened!"

"Very well."

Cousin Ethel told what she knew, quietly and calmly. "Dolores had told me that she was going to run away from the school. I tried to persuade her not to do so; and I stayed awake to stop her if she should go."

"Why did you not tell me?" said Miss Penfold gently.

"I had promised to say nothing."

"Stay a moment!" exclaimed Miss Penfold, remembering Enid Craven's visit to her the previous evening. "Did any one else know of this?"

"Yes. Another girl heard us speaking of it."

"Was it Enid Craven?"

Ethel looked surprised.

"Yes, Miss Penfold."

"Very well. You may go on."

"I heard Dolores leaving the dormitory, and followed her," said Ethel. "She left the school by the window of this room, and I followed her into the grounds. I persuaded her to return, and we went back to bed. I fell asleep, and then—then Dolores must have left the dormitory again, and I did not hear her."

"I waited till you were asleep," said Dolores.

Ethel nodded.

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"But what does this prove for you, Dolores?" asked Miss Penfold quietly.

"Do you not see?" exclaimed Dolores eagerly. "Ethel followed me into the grounds. Did I go to Miss Penfold's desk, Ethel?"

Ethel shook her head.

"Certainly not. You would not have had time before I saw you here. Besides, you had left the door of the room open all the time."

"And I had gone out, intending to leave then!" exclaimed Dolores hurriedly. "If I had wanted to go to the desk, Miss Penfold, I should have gone then, when I first tried to leave the school. I did not know that Ethel was following me."

Miss Penfold was silent.

Certainly there was a great deal in what the Spanish girl said.

If she had taken the banknote for the expenses of her flight, she would certainly have taken it when she left the house the first time. Yet it might have been an afterthought. Miss Penfold's mind wavered, but in spite of herself Dolores' earnestness was impressing her. She was no longer certain of the Spanish girl's guilt.

"Was anyone else awake at this time?" she asked slowly.

Dolores shook her head.

"I think not."

"But, my child, if you did not take the note from my desk someone else must have done so," said Miss Penfold. "Someone else must have been up last night."

Cousin Ethel gave a start.

"Dolores!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "You remember the light—the match that was struck in this room while we were in the grounds?"

Then Dolores clasped her hands.

"Yes, yes! I remember! Whoever struck that match was the thief!"

#### On The Track.

Miss Penfold looked at the two girls in surprise. Her look demanded an explanation, and Ethel hastily explained. The headmistress listened with deep attention.

"Then someone else was downstairs while you were in the garden?" she said.

"Yes."

"You did not see her?"

"No."

"Have you any idea who it was?"

"Not at all," said Cousin Ethel, with a shake of the head.

"I saw nothing but the match burning for a few seconds."

Miss Penfold compressed her lips.

"This is a very strange story," she said. "I will not say that I believe Dolores to be innocent; that would be saying too much. But my belief in her guilt has been very strongly shaken, and I shall not act hastily in the matter. Dolores, you will go to your cubicle, and remain there for the rest of the day, while I consider the matter. Ethel, you will say nothing of what has passed in this room. This is not a matter that I wish to have discussed in the school."

"I understand, Miss Penfold."

"I can rely upon your discretion, I am sure. You may go."

Cousin Ethel left the principal's study, with a smile of encouragement to the Spanish girl as she went.

Ethel went out, with her brain almost in a whirl. The happenings of the last two days had been very rapid and very strange. Little had she dreamed of finding herself in the midst of such a whirl of events when she came to St. Freda's. Of one thing she was quite sure—Dolores was innocent. Little as she knew of the Spanish girl, she was certain that Dolores was incapable of a despicable action, wild and wayward as she might be.

The other girls gathered round Ethel at once as she came out into the broad, flagged passage, curious to know why she had been sent for and what had passed in Miss Penfold's study.

But Ethel would not satisfy their curiosity.

"Is Dolores going to be expelled?" asked Belle Hilton.

"I don't know."

"Was Miss Penfold very angry?"

