



The
GEM 1^{1d}/₂

No. 582. Vol. XIII.

April 5th, 1919.



THE STONY STUDY!



TOM MERRY DELIVERS THE GOODS!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Issue).

5-4-19



THE STONY STUDY!

A Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER I. Gussy in the House!

"A LASS!"
"Alack!"
"Oh dear!"
These three ejaculations, in the sudden tones, were audible from Study No. 10 in the Hall as D'Arcy of the Fourth came along the passage.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his white eyebrows in surprise.

Apparently something was wrong with Tom Merry & Co.—usually the cheeriest of mortals.

"It's too bad!" went on Tom Merry's voice.

"Retire!" came in hysterical tones from Manners.

"Horrid!" said Monty Leather pathetically. "Alas, and slack-day! Also bother! And how it!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked into the study.

He turned his celebrated eyes, inquiringly upon the Terrible Three.

"Anything 'wong, you fellows?" he asked.

The Terrible Three looked at him solemnly.

"Everything!" answered Tom Merry. "And a little over," said Lowther.

"But Jove! I am sorry to hear it! Have the New House fellows been lookin' you!" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"Aw!"
"Woe! you fellows!"
"Could the New House lick us!" queried Monty Lowther. "Lickings from the New House are reserved for Study No. 6, not this study!"

"Wah!"
"And it's worse than that, anyway," said Manners sorrowfully.

"But Jove! Has Bangah come to live in this study!"

The Terrible Three checked.

"No; not quite so bad as that," said Tom Merry, laughing. "After all, things might be worse, you chaps."

"But what is the matter?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Pway outside your trouble to me, dear boys, and pwayas I can help you out. You can rely on a fellow of fact and judgment, you know."

"It's a case of the match!" explained Tom Merry. "Chaps are sometimes like the seed in the parable—they fall in stony places. This study has fallen in a stony place! There's a severe dearth

of cash. The question before the meeting is, how to raise the wind!"

"But Jove! Is that all?"

"All!" exclaimed Monty Lowther warmly. "Isn't it enough? For days and days—it seems like years—we've been stony. Have you ever been stony? If they let you into a cinema for a penny a time we couldn't pay for admission."

"I'm right out of film," said Manners sadly. "I've called on Julian, and that silly ass is right out of film, too. The fellow must be a silly ass to run out of film when I'm hard up!"

"Bring your mighty brain to bear on the subject, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"Make a suggestion."

Arthur Augustus reflected, with a deep wrinkle in his brow.

"Why not write to your governors?" he asked brightly. "I always write to my governors when I'm run out of cash. In fact, I write postabody."

"Do you think we haven't thought of that?" queried Tom Merry. "I wrote a letter to my guardian, which was really a triumph of fact. I told Miss Fawcett that if it would be equally convenient to her I'd be just as pleased to get my allowance at the beginning of the week."

"And what did she answer, dear boy?"

Tom Merry groaned.

"She answered that she wouldn't think of considering her own convenience before mine, and that I could rely on receiving the allowance on the usual date."

"But Jove! I did not know that Miss Fawcett was a humbug!"

"She isn't, indeed! Only she hasn't learned to read between the lines!"

"And I've written to my uncle," said Monty Lowther. "I congratulated him on getting into the House of Commons at the last election, and was very careful not to give a hint of what I think of the House of Commons. I hinted that a remittance would enable me to celebrate the thing in a manner worthy of the occasion. They give them four hundred a year for wagging their chins in the House, besides pocketing; and I thought it was a good idea to strike the iron while it was hot. And what do you think he answered?"

"What did he answer, Lowthah?"

"He suggested that election expenses were hazardous, and that perhaps I should double-check and understand that for some time, at least, I should receive nothing over

my allowance. He showed in a lecture on economy, gratis."

"But Jove! That's walloah written! He might have let you have a whack in the four hundred, as he gets it for nothing. What about you, Mammah?"

"Oh, I've written to my pater—twice," said Manners. "He somehow forgot to answer the first letter. He answered the second." Manners gave a snort. "It appears that there's a shortage of cash owing to my dear little brother Reggie having just had a new bike."

"Oh corker!"

"I thought of going along to the Third Form room and giving Reggie a spanking," said Manners. "But, after all, that wouldn't raise the wind, would it?"

"I should regard that as a most unjustifiable proceeding, Mammah!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Go on!"

"If you will allow me to make the remark, your petah seems to have been a twiddle lickin' in fact. But a fellow must make allowances for his governors," said the swell of St. Jim's tolerantly. "I'm always very patient with my governors, and I make it a rule to give him his head. But why don't you fellows write to somebody else? I can lend you some stamps."

"I've written to my uncle, General Merry," said Tom. "But he's been stuck into Germany, in the Army of Occupation, and he mayn't get the letter for weeks."

"I've tried an aunt, a cousin, and a second cousin," said Lowther. "All blanks."

"I've blined my last bob, and hampered nearly all my relations at three-halpence a time," said Manners. "Nothing doing! There seems to be a regular famine in cash. And now, of course, the weather's turned wonderfully fine—just right for taking photographs."

"You could sell your camera."

"Aw!"

"If you regard that as a polite remark, Mammah—"

"I've thought of selling Manners' camera," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "But I should have to do it while he was out, or he'd kick up a fuss—"

"Let me catch you selling my camera!" roared Manners, yelling my camera!

"What about Weggie's new bike?" asked Arthur Augustus brightly. "You could raise something on that."

"I don't think Reggie would see it!" grinned Manners.

"I trust he would not be unworthily enough to refuse!"

"His, ha! I think he would!"

"That is walloah written of Weggie. However, you fellows did quite wigh!

"This is watah careless of my governah," he remarked. "Ho has not registered the lettah. It is watah waky scadin' a fivah without registerein' the lettah."

"Perhaps he hasn't sent the fiver!" grunted Horrie.

"Oh, but Jove!"

"Suppose you open the letter and see," suggested Monty Lowther. "Nothing like opening a letter if you want to know what's inside it."

Arthur Augustus felt in his waistcoat pocket.

"But Jove, I've left my penknife indoors!" he said, in dismay.

"Can you open a letter without a penknife?" demanded Manners.

"Yess, I could use a pair of scissors, Manna; but I do not happen to have a pair of scissors about me."

"Do you happen to have a thumb about you?"

"Weelly, Manna, I twist you do not think I could open a lettah by the awfully brutal method of jabb'in a thumb into it."

"Not at all," said Blake; "but I can, and I'm going to."

And Blake jerked the letter away from his noble chins and jabbed his thumb into it.

"Weelly, Blake—"

"There you are, fathead!"

"I refuse to be called a fathead, Blake."

"Will you take the letter out?" roared Blake.

"Yess, certainly; but, at the same time, I flatterfully want to be alluded to as a fathead."

"Open that letter, oss!"

"I weally wish, Blake, that you would not wear at me."

"Yes—you thag—"

"It throws me into a flitch when a fellow wears at me."

"Will you look and see if there's anything in the letter?" shrieked Blake.

"Yess, dear boy; but pray do not wear."

And Arthur Augustus calmly drew out the letter and unfolded it. A very puzzled expression came over his face.

"This is watah remarkable," he said.

"What is?" demanded Blake.

"There does not appear to be a fivah in the lettah at all."

"Oh, you image!"

"I weally do not see, Blake, why you should call me an image because my governah has carelessly omitted to put a tankard in the lettah. I will see what he says, and perhaps I had lettah send him a wish."

Arthur Augustus glanced at the letter. He read it aloud to his chums, with rising indignation in his tones.

"My dear Arthur—In reply to your request for five pounds, I must point out to you that your allowance is a liberal one, and that I need you an additional remittance only a week ago. If you remain straitened for money until your allowance is again due you will have the benefit of learning the value of money. This should be very beneficial—Your affectionate father, Eastwood."

"But Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"If the governah thinks that this is playin' the game, I can only remark that he is very much mistaken. I shall certainly 'we him a very stiff lettah."

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

"But Jove! May I inquirah, Buntah, why you are explorin' like a Chinese cravack?" asked Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"He, he, he! I dare say your palor's The Gem Librarly—No. 562."

hard up!" shrieked Bunter. "Now, in my home fires are as thick as blackberries. He, he, he! Serve you right! I sha'n't whisk out my postcard-book with you now, D'Arry. You've lost that."

"I weally do not think I have lost very much, Buntah."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter rolled away, chuckling, apparently deriving great entertainment from the contents of Lord Eastwood's letter. Arthur Augustus gazed at it sadly, and put it in his pocket.

"I am sorry, dear boys," he said, addressing the Terrible Three, "I shall not be able to whisk out my remittance at all, so it has not come. I am weally very much distressed."

"Oh, don't mrench!" grunted Monty Lowther.

"I am weally very sorry."

"Not at all. And this is our old mobility!" said Lowther sadly. "When I go into the House of Commons, later on, I shall feel it my duty to join the Labour Party, and vote for the abolition of the House of Lords. Lords who don't shell out fivers when a study is sixty are N.G."

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Let's go and look for Figgies," said Tom Merry. "We may be able to raise the wind in the New House."

The Terrible Three walked sadly away. Their hope had failed them, and Study No. 10 in the Shell was still story.

CHAPTER 3.

Cardew Asks For It!

"SOMETHING'S got to be done!"

"Or, somebody!" remarked Lowther.

"Somehow!" agreed Manners. It was the following day, and the Terrible Three were in consultation. The subject under discussion was the same old subject, and they felt that the matter was getting serious.

It was only Tuesday, and allowances were a long way off. And Study No. 10 was barren and bare.

Figgies of the New House had been "touched" for a loan sufficient to see them over tea-time on Monday; but the study could not thrive for a week on loans, that was certain.

In fact, they owed a good many little small debts already. Manners had been busy with his camera the previous week, and when Manners was busy with his camera a good deal went in films and chemicals and things. Manners had nine or ten entries in his pocket-book of little sums borrowed up and down the Shell and the Fourth, and in fact his next allowance was fully mortgaged ahead. Monty Lowther, as it unfortunately happened, had lately expended a considerable sum on "preps" for the Jarvis Dramatic Society, and that sum had been raised partly by loan for which the credit of all three was pledged.

It was not only that a story week lay ahead, but there was a dreadful perspective of another story week after it, unless something turned up.

Like the celebrated Mr. Micawber, the chums of the Shell hoped that something would turn up, but so far nothing at all had shown any sign of turning.

Indeed, Tom Merry sadly remarked that it never rains but pours. Study No. 6 were in low water financially. Talbot of the Shell had been cleared out in paying for some repairs to his bike. Kargaroo was hoping for a remittance from Australia, but the remittance hadn't arrived. Borrowing was a resource that could only be used among the most intimate friends, and the most intimate friends of the Terrible Three

did not seem to be in a flourishing state financially.

"Something," said Tom Merry determinedly, "has got to be done. It looks like tea in Hall to-day. Of course, we can survive tea in Hall, but money is really necessary in a lot of ways."

"I'm out of films."

"Blew your film, Manners! If there was nothing worse than that—"

"I simply must have a new inner tube for my bike," said Lowther. "I've stranded until I get it; and lovely weather like this, too!"

"And Miss Fawcett may be coming to see the woss," said Tom. "I can't be stony when she comes. She likes tea in the study, for one thing."

"We could have a high tea, if you like," said Lowther.

"How can we, instead, without any money?"

"There's still that kipper we had for Saturday. It would make a decent high tea."

"Don't be a Jussy ass! Now, there's three ways of getting money," said Tom. "—Buy, borrow or steal. Stealing is the form."

"Hear, hear!"

"There are certain difficulties in the way of bogging—"

"Just a few!"

"And we've done all the borrowing that can be done. Hold on a minute, though—we haven't tried No. 9 in the Fourth."

"H'm!"

"Well, they're our friends," said Tom thoughtfully. "Clive is a decent chap, and Cardew has his good points. We used to be at lodgeries with Lovison; but that's a long time ago. You wouldn't think of remembering old friends, I hope?"

"Not when we're stony."

"The question is, do we know them well enough to borrow money of them?" said Tom.

"If we do, they may possibly wight our acquaintance was a little slighter," grunted Lowther.

"I think we do," said Tom, unhesitatingly. "We've got quite a regard for Lovison's young brother Frank. He's very pally with your muncer, Manners."

Manners nodded.

"Cardew is a distant relation of Gussy's, and Gussy is our pal."

"True."

"And we all like Lovison's witer, and Clive, too—he comes from South Africa, and as a Colonial—"

"What has that to do with it?"

"Well, drawing closer the bonds of Empire, and all that—"

"By borrowing a Colonial's money?"

"Well, that's a sort of Colonial Preference, you know. Anyway, I think that in the circumstances we'd better be friendly enough with Study No. 9 to raise a loan there, or else it's tea in Hall to-day."

Manners and Lowther nodded assent. They felt that Study No. 9 deserved, on its merits, to be admitted to their friendship. And, that important point being settled, the Terrible Three proceeded to the Fourth Form passage to look in on No. 9.

There was a sound of excited voices in that study as the chums of the Shell approached it. Lovison and Clive could be heard speaking together.

"You know, Clive?"

"Yes, silly, an!"

Tom Merry discreetly tapped at the door. The voices in the study died away suddenly; and then Ralph Redburn, Cardew's cool, drawing tones were heard:

"Come in!"

The Terrible Three entered. Cardew was reclining in the arm-

with a bored expression on his face. Lovison and Clive were standing before him flushed and wrathful.

"Ahem! I hope we're not do trop!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Not at all, dear old bean," said Cardew. "Welcome as the flowers in May! Don't go! These chaps will begin jawin' me again if you do. At present they're restrained by a desire to make you believe that there's nothin' the matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly ass!" roared Lovison.
"Lovison, old chap, you're said that before. You're beginnin' to repeat yourself."

"Anything wrong?" asked Tom, rather perplexed.
"Nothin' at all," answered Cardew. "I've been kickin' over the traces, an' these fellows are draggin' me back to the strain an' narrow path by jawin' me."

"Oh!"
"No need to shoot it all out over the road!" growled Clive.
"My dear old ass, I'm repentin', and I perfectly willin' to wear sackcloth an' ashes in public. You see," went on Cardew, smiling cheerfully at the Terrible Three, "I've been backin' horses."

"More fool you!" granted Manners. Cardew nodded.
"In that remark, Manners, you display your well-known perspicacity," he replied. "Why don't you call me a blackguard, too?"

"I was thinking it," said Manners gruffly.
"Do you know, I thought you were," said Cardew, with an agreeable smile. "I agree with you, Manners. It's a rovin' game, and a blackguard's game!"
"Why do you do it, then?" asked Lowther.

"Obvious reasons—because I'm a mug and a blackguard," answered Cardew placidly. "What other reasons could there be?"

"Oh, you're a silly ass!"
"Granted, dear boy. Join in the chorus. I'm an awful rotter," said Cardew. "In moments of repentance—which always arrive when I've lost my money—I can see it as clearly as anybody. I've blazed all my tin on Snooky Sam, and he came in seventh. If there hadn't been six other gas-goes in front of him I should have netted quite a considerable sum. But there wasn't! Hence these tears."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. This did not promise well for the object of their visit to Study No. 3.

"I've lost all my tin, and all the tin in the study, too," went on Cardew silyly. "Lovison an' Clive insist on seein' me through—they say they don't want a boozey bookmaker comin' up to see the Head on my account. I believe they mean it kindly, but their mode of expression is a little crude."

"I think we may as well go!" growled Manners.

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Cardew imploringly. "They're goin' to begin again the minute the door shuts."

"Did you come here for anything special?" asked Lovison.

Tom Merry smiled slightly.
"Yes, to raise a bean."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Clive's got three pounds," said Cardew rooily. "Lovison's got four. They have my full permission to lend it to you. I've already pointed out to them that it is a sheer waste handin' it to the chap who has been rookin' me."

"You silly chump!" said Lovison. "He'll sell you to the Head if he's not paid."

"Let him!"

"Do you want to be sacked from St. Mary's, you idiot?"

"Not at all. Still, it would be rather

awful," yawned Cardew. "Think of the dramatic moment in Hall—all the fellows there—your humble servant the centre of attraction—all the masters present, general conglomeration of bald heads—Head standin' up and addressin' me in tones more of sorrow than of anger—"

"Oh, dry up!"
"We won't borrow any of your tin," said Tom Merry, "but we won't have the trouble of coming here for nothing. Carry that silly idiot, you fellows!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three closed in on Cardew.

They felt that the dandy of the Fourth wanted a lesson.

There was plenty of cash in the study; and the reckless fellow had wasted it, and the hard-up Shell fellows had to go empty away. Before going they felt that there would be some satisfaction in dealing with Cardew.

"Here, hold on!" yelled Cardew,

Then the Terrible Three retired from the study, leaving Ralph Reckless Cardew sprawling on the carpet, and his study-mates grinning down at him. And then they silyly went down to tea in Hall—the last recourse of juniors who were stony.

CHAPTER 4.

A Desperate Rescue.

"A NYTHIN" turned up, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked that question when the juniors were dismissed after morning lessons the next day. He addressed the Terrible Three in terms of sympathetic inquiry.

Tom Merry shook his head dimly.

"Nothing."

"Hard cheese, old chap!"

"Manners won't sell his camera!" said Lowther. "I've offered to take all the trouble off his hands—"



Gordon Gay came dashing in at the gate in time to receive an egg on the nose and another under the chin! He spluttered and jumped back. (See Chapter 2.)

losing all his easy melancholia as the three Shell fellows grasped him, and whirled him out of the armchair.