"What did Dolores say?"

"Why did Miss Penfold send for you?"

"What did you say?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I am so sorry, but I have nothing to say," she replied.

"Nonsense!" said Belle, in her decided way. "What are you keeping secrets for?"

"I am not keeping secrets, but—"

"Stuff!"



"Yes, stuff and rats!" said Dolly Carew. "Go ahead, Ethel!"

But Ethel shook her head.

The girls, though considerably surprised and somewhat exasperated, let her alone at last.

Cousin Ethel walked away under the elms, to think the matter over alone. Enid Craven followed her there.

"Ethel Cleveland!" she said suddenly.

Ethel looked round. She had not seen Enid following her, and she was not pleased.

"Yes. What is it?" she said, curtly enough.

"I wish you would tell me what Miss Penfold wanted you for. What did Dolores say? Was Miss Penfold angry with her?"

"I suppose so."

"About her running away?"

"Probably."

"And—and anything else?"

Ethel looked at Enid quickly. The girl's face was very white and there was an eagerness there was no mistaking in her look and tone. Did Enid know anything of that accusation which had been made in the seclusion of Miss Penfold's study? Had she been listening again? Ethel's lip curled.

"Anything else!" she repeated. "What else? What else was there for Miss Penfold to be angry about?"

Enid coloured.

"Oh, I—I don't know!" she stammered. "But—"

"You have been listening!" said Ethel.

"Then—then there is something else?" cried Enid.

"If you have listened, you know—but if you do not know, I shall not tell you," said Ethel. "It is mean to listen—contemptible!"

"I have not listened."

"Then how do you know—I mean, why do you ask me that question? What can you know about it?"

"Nothing, but—"

"Well, I have nothing to tell you," said Ethel. And she turned away.

Enid Craven did not follow her.

Ethel sat down upon a seat under the shadow of the elms. The sunset was bright on the grass in the Close. She could hear the merry girlish voices as she sat there, but she paid them no heed. She was thinking.

Dolores was in her cubicle now—a prisoner—waiting her doom. That she would have to leave St. Freda's seemed certain, but that she should leave in disgrace, expelled as a thief—that was the worst, and it might be possible to save her from that. Who was the thief? That it was not Dolores, Ethel felt certain. It was the unknown person who had struck the match in Miss Penfold's study the previous night, the flicker of which the two girls had seen from the darkness of the Close.

But who was that?

Ethel did not know much as yet of the girls of St. Freda's, but when she thought of the fresh, healthy faces, she found it hard to credit that there might be a thief among them. She started as a new thought came into her mind.

The theft had been so well-timed for suspicion to fall upon Dolores—it looked as if the thief knew that the Spanish girl was about to leave the school, and laid plans accordingly. Who knew it besides herself?

Ethel compressed her lips as she thought of Enid Craven.

Enid had known it, and, contrary to Ethel's expectation, had not betrayed the Spanish girl to the Head.

Enid was the one girl at St. Freda's whom Ethel would have been more ready to doubt than any other.

And what did Enid's mysterious hints as to the "something else" Miss Penfold might be angry about mean? She knew that Dolores was charged with something more than merely running away from school.

Like a flash it came to Ethel.

In the agitation the thought brought to her she rose and began to walk up and down under the trees, her face pale and excited.

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed, unconsciously speaking aloud.

"It was she!"

"Ethel!"

Ethel turned her head. Dolly Carew was looking at her with wide-open eyes of astonishment. Ethel coloured.

"What is the matter, Ethel?" exclaimed Dolly. "I came to look for you! We want you to play rounders! What is the matter?"

"Nothing!" said Ethel.

"Well, are you coming?"

"I would rather go for a walk," said Ethel, "if you will come. Will you? I have not seen the village yet, and—and I want to go there particularly."

Dolly nodded.

"Certainly!" she said. "I'll call out to Belle."

And five minutes later the two girls were walking down the leafy lane to Elmhurst.