"We're holding on."

"Let go, you dummy!"

"Not just yet! Bump him!"

"Yoooop!"

Ralph Heckness Cardew smote the study carpet with his person. He let out a yell that rang the length of the Fourth Form passage.

"Bump! Bump! Bump!"

"Yaroooh! Help!" roared Cardew, struggling desperately, but in vain.

"You shookey idiots— Oh, my hat! Rescue! Lovison! Clive!"

But for once his chums failed to come at the call. Probably they considered that Cardew was getting what he wanted.

"Bump! Bump! Bump!"

"Yaroooh! Yoooop! Yuh! Help!"

"One more for 'eck!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bump!"

"Oh! Woor-woor!"

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"I have been thinkin' orah the problem!" said Arthur Augustus confidently as they strolled out into the quadrangle.

"There are a lot of ways of gettin' money?"

"Tell us one of them," answered Tom, laughing. "One will do, for the present."

"Workin' is one way, Tom Mowey!"

"Workin'!"

Arthur Augustus nodded sagely.

"Yass, wathah, deah boy! Do you know, there are lots of fellows in the world who get money by workin' for it!"

"Go on!"

"It is a fact, Montay Lowthah, though you are pleased to gwin! My own opinion is that more fellows get money by workin' than too. You see," said Arthur Augustus, with a manner that showed he had given the subject some deep thought, "if somebody did any work, money wouldn't be

any good. It's wippin', of course, to have money; but it wouldn't be any use at all if there wasn't a lot of splendid, smallish fellows in the world to do the work. Everything you buy has to be made by somebody. Well, that's work, you know! And I werry think that the chaps who do the work are worthy of rowy great respect and admiration!"

"Gussy, old man, you talk like a picture-book!" said Monty Leather. "Personally, I'd rather have money than work; but there's no end of wisdom in what you say. Are you suggesting that we should work to get some money?"

"Yass!"

"Oh, my lat! Are we to go on strike for an eight-hour day, and demand trade-union rates of pay for working in the Farm-house?"

"Wahhah! Lowthah! I am not suggestin' anything of the sort! There is a lot of work to be done, but several of these must be, in fact! For instance, there's hawkin' coal."

"I've got a hopperin' doubt that we might be refused if we applied for jobs at a coalmine."

"Yass, I dare say it has to be learned," asserted D'Arcy. "Besides, there are no coalmines neah St. Jim's. I werry simply givin' that as an instance. Now, when a chap wants a job, what he does is to get a newspaper and look in it. You find a job by lookin' down a long column in the paper. Employahs put it in the paper when they want a man or a boy, you know! They're awfully good-natured."

"I see! I wonder if they want a new governor for the Bank of England?" said Monty Leather thoughtfully. "If the work could be done in holidays I should not refuse the job!"

"Of course, you would not begin at the top of the tree, Lowthah. I dare say the Governor of the Bank of England started life by sellin' matches or something of the sort."

"D-d-d-did he!"

"I werged it as very prof, Lowthah. You wize by meeth, you know, to verry high positions. Of course, it is wathah a handsp'ain heah at school; but there are chaps who go to school and work as well—like the half-stinks, you know, in the North. They must be awfully energetic chaps, and I have a verry great respect for them! We have two half-holidays a week, and if you had sufficient guin you could get jobs for part-time—I am stah of it! I trust," added Arthur Augustus with dignity, "that you do not see anything 'dewastatory' in workin' for your bread!"

"Not at all—only a little difficulty," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Gussy, old man, there's no demand for us in the labour market! If we called on any tradesman and offered to him Latin verses at a set time, how much work should we get?"

"There are lots of things, Tom Merry! Of course, you could not do skilled labah—I suppose a public school chap would work at wathah labah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "You could take things home for a growth on your bike!"

"And ask him to keep his shop shut on the days when I don't have a half-holiday?" asked Tom. "He would, of course!"

"N-no; I hardly think he would, Tom Merry! Howwah, I werry think you could get something to do if you tried. And I'll tell you what, dash boy—you try, and if you succeed, and get lots of money, I'll follow your example! I can rounch you that I am not afraid of work! Of course, I should werry much like to see the GEN LIBRARY—No. 666.

where there was scope for administrative ability!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any reason for this wild laugh!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"You're too funny to live, old chap!" said Lowther. "Still, I think there's one job you could get—if you asked for a place on the front page of 'Cricket!'"

"I warged that werrah as asinine!" said Arthur Augustus. "I look, dash boys, that you are fearful slarkers and work-shays! If you belong to the extremely wappeshonable class of werr't-werr'ts, it is useless for me to give you good advice!"

And Arthur Augustus walked loftily away.

The Terrible Three exchanged a grin. "All the same, there's something in what Gussy says!" remarked Tom Merry.

"We simply must raise the wind somehow! It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and I'd be jolly glad to put it in working if there was any money to be earned. But how?"

"Let's ask Bunter!" said Manners.

"Bunter!"

"Yes; Wally Bunter! He used to work for his living before he came to St. Jim's, and he ought to know how it's done."

"Blissed if I can imagine that fat slacker doing any work!"

"But he must have! He was in an office at Canterbury, and his employer sent him here because he was so jolly well satisfied with him and wanted to prepare him for a higher post."

"I've heard so," asserted Tom. "But how on earth could anybody ever have been satisfied with Bunter?"

"That's a bit of a puzzle!" admitted Manners. "But, it's so! You remember his old governor, Mr. Pansman, came here to see him once."

"I—I suppose it's true, though it seems jolly queer! We'll ask Bunter how it's done."

And, filled with the noble desire to raise cash by the desperate resource of working for it, the chums of the Shell proceeded to look for Bunter.

The dinner-bell was ringing when they spotted the fat junior hurrying towards the School House.

"Hold on, Bunter!" called out Tom Merry.

The Owl of Greyfriars blinked round at him.

"Can't stop—dinner!"

"Just a minute!"

"Rot!" And Bunter called on.

"We'll tackle him after dinner!" said Tom Merry, laughing. And the Terrible Three went into the School House after the fat junior.

After dinner the Shell fellows joined Bunter as the juniors came out. They did not mean to let him escape them—they were in need of the knowledge he could impart concerning the strange and mysterious process of obtaining money by means of work.

Tom Merry and Lowther linked arms with the fat junior, and the Terrible Three walked him out into the quad. Billy Bunter blinked at them in some alarm, suspecting a rag.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"All serene, Bunter! We want you to give us some advice," said Tom Merry.

"My dear chaps, I'm sorry at your service, but I'm overworked. You couldn't have come to a better shop! Anything about cricket?"

"My hat—no! More important than cricket. We're in want of money—"

"Same here!" said Bunter sadly. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Never mind your postal-order, kid! It seems that you need to work for your living before you come to St. Jim's—"

"What?"

"You did something or other in an office—"

"If you mean to laugh at me, Tom Merry—"

"Oh!"

"I decline to continue this conversation any further!" said Bunter.

And he jacked his fat arms free and rolled away, with his fat little nose in the air, leaving the Terrible Three staring.

CHAPTER 5.

No Help From Bunter!

TOM MERRY blinked at the re-arranged figure of the Owl of Greyfriars.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked.

"Blissed if I know!" said Manners.

"He seems to have his little back about something!"

Monty Leather chuckled.

"I'm afraid Bunter has degenerated into an aristocrat since he gave up work," he remarked. "He's ashamed of the office now."

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Tom.

"My dear chap, we must make allowances for the noble blood of Bunter de Bunter."

"The fellow is going to tell us all the same; he knows how it's done," said Tom. "Ask him!"

"Here, here!"

The Terrible Three pursued Billy Bunter, and ran him down under the elms. Tom Merry stopped him with a jerk at his collar.

"Now, then, Bunter—"

Billy Bunter eyed the Shell fellows with a lofty blink. He was very much offended. For the moment the Owl of Greyfriars had forgotten that he was playing the part of Walter Gilbert Bunter, who had worked as a junior clerk before his good luck came along. All the aristocratic prejudices of Billy Bunter were aroused at the mere hint that he might ever have done any work. Certainly, work was a thing he had never known.

"I say, you fellows, you can cheer off," said Bunter. "I decline to have anything to say to you!"

"Now, look here, Bunter, we're hard up," said Tom Merry. "It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and we've got an idea of doing something to get some tin. See!"

"Go and do it, then!"

"We don't quite know how," explained Tom. "It's no good going somewhere and offering to do Latin verses, or to play cricket. We're unskilled labour. Now, we know jolly well that you used to keep yourself—"

"I didn't!" roared Bunter.

"You worked—"

"Never! I think you're an insulting beast, Tom Merry! No member of my family has ever done any work," exclaimed Bunter indignantly. "We should seem to soil our hands with anything of the kind!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tom.

"Oh, really, Merry—"

"Isn't it true that you were employed by a merchant named Pansman, who sent you to St. Jim's because he was satisfied with you?"