Dolly kept up an incessant chatter all the way. She told Cousin Ethel everything she knew about the locality, about the footpaths and the woods, about the surroundings of St. Freda's, and was so interested in her own conversation that she hardly noticed that Ethel said scarcely a word.

Ethel was busy with her own thoughts.

She felt that she possessed the clue to the mysterious happenings at St. Freda's, and she alone. It was not pleasant to her to make any investigation into the matter, but Dolores was accused—Dolores was in danger of being branded as a thief. To bring the guilt home to the right person was Ethel's duty if she could do it.

"And this is the village," said Dolly at last.

Ethel, as a matter of fact, had hardly heard a word that the voluble Dolly had been saying all the way, but she nodded, with a smile.

"Where does Mrs. Scruton live?" she asked.

"Mrs. Scruton!" ejaculated Dolly.

"Yes, the dressmaker, you know."

"Yes, but—"

"Where does she live?"

"Look here," said Dolly, "you're not going to Mrs. Scruton."

"Why not?"

"Because she's not a nice woman. She over-charges fearfully, for one thing, and then she encourages girls with money to run into debt, and piles all sorts of things on the bill," said Dolly. "Miss Penfold doesn't like us to go to her. That is why Ethel was so scared."

"I understand. But I am not going to her as a customer."

"Then why—"

"I want to see her."

Dolly looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I know why you should want to see her," she said. "She's not a nice person to see. She's treating Enid very shabbily, I think. Of course, she let Enid get into debt, thinking she would get the money from her people. It would be only what she deserves if she were never paid at all."

"But I want to see her."

"Oh, I suppose you have a message from Enid!" said Dolly.

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## DICK JULIAN,



## THE JEW OF ST. JIM'S

NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"TALBOT'S RESCUE!"

Dolly. "This way! How dense of me not to think of that!"

"It is not that, but——"

"Oh, I won't ask any questions!" said Dolly, laughing. "I'm not interested in Enid's debts and difficulties. She is lucky to have a good-natured goose like you to help her out of them. This is Mrs. Scruton's house."

She stopped at the garden gate of a tasteless-looking, red-brick villa—one of the few modern houses in the village of Elmhurst. A brass plate on the door announced that it was the dwelling of Mrs. Scruton, and that Mrs. Scruton was a "modiste," and prepared to make up ladies' own materials. "I'll wait for you here," said Dolly. "I'll come in if you like."

"Oh, not at all! Wait here, there's a dear!"

"Right-ho!" said Dolly cheerfully.

And Cousin Ethel went up to the door alone.

### Ethel's Suspicions Are Confirmed.

A slatternly-looking servant answered her ring, and Cousin Ethel was admitted to a shabby hall. Her heart was beating fast now. She was undertaking this in the hope of clearing Dolores, but now that she was fairly embarked she began to feel a little afraid. But she did not allow her courage to sink.

"What name, please, miss?"

"Mrs. Scruton does not know my name," said Ethel, "but say it is someone from St. Freda's."

"Yes, miss."

Ethel was shown into a room in which the signs of dress-making were pretty evident everywhere. The windows were tightly closed, so that the atmosphere was extremely stuffy, and that, added to a stuffy odour of cloth, made Ethel feel quite faint for a moment. There was a looking-glass over the mantelpiece in a hideous oak frame, and the furniture glistened with cheap varnish. In the bay window was a stand with an "art" pot of a colour that would have made an artist shudder, with a fern in it which seemed to be in the final stages of consumption.

Ethel sat down on one of the shiny, creaky chairs, and waited. She had not long to wait. A stout woman of uncertain age, with a red nose and very red cheeks, entered the room with a sort of sweeping motion. Ethel did not know that the redness of the nose was caused by drinking, or that of the cheeks by rouge; but she felt an instinctive dislike of the woman the moment she saw her. She felt that Miss Penfold was quite right in not wishing her girls to come into contact with Mrs. Scruton.