Billy Bunter started.

It was true enough of his case, Wally, and the St. Jim's fellows, of course, didn't know that Billy Bunter had taken Wally's place, leaving Wally in his place at Greyfriars.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "No—just—"

"Yes—just! I mean—"

He gets no end of remittances from his Uncle Grundy!"

Tom made a grimace.
"We can't borrow Grundy. He's no pal of ours."

"We could wish him to the privilege of palship for one occasion only!" suggested Monty Lowther. "We stretched a point in favour of Study No. 5, though it never materialised. Let's stretch another point in favour of Grundy. After all, it's an honour to anybody to lend us a quid!"

Tom Merry hesitated. But the thought of Miss Priscilla arriving on the success, and finding the steady egghead in the same state as Mrs. Hubbard's, decided him.

"Well, we'll give him a look in," he said.

"I think he's on Little Side," said Manners.

The Terrible Three proceeded in the direction of the junior cricket-ground, where a good many fellows were at practice. George Alfred Grundy was looking on, Wilkie and Gern, his chums, being at the wickets. Grundy had rather a trowee look.

"Getting busy, old sport!" said Monty Lowther affably. "We expect great great things from you this season, Grundy."

"It all depends on whether I have a chance in the eleven," said Grundy. "I wanted to speak to you, Tom Merry, about—"

"Just what I want!" said Tom, with a smile. "I was looking for you."

"Good! You've decided to put me in the eleven?"

"Ahem!"

"The fact is," said Grundy, "I shall insist upon it! Look at the matches you've lost through leaving me out of the eleven!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I can't stand lily by and see cricket-matches thrown away for the same reason—ignorance and petty jealousy!" said Grundy firmly. "I don't think you are a bad chap, Mery, in the main—"

"Oh! Thanks!"

"Not at all! I speak as I find," said Grundy. "You're not a bad chap, only rather dense. You don't follow a fellow's form, and, though I believe you don't mean to yield to petty feelings of jealousy, you do it all the same—unconsciously, perhaps."

"Oh!"

"You oughtn't really to be junior captain," pursued Grundy, perhaps encouraged by the serious politeness with which he was heard. "Merry, I feel it my duty to point it out to you!"

"Don't mind me!" said Tom sarcastically.

"Thanks; this season! Now, about cricket this season! I shall expect a point in the eleven. I'm not asking you to resign the captaincy to me. I can make allowances for fellow's conceit, though I can't sympathise with it. But I expect to be played in all important matches. I can hold the team."

"Which, of course, is all that is necessary!"

"Exactly! Is it a go?"

"Not quite."

"I may as well say plainly, Tom Merry, that if I'm not played there will be trouble!" said Grundy truculently.

"I'm not going to stand any nonsense!" Tom Merry looked at his chums with a faint grin. Borrowing a quid of Grundy was evidently not feasible.

"Well, what do you think?" asked George Alfred in a tone of finality.

"I think you'd better sit down," answered Tom.

"Oh—what? Oh, my hat!"

The Terrible Three walked away, leaving Grundy of the shell sitting in the grass with a dazed expression on his face. And they went quidless.

CHAPTER 7. Boy Wanted!

"Boy wanted!"

"Leave!"

"Read it out, Tommy!"
Tom Merry's face was quite cheery and hopeful. He was sitting on a bench under the old elms with a copy of the "Rylcombe Gazette" in his hands, looking down the advertisement.

"Boy wanted!" he repeated. "Well, I'm a boy, and you're a boy, Lowther, and you're another, Manners. One of us ought to bag that job."

"If'n! Does the man say he wants a boy only for half-holidays?"

"I'll read it out."

Tom Merry read out the advertisement to his chums, who listened with keen attention. It ran:

"Boy wanted—temporary. Willing to work, and able to ride bicycle. Apply personally, and at once, to the Rylcombe Stores."

"Rylcombe Stores!" said Manners.

"That's Mr. Sande's grocery! Why, that's Grimes' job! You remember Grimes?"

"I suppose Grimes has left," said Tom. "Mr. Sande wants another boy. He says temporary. Well, we should be temporary enough to please anybody!"

"Perhaps we should be a little too

temporary," grinned Monty Lowther. "One afternoon isn't really much to put even into a temporary job."

"Still, if Mr. Sande hasn't anybody, he may be glad of help for even one afternoon," said Tom sagely. "This looks like a good chance. There must be goods to be delivered to-day. I don't think Wednesday afternoon is a half-holiday in the grocery trade. He doesn't mention wages."

"Can't be much," said Manners. "A grocer's boy isn't paid like a politician. Still, it must be something, and I believe special temporary jobs are paid more than permanent ones. He says the boy must be willing to work—well, we're willing to work, and able to ride a bike—well, we can ride any old bike. Look here, this is too good to be lost. Let's try!"

"The paper's last week's," said Manners, looking at it. "Place may be taken. Still, it won't hurt to give Sande a look in. I suppose there's nothing else!"

"Young man wanted with experience of the meat trade—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Man with knowledge of millinery and—"

"Phew!"

"Boy wanted at the Black Bull in Wayland—"

"Ahem! I think we'll stick to the grocery business. It's not a bad job," said Manners. "I've often envied Grimes riding round the lanes on his bike while we're bunged in the Form-room. Let's go and see Sande. If he won't take one of us, he may take another."

And that decision having been arrived at, the Terrible Three started for Rylcombe, walking quickly. If the grocery job was still open they did not see any reason why they should not bag it temporarily. And they did not share Billy Hunter's contempt for honest work.

"We won't all go in together," said Tom, thoughtfully. "One of us can try first. Now—"

"Chap with the best looks and the best manners had better be selected. Leave it to me," said Lowther.

"Sure you could manage a bike with a grocer's basket on it?"

"I could do it on my head, suffer!"

"Well, we'll wait at the corner," said Manners. "Sande isn't likely to take you, old chap. It requires a fellow with some sense for a job like that. But go ahead!"

Arrived at the village, Tom Merry and Manners waited at the corner of the street while Monty Lowther walked on to Mr. Sande's grocery. A somewhat shrill feminine voice was heard in the shop as Lowther approached.

"Ordered two days ago, and not delivered! Don't talk to me about the war, Mr. Sande—the war is over! Your customers expect to have their goods delivered!"

"Madam—"

"I wish to know, Mr. Sande, when the eggs will be delivered!"

Monty Lowther strode into the shop with a swelling face. It was pretty clear that Grimes' place had not yet been filled.

"Immediately, madam, immediately," said Mr. Sande. "My boy is ill with cold, and I have not yet been able to replace him. I expect him back tomorrow, or the next day—"

"Am I to wait for my goods until tomorrow or the next day?"

"Ahem! I will do my best—my very best—"

"I should not have this trouble, Mr. Sande, in dealing with the stores at Wayland."

Grand, Long, Complete SCHOOL STORIES

of

HARRY WHARTON & CO.

a pair every Friday

in

THE - - -
PENNY - -
POPULAR.

War Price, 1jd.



"Ahem!"
"However, if this is the result of giving custom locally—"

"Ahem! My dear readers—"
Monty waited for the painful interview to cease. The lady was a stout, somewhat wrathful-looking lady, and she had a little fluffy dog on a long cord. The little dog snuffed round Lowther, who patted it, and was rewarded with a wag of his fingers.

"Ow! You ugly beast!" ejaculated Lowther, pushing the dog away with his boot, not roughly. But there was a loud yelp from the petted and spoiled animal.

The stout lady spun round.
"Hey! How dare you kick my dog?" she exclaimed.

"Oh dear! I didn't kick him, ma'am," said Lowther. "Just pushed him off because he snaggled."

"He did not snag. Fido would not snap unless he was kicked. Mr. Sands, if I cannot enter your shop without my dog being assaulted by a brutal boy, I—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lowther. Mr. Sands looked quite distressed. The stout lady was evidently an important customer, whom he did not care to offend.

"Master Lowther, you should not touch Mrs. de Smythe's dog," he murmured.

"I tell you—" began Lowther hotly. Mrs. de Smythe, frowning out of the shop, taking her precious pet with her. Mr. Sands breathed hard through his pink, shiny nose.

"Well, what can I do for you, Master Lowther?" he asked.

"Ahem! I'm not wanting anything at present," said Lowther.

"Then what have you come into my shop for?" asked Mr. Sands tartly.

"Ahem! It's about your advertisement—"

"What?"

"Would you like to take me on for the afternoon?" asked Lowther. "I'm willing to work, and able to ride a bike, and am strictly temporary."

"Don't be silly," was Mr. Sands' tart answer. "You've offended my best customer, Master Lowther, and I don't want any of your little jokes."

"But I mean it," urged Lowther.

"Well, if you mean it, I don't," answered Mr. Sands. "Nice for you to take goods home to Mrs. de Smythe's house—I don't think! Run away!"