There was a very agreeable smile upon the disagreeable face now, however. Mrs. Scruton knew that Ethel must be a new girl, and she was very ready to welcome and make much of a new customer.

"Good-afternoon, my dear!" she said effusively. "I hope you have time to stay for a cup of tea. Now——"

"No, thank you!" said Ethel hurriedly. "I—I am pressed for time. I have not come on my own account really, but about—a certain matter in connection with Enid Craven."

Mrs. Scruton smiled.

"Ah, the change!" she said. "Quite right. But I told Miss Craven that I should send her the change when I had placed the note in my bank."

Ethel started.

She had come there to learn the truth, half-afraid that she was doing wrong. She had remembered how Enid Craven had gone out immediately after morning school, and how strangely white and how touchy she had been. The suspicion had forced itself into Ethel's mind that Enid's offer of half-sovereign on account had been refused by Mrs. Scruton, and that the foolish girl had been driven to a desperate step to find the money, and had thrown the odium upon another.

But Ethel was startled at having her half-formed suspicion so suddenly and fully confirmed.

"The—the note!" she stammered.

"Yes. I do not keep so much money in the house," said Mrs. Scruton, with a smile; "but I shall place the note in the bank to-day, and will send the change up to the school, unless Miss Craven prefers to call for it."

Ethel shivered.

"You have not yet placed the note in the bank, Mrs. Scruton?"

"I have not been out this afternoon yet," said Mrs. Scruton, "but there is ample time before the bank closes. It is open till six in Elmhurst."

"You—you must not take the note there," said Ethel hastily.

Mrs. Scruton looked astonished.

"Why not?"

"Because—because—— Oh, did you not think it strange that Enid should have so much money?" exclaimed Ethel.

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The woman's face hardened.

"She told me her aunt had sent her the banknote," she replied. "Of course, I believed her. Do you mean to say that the note did not belong to her?"

"It did not."

"Then she stole it?"

Ethel flushed.

"Never mind that; but it would be better for you to take the note to Miss Penfold, and explain how you came by it. I know that Enid had no money last evening, and she was very much afraid of what you would do. It is you who have caused her to do this wicked thing."

Mrs. Scruton threw open the door with a theatrical gesture.

"Leave my house!"

Ethel walked down the garden path and joined Dolly. Her heart was beating hard; she felt as if she had just left the den of an ogress.

Dolly looked at her flushed face.

"Had a row with Scruton?" she asked.

Ethel laughed.

"Not exactly, dear. Let us go away."

"Is she going to be easy with Enid?" asked Dolly.

"Surely the half-sovereign will keep the Shylock quiet for a time, anyway?"

Ethel did not reply. She did not wish to expose Enid's falsehoods to her companion.

That Enid had lied recklessly was certain; but her greatest folly was in overlooking the fact that a note, being numbered, could be traced if Miss Penfold chose to call in the aid of the police. But the foolish girl had been too frightened and confused to even think of that, in all probability.

Ethel was very silent during the walk home to St. Freda's.

That did not matter to Dolly, however, who talked enough for two. When she arrived at the school, Ethel went as soon as she could to the dormitory, and looked in at Dolores' cubicle. Dolores was not there, but Ethel caught sight of her in the window-seat at the end of the dormitory, and hastened to join her.

Dolores looked at her with a faint smile.

"You will still speak to me?" she exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"Then you do not believe that I am a thief?"

"I never believed it for a moment," said Ethel quietly.

Dolores threw her arms round the English girl and hugged her, and kissed her upon both cheeks.

"How good and kind you are!" she exclaimed. "How unlike me! If I had had you for a friend when I came here, I should have done much better than I have."

"Nonsense!" said Ethel, smiling.

"But it is true! I—I wish I were to stay at St. Freda's now," said Dolores. "I have been thinking—and this—this horrible thing that has happened has seemed to clear my brain. I wish—oh, I wish I had not run away last night, Ethel!"

"I wish you had not, dear."

"And you tried to stop me, and I said I hated you," said Dolores; "but I don't hate you, Ethel, I love you."

Ethel kissed her.

"You shall stay at St. Freda's, and we shall be great friends," she exclaimed.

Dolores shook her head.

"I cannot stay. Even if Miss Penfold forgave me for running away, she thinks I am a thief—and I cannot prove that I am innocent."

"But I can!" exclaimed Ethel triumphantly.

"What! You!"

"Yes."

"But how?" exclaimed Dolores, in astonishment. "How can you? Do you know who the thief is? Have you found out?"

"Yes, I have found out."

"And who is it?"

"Enid Craven."

"Oh!"

"Miss Penfold will know it soon," said Ethel softly. "You will be cleared. But—but I hope Miss Penfold will not be very hard on Enid. The silly girl was frightened into it by a bad woman—though it was very, very wicked of her to let it fall upon you."

"But—but you are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Then you have saved me, Ethel!"

Ethel kissed her again. Dolores did not speak, but she sat with her arm about Ethel's neck, her head on Ethel's shoulders, and the proud, dark eyes were dim with tears. Dolores was crying.

(Another long instalment of this grand school serial next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

No. 4. THE GREYFRIARS HERALD, 1<sup>LD</sup>. OUT TO-DAY. BUY IT AT ONCE!



# THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —  
**EDITOR. "THE GEM" LIBRARY.**  
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 EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

## "TALBOT'S RESCUE!"

By Martin Clifford.

"One of the best" is next Wednesday's grand, long complete story of school life, which deals with a most amazing deception on the part of a German youth, who forcibly changes identity with a new boy named Loring. Many exciting incidents follow, and the climax is reached when Talbot, with consummate skill and courage, discovers the whereabouts of the genuine scholar, and shows up the impostor. Gemites of all ages and dispositions will positively revel in

## "TALBOT'S RESCUE!"

which is a thrill from start to finish.

## "RALLY ROUND!"

A Great New Song for British Boys.

The superb Christmas Double Number of the "Magnet" Library is now on sale, price twopence, and among numerous other attractions, it contains a really magnificent song for the boys of Britain; and every Gemite should at once make himself—or herself—acquainted with the words and tune—the work of Mr. G. R. Samways and Mr. Frank Witty respectively.

Apart from this wonderful attraction, our famous companion paper boasts a magnificent 50,000-word story of school life, entitled:

## "HARRY WHARTON & CO'S PANTOMIME!"

By Frank Richards.

There is also a special four-page supplement, similar to that which appeared in the "Gem" Double Number, and dealing exhaustively with all the leading characters at Greyfriars.

Fun for the festive fireside is assured when the Christmas Number of the "Magnet" Library is at hand. Get your copy NOW!

## A CLEVER ESSEX CHUM.

A. D. N. A., of Seven Kings, sends me a most interesting letter, and encloses a short story made up from the titles of various "Gem," "Magnet," and "Boys' Friend" stories which have appeared from time to time.

Here is my Essex chum's clever contribution:

"The St. Jim's Recruit" is "Loyal and True" "For the Old School's Sake," and "The Jew of St. Jim's," "The Fellow Who Won," is resolved that "Schoolboys Never Shall Be Slaves"; but not so "Grandy of the Shell," "A Regular Ruffian," who, in taking to "The Path of Dishonour," receives "A Waster's Reward," "The Schoolboy Lawyer," offers "Fifty Pounds Reward" for "Backing up Bunter," "A Son of Scotland," "Kildare for St. Jim," and "Tom Merry for England," Sportsmen All, discover "Hurree Singh's Peril," and save him from being "Carried Away."

On "Finding His Level," and becoming "The Hero of the Hour," "Tom Merry & Co.'s Ally," "Talbot of the Shell," becomes "The Outcast of St. Jim's" "For Another's Sake."