"But—"

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Sands closed the interview by going back into his parlour. Evidently there was nothing doing; and Monty Lowther sighed, and quitted the shop. There seemed to be great difficulties in the way of getting a job—even a temporary one.

CHAPTER 8. A Job at Last!

"WELL!"
Tom Merry and Manners asked the question together as Monty Lowther joined them at the corner of the street.

"N.G.," he replied.

"Place taken!"

"No; there's a chance for you chaps yet!" And Monty Lowther explained. "You're an aw, old fellow!" said Manners. "Grocers have to be jolly polite, and if you're going to be a grocer you'll have to learn grocer manners. You must let a customer say what he likes, and smile all the time. Except in war-time, of course—then you can rag your customers as much as you like, and they can't do anything. Now the war's over, the grocers will have to cultivate Chesterfieldian manners till the next war.

You're an ass. You ought to have begged the stout lady's pardon."

"But I hadn't done anything!" howled Lowther.

"That doesn't make any difference. It's expected of a properly educated tradesman."

"Here-ry!" said Lowther. "You can go and try your luck. I don't think I'm much good on the grocery business, anyhow!"

"You or me, Tommy!" said Manners.

"Oh, I'll try," said Tom.

And the captain of the Shell started for the grocer's shop. The bell tinkled as he went in, and Mr. Sands came out of his parlour. He gave Tom Merry an agreeable smile. Tom was rather a good customer in those prosperous days.

"What can I do for you, Master Merry?"

"You can give me a temporary job, Mr. Sands."

"Eh?"

"I want to earn some money," ex-

Mr. Sands smiled.

"If you mean it, Master Merry, I'll be glad to give you a job for the afternoon," he said. "It will be very convenient to me, certainly."

"Done!" said Tom.

"I shall want you to take home goods on the bicycle," explained Mr. Sands.

"Yes, sir," said Tom, with the respectful manner proper in a grocer's boy addressing his employer.

"Bring that basket here."

"Yes, sir."

"I've never had a boy delivering goods in Etona before," remarked Mr. Sands.

"There's an old jacket of Grimes' here, and you'd better put it on."

"Certainly, sir!"

"Get the bike out of the shed."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry set to work cheerfully. He brought the grocery bicycle round to the front of the shop, while Mr. Sands was packing groceries into the basket. Manners and Lowther joined their chums.



"I want to earn some money," said Tom Merry candidly. "Can you give me a temporary job, Mr. Sands?" (See Chapter 7.)

plained Tom Merry candidly. "I've seen your advertisement in the local paper, and if my services would be of any use for this afternoon, I'd be glad to be taken on. It's a half-holiday to-day, and I can work till six-thirty, if I'm any use."

"My word!" said Mr. Sands.

"I'm willing to work, and I can ride anything in the shape of a bike—"

"With a basket of eggs on it?"

"Certainly!"

Mr. Sands looked at him rather oddly. He was badly in need of aid that afternoon. Goods had to be delivered; and since posts had arrived the grocer was no longer an autocrat dictating terms to obsequious customers. And Mr. de Smythe's threat of transferring his custom to the big stores at Wayland worried him. Certainly Tom Merry would have come in useful, but—

"I suppose this isn't one of your larks?" said Mr. Sands at last.

"Honest Injun!" answered Tom.

"Taken on?" asked Lowther.

Tom nodded, with a smile.

"Great Scott! Where did you dig up that jacket?" asked Manners.

"It's one of Grimes'. Mustn't talk now, you chaps—I've got work to do. See you later, at calling-out," said Tom.

And he went into the shop again. Monty Lowther whistled.

"Well, Tommy's had good luck," he said. "We may as well get back to school, and put in some cricket—unless you feel inclined to go after the job at the pub in Wayland, Manners."

"I hardly think I should quit. Besides, we ought to, put in some cricket practice," remarked Manners.

And they started for St. Jim's, leaving Tom Merry to carry out his new duties.

He was carrying them out well, so far. Mr. Sands was in a doubtful mood; and certainly only the fact that he was in a difficulty for assistance would have induced him to give a job to a public

school boy—even a temporary job. But he was soon satisfied with Tom Merry. Tom had plenty of common-sense; and while he was in Mr. Sands' employ he dropped the public school entirely, as it was; it was not the thing to regard with a superior eye the man who was paying him to work. He swept out the shop—which needed it—while Mr. Sands was preparing the groceries for delivery; and the grocer looked with satisfaction that he did not collect the dust in the room.

When the big basket was ready, Tom took it out, and secured it on the carrier on the bicycle. Then he listened respectfully to Mr. Sands' rather long list of instructions.

Finally he started.

The question of remuneration had not been referred to; Tom left that to his employer, not having the faintest idea how much he would be entitled to for his afternoon's work. But he hoped to render useful service, and to be paid accordingly.

He found that, good cyclist as he was, it was not easy at first to handle a machine loaded up with a heavy basket of groceries. There was, in fact, more in the work of a grocer's boy than met the casual eye.

The bike lurching a good deal when he started, and waddled; and the eggs had a rather awkward escape.

But Tom soon had it going well, and he rode away in cheerful spirits, thinking that his new occupation was rather an improvement on grinding Latin in the Form-room at St. Jim's.

He called at the first house on his list, a rather large villa off the High Street, and, being new to the business, made the mistake of taking his groceries to the front door. The maid who opened the door at his ring stared at him.

"Goodness from the Plymouth Heron," explained Tom, "what do you mean by coming here?"

"Oh! This is the address," said Tom, looking at his bill.

"Go to the back door!"

Slam!

Tom Merry jumped back just in time to avoid a collision—his nose was only an inch from the door as it closed.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Mr. Sands' day boy.

He dutifully carried his groceries to the back door, and delivered them. After that he was careful to apply at back or side doors.

His load, like Knap's of old, lightened as he proceeded on his journey. Only one commission remained at last—a large assortment of grocery goods for Mrs. de Smythe, whose residence was some little distance outside Ryecroft.

Tom Merry, feeling that he was getting on rather well; and consequently in good spirits, peddled along the country road briskly.

Three youths in Etons were strolling along the road towards the village, and they stopped at the sight of Tom Merry on Grimes' bike. Tom was within a few yards of the De Smythe villa when he sighted them. And he started down—in some dismay. For the three juniors were Gordon Gay, Wootton major, and Frank Monk, of Ryecroft Grammar School; and their expressions as they started towards him did not bode well to Mr. Sands' day boy.

CHAPTER 9.

Not in the Programme!

"H.A.T.!" grinned Gordon Gay.

Tom Merry jumped off his bike.

The three Grammarians laid gathered round him, and there was too

much danger to the eggs if he charged them.

"Hold on, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "No larks!"

"Larks!" repeated Gordon Gay. "Do we ever go in for larks?"

"Do we?" murmured Wootton major.

"Oh, don't play the goat!" said Tom bitterly.

It was easy to see that his old rivals of the Grammar had meant mischief. That would not have mattered much on any other occasion; but as a grocer's boy Tom Merry was not looking for "rags."

"What are you doing with this bike?" demanded Gordon Gay. "It looks to me as if it's your larking. This is old Sands' grocery bike; there's the name on the basket. What have you done with Grimes'?"

"Too bad," said Frank Monk. "You've been playing tricks on Grimes, and keeping him off his bike! I'm surprised at you, Merry!"

"I haven't," said Tom. "Grimes' on the sick list, and I'm taking his place for the afternoon."

"Gammon!" said the three Grammarians together.

"Honest Injun!" said Tom.

"Left St. Jim's!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"No! it's a temporary job."

"And you want us to swallow that!"

"It's true, you see! Don't play any games now!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I've got to deliver these groceries at the house yonder."

Gay shook his head.

"Dear old boss, I'm afraid you're pulling our innocent leg," he replied.

"You've raided Grimes' bike—"

"I haven't!" roared Tom. "I tell you—"

"It's no good telling us fairy-tales," said Wootton major with a shake of the head. "I suppose you're joking, though I don't see where the joke comes in. You haven't come by this bike honestly, you misguided youth."

"I tell you—"

"I feel that it's our duty to recapture this bike, and take it back to Sands," said Gordon Gay.

"I've got to deliver the goods!" roared Tom Merry. "I tell you, I'm on business, and I've no time for larks!"

"Neither have we," said Gay solemnly. "We're serious—either as judges. You're a bad boy, Tommy, and we're going to bring you up in the way you should go."

"We are—we are!" grinned Monk.

"Tom Merry breathes hard."

The three Grammarians were in a mischievous mood, whether they believed his rather surprising explanation or not.

Tom Merry was holding the bike, and he made a sudden rush with it to escape. Once within the side gate of the De Smythe villa he did not think the three sportive youths would venture to follow him.

Crash!

The bike collided with Gordon Gay and Wootton, and they spun away and sat down in the road, yelling.