"The Housemaster's Homecoming" brings about "Grandy's Downfall," and "Police-constable Jimmy Silver" succeeds in "Turning the Tables" at "Pankley's Picnic," while "Special Constable Coker," who is "At War with Greyfriars," clears up "The Mystery of the Gables," "Manly's Flirtation" at "The Old Boys' Challenge" results in "The Scouts' Victory."

"The Champion of the Oppressed" brings out "The Punishment Policies." They call it "An Affair of State." "A Soldier of the King," "Coker's Canadian Cousin," meets "Master Marie." "The Sunday Crusaders" interfere, much to the disgust of "The Four Conspirators." "The Master Who Stayed at Home" succeeds in "Winning His Spurs," and "The Terror of Rookwood." "A Spy in the School," is "Renounced by Rookwood" "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

Many thanks, my Essex chum! You have amply proved that there is literary talent of no mean order at Seven Kings, and I shall be pleased to see further effusions from your pen.

## ANOTHER WAYWARD YOUTH APOLOGISES!

"I am Determined to be Decent!"

Anti-Gemites—if there are any left—will feel very small on reading the following letter, which demonstrates the fact that there are no real grievances against the "Gem," and that those who write offensive anonymous letters do so with a view of gaining cheap notoriety.

"Islington.

"Dear Editor,—I am writing to ask you to accept an apology for the anonymous letter I sent you. I can't think whatever made me do such a thing. I am now determined to be decent, and to back up the companion papers might and main. I have two brothers serving in the Army. One has been ten months in Flanders, and is now wounded. I am thinking of sending some of your papers out to him to cheer him up.

"I must now conclude, in anticipation of your taking a lenient view of my conduct.—Yours truly,

"H. J. CHILD."

I sincerely hope Master Child will keep his word, and never again resort to a practice which can only be classed as dishonourable. His apology is cordially accepted, and if his name ever appears on this page again, I trust it will be as a loyal reader, who spares no effort in making the companion papers a great and glorious success.

## REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Reginald A. Brown (York).—Storyette not quite up to standard. Try again. Have despatched you a parcel of back numbers.

Harwell B. Gray (Argyllshire).—I am unable to say exactly what part of the Highlands Kerr hails from.

Leslie Barrett (Stoke Newington).—Many thanks for your exceedingly chatty letter, and for the pen-and-ink sketch of Charlie Chaplin. Charlie seems almost "played out" now, and I am not surprised. Malpas in the Army? Heavens above! The only army he belongs to is the Army of Slandrers, of which he is the commanding-officer.

James R. (Glasgow).—All things considered, I should not advise a boy of fourteen to enlist. He is not fitted to stand the strain and stress of modern warfare nearly so well as a person twice his age.

"An Admirer of Talbot" (Ripon).—The series of stories you mention made such a sensation that for four consecutive weeks the "Gem" Library sold out completely—lock, stock, and barrel. I cannot, therefore, get you the numbers you require. Sorry!

Ernest H. (co. Kerry).—The information you require was contained in the special four-page supplement which appeared in our Christmas Double Number.

"Babs" (Ireland).—Many thanks for a most interesting letter. No, Talbot and Marie Rivers are not in love. A boy's

(Continued on next page.)

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NEXT  
WEDNESDAY:

"TALBOT'S RESCUE!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of  
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

and-girl friendship sums up their attachment. You are a very nice height for your age—certainly not too tall, as your friends tell you. Best wishes for a jolly good time this coming Christmas!

J. S. B. (Birmingham).—I was interested to hear of your chat with Miss Doris Frodin, and have written to her on the subject you mention. Best wishes for a merry Christmas!

Marion Webster.—Jack Blake is very good-looking. As for Gussy, he is admirably portrayed week by week by Mr. Macdonald. Glad you appreciate "Cousin Ethel's School-days."

W. T. (South Shields).—I am deeply indebted to you for your splendid support. My word! You do have a busy time, sending off copies of the companion papers to your relatives and chums at the Front and on the high seas. Yes, I always like my readers to regard me, not only as an Editor, but a friend. Write to me whenever you are beset by any of boyhood's difficulties. Meanwhile, I wish you a very merry Christmas!

Frank Taylor (Rotherham).—Storyettes should in all cases be sent in on postcards, otherwise they cannot be considered.

Stanley A. Morris (Cheshire).—Hope you enjoyed "School and Sport," the new threepenny library. You should refer for your information concerning the characters to the special supplement published in the "Gem" Library a short time ago.

Phyllis P. (Maida Vale).—I deeply sympathize with your position, and hope the sun will shine before long. Write to me as often as you like.

Miss P. B. S. (West Croydon).—Our Correspondence Exchange has had to close down temporarily, a state of affairs which must be laid to the door of William the Kaiser.

"A Lancashire Chum" (Clorley) writes me a most interesting and thrilling letter. It appears that one of his former chums started slandering the "Gem," and said he would write to the Editor condemning it, in the hope of seeing his name in print. His chief grievance was that no boys ever went the pace to the extent of Levison and Crooke; whereupon "A Lancashire Chum" told him to take his own case as a parallel. This enraged the slanderer, and a fight was fixed up, on the following terms: If the loyal reader won, then his opponent would refrain from libelling the "Gem." If otherwise, then he would go ahead with his caddish work. Happily, the true Gemite succeeded in wiping up the floor with his aggressor, and now everything in the garden is lovely. I am much obliged to my Lancashire chum, and my only regret is that I was not present to referee.

"A Warwickshire Lad."—Your best plan would be to take lessons in music from a skilled teacher.

C. H. (Whitby).—All available war pictures by A. C. Michael were distributed long ago.

"A Unit" (Tottenham).—Very many thanks for your letter. I sincerely hope that by the time these lines are in print you will have recovered from your indisposition.

Tom Jenkins (Portsmouth).—The Christmas Double Number of the "Magnet" contains a special song for loyal readers, with music appended. Don't forget to secure a copy and get your sister to play the song over to you. It ought to be the "rage" in Pompey.

"Terra Nova" (Newfoundland).—It is not at all surprising that your storyette was duplicated by another reader. Such things frequently happen, especially as the jokes need not be original.

"A Cape Town Reader."—Tom Merry is the finest exponent of boxing at St. Jim's, without a doubt. The claim to being the best footballer rests between Tom Merry, Talbot, and Jack Blake. They are all "hot stuff." Talbot is probably the most celebrated long-distance runner, with Figgins not far behind.

N. I. L. (Johannesburg).—By all means send along your storyettes, which will receive prompt consideration. Glad to hear how highly you appreciate the "Greyfriars Herald."

T. C. M. (Glasgow).—There is no "Gem" League in Glasgow. Why not take the bull by the horns and form one yourself?

Amy M. (Liverpool).—Watch the "Penny Pop" for dramatic developments.

S. C. M. (Cape Town).—Thank you for your suggestion, but a competition on the lines you stipulate would lack interest and excitement. Best wishes.

Sydney A. (East Yorks).—A portrait of Tom Merry, and another of Eric Kildare, appeared in the special supplement contained in last week's issue.

E. Y. (Tunbridge Wells).—Mr. Martin Clifford did not mean to imply that all cinema pianists were rank duffers. It was alluding, in the main, to Mr. Curll. No, a boy of sixteen is not called upon to enlist.

Corporal A. J. Sage, R.A.M.C., 4th Corps, Railroad, France, will be very grateful to readers of the "Gem" would send out to him a few spare copies.

J. A. K. (Pretoria).—Many thanks for your kind suggestion, which shall receive due consideration.

Herbert Wood (Oldham).—So long as the "Gem" Library retains the valuable support of such fellows as you have proved yourself to be, it need never fear for the future. I think you are a thorough brick.

J. H. B. (Wales).—An amalgamation of the doings of Tom Merry & Co. and Harry Wharton & Co. will shortly take place in the "Penny Popular," and ought to liveen that paper up, some!

Elsie S. (Wilts).—Many thanks for your loyal letter!