Monk jumped back; and Tom ran the bike on as fast as he could go.

"Oh! Oh!" howled Gordon Gay.

"After him!"

"Yarrah! Scalp him!" howled Wootton major.

The Grammarians dashed in pursuit.

They easily gained on Tom Merry, who had the bike to handle. The third fellow of St. Jim's reached the side gate just as they reached him.

Three pairs of hands collared his together, and the bike crashed against the gate.

It might have rained there; but unfortunately the gate was not fastened. It

few open under the weight of the loaded bike.

Tom Merry had to let go the bike as he was collared, and it rolled in after the opening gate, curbed round the path within, and crashed over.

There was a crash as it landed, and barrels and bags of grocery rolled out on the gravel.

"Oh, you deffers!" gasped Tom.

"Down with him! Bump him!"

"Hands off! Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry hit out desperately. Gordon Gay gave a roar as he caught Tom's knuckles with his chin and went spinning into the road.

"Yooop!"

Tom struggled to free himself from Wootton and Monk. They trampled recklessly on the groceries. Rice and tapioca were mixed up with the gravel of the path.

Tom dragged himself free and jumped back.

"You silly idiots!" he panted. "You frabulous—"

"Collar him!" shrieked Gay, sitting up in the road. "We'll paste him with his groceries! We'll—we'll—Collar him!"

The bag of eggs was at Tom's feet—some of them broken. He snatched up the bag.

"Whiz, whiz!"

Tom was rather reckless now. The ammunition came in handy just at the right moment.

Smash! Crash!

Wootton major and Frank Monk splattered as the eggs burst on them. They jumped back hastily.

Gay came dashing in at the gate in time to receive an egg on the nose and another under the chin. He splattered, and jumped back.

"Whiz, whiz, whiz!"

The three Grammarians were in haste retreat now. Eggs at close quarters were not nice, especially as these were that Mr. Sands used as "cooking" eggs—with no extra charge for the flavour.

"Oh! Ah! Oooocoh!"

"Grough! Stoppit!"

"Oh, my hat! You rotter! Oooococh! Grough!"

"Whist! Smash! Smash!"

With splinters in their heads the three Grammarians fled. They had had enough—more than enough.

Tom Merry panted breathlessly. The eggs had saved him, and he was victorious in that struggle against odds.

But he was dismayed as he looked about him, victorious as he was. The groceries were in a fearful state, and so was the path; and those eggs, certainly, could never be used for cooking or for any other purpose.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Boy!"

Tom spun round.

An awe-inspiring figure was whisking towards him from the direction of the house. It was the stout lady who had visited Mr. Sands' shop that afternoon.

She looked angry. Perhaps it was not surprising, in the circumstances.

"Hi!" she shrieked.

"Mum! am I allowed?"

"Who—who—how—how dare you! Who are you? How dare you enter my grounds and make a disturbance here!"

"Oh, my hat! P-p-p-please, ma'am, I've brought home the groceries!" gasped Tom.

"What?"

"The—the groceries!"

The stout lady looked at him and looked at the groceries, and seemed on the verge of a volcanic explosion.

"You—you—you young ruffian!" she gasped at last.

"Oh, ma'am!"

"Mr. Sands shall hear of this—"

"I—I suppose he's bound to!" mumbled Tom in dismay. "It really wasn't my fault, ma'am! I—I—"

"Take away that rubbish!"

"It—is—the groceries—"

"Take it away! Take your bicycle away! Go away yourself! I shall telephone to Mr. Sands at once!"

"If—if you please—"

"William!" shrieked Mrs. de Smythe, "William! Where are you, William! Get the dog loose!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom.

"It was evidently time to go."

Tom Merry dragged up the bike and roshed it out at the gate. There was no time to collect the trampled groceries—they had to be left where they were. With William setting the dog loose, Tom Merry felt that it would not do to stand upon the order of his going, but that it was advisable to go at once.

And he went!

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry Loses His Job!

"YOU young rascal!"

"Oh—"

"Rascal!"

Tom Merry stared at his temporary-employer.

He had returned to the Riverside Stores, to find Mr. Sands in a towering rage. Mrs. de Smythe had evidently been at work on the telephone.

Mr. Sands' shiny face was crimson with wrath. He shook a shiny fist at Tom Merry as that hapless youth came into the shop.

"I—I say—" gasped Tom.

"What have you been doing?" shouted Mr. Sands.

"Delivering the groceries."

"Mrs. de Smythe has rung me up. She has threatened to take her custom away unless I discharge you at once! I shall certainly do that!"

"Look here—"

"You young rascal! I might have known you came here to play tricks—"

"I didn't!" roared Tom. "I was handled by a set of young duffers, who hadn't any sense! It wasn't my fault that—"

"Where are Mrs. de Smythe's goods!"

"I—I'm afraid they've been trampled on—"

"Do you know those were thirty shillings' worth of groceries booked to Mrs. de Smythe?" roared Mr. Sands.

"Yes—you can keep it out of my wages!" suggested Tom.

Mr. Sands looked at him.

"Kik-kik-kik! Get it out of your wages!" he snarled.

"Yes; I really think that would be fair, though it isn't wasn't my fault!" said Tom Merry.

"Do you think I was going to give you thirty shillings for your afternoon?" roared Mr. Sands.

"I—I don't know—"

"Do you think I paid Grimes a shilling as much for a week!"

"Oh, my hat! Didn't you?"

"The boy's mad!" gasped Mr. Sands.

"Well, how much were you going to give me for the afternoon?" asked Tom.

"Sixpence."

"Oh!"

"Sixpence!" roared Mr. Sands.

"Sus-sus-sixpence! I'll pinch that idiot Grays' head, telling me a chap could earn money by working for it!" gasped Tom Merry. "Sixpence! Holy smoke!"

"I shall send the bill up to the school!" thundered Mr. Sands. "Those goods shall be paid for!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Now get out of my shop!"

"Jolly glad to!" retorted Tom Merry. "Where's my dashed jacket?"

The captain of the Shell did not regret the loss of his "job" very much. As his remuneration was to be no more than the princely sum of sixpence, it was pretty clear that the financial difficulties were not to be solved by working for Mr. Sands. Sixpence would not really go very far towards relieving the embarrassments of the stony study.

"Put the bicycle away in the shed!" snarled Mr. Sands, as Tom Merry slipped into his flimsy jacket.

Tom shook his head.

"No fear!" he answered. "I should have to charge you another sixpence for that!"

"You—you—"

"I'm going on strike! If you want me again I shall require trade-union rates of pay!" said Tom Merry. And he left the shop rather hastily as Mr. Sands made a clutch at a barrel-stave.

The junior started for St. Jim's. It was rather too late in the afternoon to think of looking for another job; besides, he had lost faith in Arthur Angustus' original scheme of getting money by working for it. There seemed to be more work than money in that scheme.

Manners and Lowther were coming off the cricket-ground, and they met Tom as he came in.

"Finished already?" exclaimed Manners.

Tom nodded rather ruefully.

"Well, I call that an easy afternoon's work," said Lowther. "Very temporary indeed! What did Sands give you?"

"The boot."

"And some jaw thrown in."

"Didn't you give satisfaction?" asked Lowther.

Tom Merry explained. His chums chuckled; but they became grave again.

"There goes our last chance of raising the wind," said Manners. "You ought to have smoothed Sands down somehow, Tommy, till he'd paid you."

"Not so much if I did—he was only going to give me sixpence."

"Sixpence!" yelled Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"That wouldn't have seen us through!" he remarked.

"My hat! No. Next time you look for a job, you'd better ask about wages before you start."

"Sixpence!" repeated Monty Lowther. "If ever I get a job like that, I shall found a grocers' boys' trade union, and organise strikes. My uncle gets four hundred a year as a member of the gasworks at Westminster. It's a queer world. You get paid much less for using your hands than for using your chin. That's where we've made a mistake—we ought to have looked for a job with our chins. Chinwagging is the paying game."

And Monty Lowther shook his head thoughtfully.

"It's too late now," said Tom, laughing. "And the question remains before the meeting—what's going to be done?"

"My, you fellows—"

"Hallo, Butler! Have you received your postal-order?"

"Not yet, you fellows; and I was going to ask you—"

"You needn't bestow your society on us till you've received your postal order," said Lowther. "Bass off!"

"Oh, really, Lowther—"

The Terrible Three walked on to the School House at a speed Butler could not equal. They went up to No. 10; but the study was bare, and it was tea-time. And an afternoon out of doors had made them hungry.

"Tea in Hall, I suppose!" said Lowther dully.

"I suppose so. Is there anybody we can plant ourselves on, though?" asked Tom Merry. "No. 5 and No. 9 are no good. Grindy's got brags, but we're not going to honour Grindy. We might try Figgins again—but—Dash it all, we can't sponge on Figgins again so soon! Hold on, though." Tom Merry's face brightened. "There's Kildara."