Nozah P. (Co. Down).—Mr. Railton has been discharged from the Army.

J. S. (near Cardiff).—The reader in question is no relation of yours.

Bernard D. M. Adams (Northampton).—A great new series of school and sporting stories will commence shortly in the "Penny Popular," as the outcome of Master Howard V. Tracy's suggestion. With regard to the mistake made in the "Gem" a few weeks back, I have already explained that Mr. Macdonald is in the Anti-aircraft Service, and he was called away that week to "pot" at hostile Zepps, and that is how the bloomer came about. Patriotic readers should take it smiling; it was only a trivial error, after all.

Alec C. S. (London, E.C.).—See reply to Bernard Adams, printed above.

Roland S. (Leicester).—The information you require was contained in our special supplement.

Glady M. (Dublin).—Thank you very much for your cheery letter. I hope your brother has fully recovered from his wound, and that you will both remain loyal supporters of the "Gem" Library for many years to come.

Miss F. A. (Liverpool).—Thank you very much for your suggestions in connection with the "Greyfriars Herald."

M. J. S. (High Barnet).—The full names of the characters you mention are Jack Owen and Sam Grant. Pete has no surname. No, I am not the Editor of the "Marvel."

A. Floyd (Plaistow).—I will try and do as you suggest later on.

W. B. (Birmingham).—I sympathize with you in your position, but as our Correspondence Exchange has closed down, it is impossible for me to do as you suggest. I once had an Exchange in the "Magnet," but a few cad took advantage of its privileges, and the majority have now got to suffer for the sins of the few.

"Botha-ite" (Johannesburg).—Mr. Martin Clifford is the first to appreciate the splendid work accomplished by General Botha in the present war; but the "Gem" Library is not the proper medium for paying tributes to battle heroes. We leave that sort of thing to those books which deal exclusively with the war.

Bernard B. (Transvaal).—No, I am not in the least perturbed by Master Malpas. There are no South African scholars in the schools you mention.

Ernest H. (Sheffield).—You will frequently find on my Chat page the name and address of a soldier who would appreciate spare copies of the companion papers. Figgins ranks with the best runners at St. Jim's. With regard to your request for a correspondent, see reply to W. B. (Birmingham), printed above.

P. T. (Littlehampton).—There is no Exchange and Mart in connection with this journal.

"A Lancashire Lad."—Thank you for your criticism of the "Greyfriars Herald." This journal is being splendidly supported, but still greater efforts are required before "Tom Merry's Weekly" can come into existence.

Private J. A. Chatwin, 1574, "B" Company, 1-6th Welsh Regiment, British Expeditionary Force, France, would be grateful if any kindly-disposed Gemites would send him back numbers, as he has had no opportunity of reading this paper for a long time.

A. Pringle (Eife).—Lieutenant Lascelles, before he enlisted, was the mathematics master at Greyfriars. I do not know where the individual in question lives.

R. E. Mitchell (Limerick).—I do not think Mr. Railton will return to the trenches. A story on the lines you mention will be published in the New Year.

Your Editor



# No. 4

## OUT TO-DAY

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# The GREYFRIARS <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> HERALD. <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

No. 4. Vol. 1.  
Week Ending  
Dec. 11th, 1915.

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co of Study 1. Greyfriars School.

### COLOSSAL SUCCESS OF THE FIRST THREE ISSUES

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# No. 4

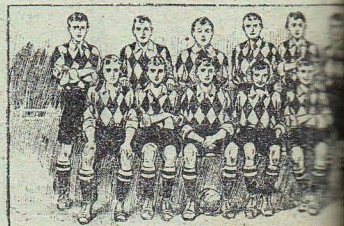
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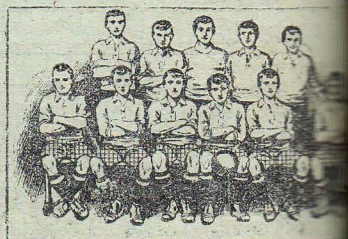
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