"You're going to ask yourself to tea with the captain of the school?" ejaculated Manners.

"I've got an invitation," said Tom loudly. "Kildara told me to come in to tea some time."

"That's—ahem!—a—little vague."

"Well, he said some time—and this is a time. I've no doubt I could take a couple of friends with me."

"Ahem!"

"After all, old Kildara's a good sort," said Tom. "Let's try."

"Oh, all right!"

The Terrible Three made their way to the Sixth Form passage, perhaps in a rather doubtful mood. A clicking of teacups in Kildara's study showed that tea was in progress.

Tom Merry tapped discreetly at the door.

"Come in!"

Kildara was at tea with Darrel of the Sixth. The two seniors gazed at Tom Merry & Co. as they came in.

"Well!" said Kildara.

"Ahem!"

"Do you want anything?" asked the St. Jim's captain, puzzled.

"Ahem! Yes! We—we've come—"

"I can see you've come," assented Kildara. "I think you had better go, tea. There's the door."

"The fact is—"

"Well, what is the fact?"

"We've come to tea!" gasped Tom Merry.

"That's very kind of you," said Kildara, raising his eyebrows. "I don't often get distinguished guests from the Lower School to tea; and I can assure you that I fully appreciate the honour. At the same time, I feel that it is above my deserts. Good-bye!"

Darrel grinned; and the three juniors circled.

"You jolly well asked me to tea, Kildara!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Oh, did I?" exclaimed Kildara. "I don't remember! Did I fix the date?"

"None."

"Well, then—"

Kildara paused, and burst into a laugh. "All right! If I asked you to tea, you're welcome. Sit down."

The Terrible Three were lacking to the door, and they looked rather doubtful. But Kildara beckoned to them.

"Sit down," he repeated. "Luckily, the supplies are adequate for a distinguished tea-party. Darrel, you don't mind these rather charming young gentlemen joining us?"

"Not at all!" said Darrel, with a smile.

"Ahem!" murmured Manners.

"Sit down, kids, and make yourselves at home."

The Terrible Three decided to accept the invitation. They sat down; and Kildara's fog was called in to renew the supply of toast and tea, and in boil eggs. Curly Gibson of the Third looked exceedingly furious at the idea of waiting on Shell fellows; but he did not venture to give any expression to his wrath in that august study.

For once, the stony juniors enjoyed an ample tea; and it came like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. They were feeling more at ease with themselves and with things generally when

they retired gracefully from Kildare's study, after having cleared the hospitable board almost to the last crumb.

"But what about to-morrow?" said Manners, as they went down the passage. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," said Tom Merry. "Something may turn up by to-morrow."

And, with that Misanthropic remark, the painful subject was dismissed for the present.

CHAPTER 11.

Pulling Through!

TOM MERRY looked very thoughtful in the Form-room the next day.

That unshared thoughtfulness was not bestowed upon his lessons. Mr. Lipton found fault with him several times that morning.

Tom was thinking of far other matters. That afternoon Miss Priscilla Fawcett was to visit St. Jim's, and whenever Miss Priscilla came to see her way it was the occasion of a little celebration in No. 10. Tom Merry had an affectionate heart, and he was accustomed to making a fuss of his kind guardian. Tea in Study No. 10 was a regular institution on such occasions; and Miss Priscilla would not have missed it for worlds. But how in the study—and an extra special tea—was to take place in the painful circumstances was a mystery.

The study was full of everything that was required for a display of hospitality. Even the old kipper, to which Leather had humorously referred, had been quietly buried, and was no longer available.

Tom Merry was thinking out the problem at morning classes—he was thinking it out during dinner. It was a more worrying problem than any he had ever tackled in mathematics. And the result of his thinking was—nil.

Mr. Kildare had given permission to the Terrible Three to leave class an hour earlier than usual that day, to meet Miss Fawcett at the station. Tom Merry almost made up his mind to attempt to borrow a "quid" of his Form-master, but his heart failed him. After dinner the unhappy three discussed the matter dimly in the quad.

"Trimble seems to be in funds," remarked Leather, with a nod towards Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, who was coming out of the tuckshop laden with parcels.

"What 'bout raising 'em?" said Leather thoughtfully. "He's got enough tuck for a garrison."

Tom glanced at the fat Form-master. Trimble was certainly well laden. Baggy grinned as he met the glances of the Terrible Three.

"No larrik," he said. "This stuff is for Cutts of the Fifth."

"Oh! You're shopping for Cutts, are you?" granted Leather. "Fagging for a Fifth-former, you fat bouncer!"

"Cutts is giving a party to his study," explained Trimble. "I'm going to look for him. I'm going to have my whack in the foot—see? Don't you wish you had a chance?"

Amid a fat snigger Baggy Trimble rolled on.

The crew of the Shell fellows followed him. There was more than enough in Baggy's load to relieve them of all their difficulties, so far as entertaining Miss Priscilla was concerned.

"If Cutts would lend us that lot!" said Tom.

"Catch him!"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. He was not on good terms with the dandy of the Fifth, and it was

quite impossible to ask favours of Gerald Cutts. But Tom was thinking of that supply of tuck, all the same.

The chams of the Shell went in to afternoon classes, and at three o'clock they were allowed to leave the Form-room to go to the station. Tom was still in a mood of deep reflection as he walked down the lane with his chums.

"Thought of anything?" asked Manners, at last.

"Yes. Cutts will have to stand the feed."

"Not much good asking him."

"I'm not going to ask him. Cutts will be in the Fifth Form-room till four, so I couldn't ask him. Must be done without asking."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'll pay him for the stuff afterwards, of course. He ought to be willing to oblige chaps in such a fix."

"Ha, ha! You can bet he won't be. He will be awfully ratty."

"Well, so generally is ratty. Can't be helped."

Leather and Manners checked. It really seemed to be the only way; indeed, Cutts' tea-party seemed to be the "something" which the story trio had hoped would turn up. The pressing need of the moment would be satisfied, and if Cutts weren't satisfied it couldn't be helped. There was no satisfying everybody.

The chums of the Shell, considerably relieved in their minds now that a way had opened out of the difficulty, waited on the platform for Miss Fawcett's train. It came in, and Tom rushed to help the old lady to alight.

"My dearest boy!" exclaimed Miss Priscilla, in fond tones, which made a good many people on the platform glance round. "My dear little Tommy!"

"This way," said Tom hastily.

"The cat is better, Tommy."

"The cat!"

"Yes. Didn't I mention in my letter—"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I'm so glad she's better!"

"It was not influenza, after all," said Miss Priscilla.

"I—I'm so glad! This way, dear!"

Miss Priscilla was piloted out of the station. On the way to St. Jim's the Terrible Three had the advantage of hearing all about the illness of the cat, of the sympathy shown by Mr. Duddie, the curate, and of the remedies tried so successfully.

St. Jim's looked rather deserted as they arrived. The fellows were still in the Form-rooms. Miss Priscilla went into the Head's house to see Mrs. Holmes, promising to come up to Study No. 10 almost immediately.

"I would not miss having tea with my dearest little Tommy for anything!" she said fondly.

Tom Merry felt thankful that Cutts of the Fifth had arranged a tea-party for that afternoon.

"Let me see your friends with you, especially that dear boy, D'Arcy," said Miss Priscilla.

"Oh, yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three went up to their study. It had already been made nice and tidy for the visitor, but some finishing touches were given more easily when the other fellows were in the Form-rooms. A vase of flowers from Julian's study, a handsome tablecover that belonged to Gervase and a new rug, upon which Racks had recently expressed some of his ample cash, improved the study considerably.

Tom Merry left his chums improving the study while he hurried away to the Fifth Form passage. It was very fortunate that the Fifth Form were still busy with Mr. Ratoff in class.

Tom returned heavily laden.

"Better make a list of the stuff while I wrap them," he remarked. "We've got to pay for them later. Until Miss Fawcett's gone, though, I don't think I shall mention the matter to Cutts. He's rather ill-bred."

"I'm afraid he'll be very ill-bred if he tracks his grub to this study," grinned Leather.

Study No. 10 was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey by the time Miss Priscilla arrived. Nobody, to look at the festive board, would have supposed that No. 10 was a study study.

Classes were over by that time, and Leather cut off to call the other guests to the spread. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived with Blake & Co., and Talbot of the Shell came in, and Kangaroo, and Piggins & Co. from the New House.

Most of the fellows were aware of the story state of No. 10, and they could not help being surprised at the sight of the bounteous supplies there; but no remark was made. The guests were pleased to see that the study study had got through its embarrasments in the nick of time. They did not guess how.

There was quite a cheerful party in the study. It was rather a crowd, but the fellows were used to crowding on festive occasions.

Plenty of room was given to Miss Priscilla, who presided over the banquet with much grace. And Arthur Augustus handed round tuck with imitatable grace; indeed, Leather said admiringly that he was really a born waiter.

Perhaps the Terrible Three were not wholly at their ease. They knew that Cutts must have discovered the raid on his study, and there was a lingering danger that he might track the missing tuck.

Once or twice Tom Merry thought to board some sounds from the direction of the Fifth Form quarters.

Billy Hunter rolled in and joined the tea-party, without backing about the formality of his intrusion.

"I saw you fellows there's an awful row in the Fifth!" he grinned. "Somebody has raided Cutts' study."

"Not really!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes. Cutts is simply raging. He says he's going to make a round of the junior studies, looking into every one of them till he finds his grub."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bel Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The diamy in the faces of the Terrible Three was not to be mistaken. The guests knew now where the ample supplies had come from. Only Miss Priscilla remained in blissful ignorance.

There was a sound of voices in the passage, and hurried footsteps. Cutts' voice could be heard.

"I'm going to find it! I'm going to raid down the cheeky young villain who's raided my study. I'll slaughter him!"

Jack Blake rose to his feet, and signalled to his chums. It was a time for all troops to rally round.

"Dear me! That sounds like a most excited person!" said Miss Fawcett, in surprise.

There was a heavy step outside, and the door was flung open. The red and angry face of Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form looked in.

"Have you got— My hat!"

Cutts did not need to complete his question. Even if the goods on the table had not been recognizable—and some of them would have been enough for him. No. 10 would have been enough for him.

"You young arrant-fraud!" roared Cutts. "Here, I say, hands off, you impudent little ruffian! Oh, my hat!"

Jack Blake and Harries and Dight fairly jumped on him. In the grasp of

the three juniors. Cuts of the Fifth went whirling back into the passage. Talbot and Kargaroo rushed to their aid.

There was a sound of confused scuffling and struggling and gasping in the passage.

"Avast! Augustus closed the door.

"Bless my soul!" said Miss Priscilla, in amazement and alarm. "What—what—"

"It's all right, Madam—quite all right!"

"Quite!" said Tom Merry breathlessly. "Only a—rather rude and rough fellow, dear. He—he's often acts like that. I'm afraid he's been rather—rather badly brought up. Those chaps are going to take him away."

"Dear me! I hope they will be gentle with him, though he seems very obstreperous and ill-bred."

"Yess, wotah!"

"Blake came back into the study, looking rather flustered.

"Has that noisy boy gone?" asked Miss Priscilla.

"We've put him—I mean, we've taken him into my study," said Blake. "The other chaps are staying with him. They seem rather fond of his company, and they won't desert him."

"Dear me! I hope they are treating him kindly, in spite of his rudeness."

"Oh, yes. Talbot is sitting holding his hand," said Blake. He did not add that Herriss was holding Cutts' other hand, and that Kargaroo was on his neck.

"How very nice of Talbot!" said Miss Priscilla, beaming. "I have always noticed that Talbot is a very nice and gentle boy."

Whereas there were smiles in Study No. 10.

When the celebration in No. 10 was over, and Miss Fawcett was escorted away, they passed the door of No. 5, which was closed. Muffled sounds could be heard from within, and Tom Merry hurried the old lady past the study rather quickly.

Tom Merry & Co. came back, after seeing Miss Priscilla off at the station, with cheerful faces. There was a five-pound note in Tom's pocket—a very handsome tip from Miss Priscilla to her dearest little Tommy, for which her dearest little Tommy was duly grateful.

The clouds had rolled by.

The Terrible Three proceeded to Cutts' study as the Fifth Form passage. They found Cutts in a temper which would have shocked even Von Hippin.

However, he accepted due payment for the raised tuck, and even carried his complaint so far as to change the Terrible

Three ten shillings too much. He also gave them his opinion of Sam with some forcible expressions, and would certainly have proceeded to assault and battery but for the fact that there could have been no more assault and battery that can. He took it out in slapping, and he was still going strong when the cleans of the Shell left him.

"I think we've come through remarkably well," Monty Lawlor remarked as the juniors sauntered away to the Common-room. "Cutts doesn't seem to be satisfied. He was always a crummy sort of cad. We shall be able to settle up all our little debts now."

"And I can get my Sims!" said Messers, with deep satisfaction.

"And the study will be thirl over till the allowance come in," said Tom Merry. "Why grouse? That giddy old philosopher was right when he said that everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Study No. 10 always comes out on top."

And peace and contentment reigned in the one-time Stony Study.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—TWO OF A KIND!—by Martin Clifford.



THE MYSTERY OF DICK RAKE! By Frank Nugent.

"DARLING!"

"My hat!"

"Dear old soul!"

"See what!"

"There is nothing I wouldn't do for you—without!"

We—the Famous Five of the Remove—passed outside Dick Rake's study, and we stared at each other in bewilderment and amazement at these unending phrases issued from within.

"Say but the word, and I'll do anything I'm asked!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Wharton. "Four old Rake got it bad! Of course, he's pettish—wondering in his mind. I had my suspicions before, and now they're confirmed!"

"It sounds like Hamlet, or one of the tragedies!" said Bob Cherry.

"There will be further tragedy if he doesn't dry up!" growled Johnny Bull. "Come on! Let's see what it's all about!"

Johnny Bull opened the door, and we followed him into the study. We only got as far as the threshold, when we pulled up short with a gasp of astonishment.

Dick Rake stood in the study alone. He was topped up in a most dazing manner, so that we hardly recognized him. Like a king of the castle, he stood erect in immaculate attire, with gold links peeping from his sleeves, and a precious stone glittering in his lips.

I remarked, "Rake, old man, you shouldn't spring these sudden surprises on us, you know. They're bad for the nervous system!"

"And look here, said Johnny Bull, regarding Dick Rake critically: "before we noticed it we heard you pouring out your passionate devotion to some person unknown. What do you mean by it?"

The colour mounted to Rake's cheek. He shifted from one foot to the other, and looked jolly uncomfortable.

"I was just saying things!" he stammered feebly.

"I should jolly well think you were! You were speaking like a hero of romance! And, I say—what's the little case? Which party's side were you on?"

"They're set from a pawtup at all!" replied Rake indignantly. "I was measured for 'em last time I was in London!"

"But my dear chap, we don't understand!" I said helplessly. "Are you going to a fancy-dance ball?"

"Not exactly!"

"No, exact!"

"The what?"

"My hat! Fancy a kid of your age going to a dance! It beats the band!"

"Look here," said Dick Rake, facing round once as if you chaps have come along to suggest and advise. "You can get out! I don't want to soil these legs by having a scuffle, but you're gradually driving me to it!"

"Bots!" said Wharton. "Don't get huffy! You ought to be grateful to us for taking such a brotherly interest in you. Where's this dance going to be held?"

"In Courtfield," said Dick Rake; and a stiff spread over his face.

plag! And perhaps, if I'm lucky, she'll let me take her along—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "There we have the key to the giddy mystery! Now we know why you've been carrying on in this study like a tame lunatic! There's a lady in the case!"

"Yes, rather!" said Wharton. "Rake, old man, you're jolly shrewd!"

"Dry up, my goodness take it!" growled Rake, glaring defiance at us. "Can't a fellow be keen on a girl if he wants to bot it's no crime that I know of?"

"But what's her name?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

Dick Rake sprang towards the fireplace and grabbed up the poker.

"I'm fed up!" he snarled. "Get—out—don't come here again with your confounded questions!"

Dick Rake wielded the poker in such a warlike manner that we took him at his word.

We retreated along the passage, and Rake stood in the doorway and watched us go with scorn on his face. We weren't fools, but we had no desire to be treated by a fellow concerning whose sanity we were beginning to entertain grave doubts.

"Well, I'm pugged!" gasped Bob Cherry, when we were out of the study. "Fancy old Rake blossoming out into a lady's man like this!"

"Who is the lucky girl?" guessed Wharton. "Phyllis Howell, you bet?" said Johnny Bull. "I remember her saying she was going to a dance in Courtfield. But I didn't know Rake was keen on her at all!"

"Shouldn't be surprised!" murmured Bob Cherry, who had an inspiration in that direction himself. "Phyllis is not a toppling old."

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 52.

that I was quite understand a close being near us by. But there's a vast difference between having a girl as a chum and falling head-over-ears in love with her. What does a chum of a certain kind amount to?"

"Give it up," said "Let's get down to footer."

We were now engaged in chasing the bounding leather, but, somehow, we could not remember upon the great winter game. All our thoughts were for Dick Rake, who was behaving in such an alarming manner.

"I can't help worrying about that one," said Johnny Bell, at length. "He'll go getting it in the neck—slaying out late, and the best of things are known if he hangs up after looking up time there'll be trouble."

We couldn't let his idle love-making lead him into trouble. And Wharton, with a warning glance at the great winter game, all our thoughts were for Dick Rake, who was behaving in such an alarming manner.

"I can absolutely assure the esteemed Miss Phyllis," said Wharton, "that she is not a chum of mine. She is a friend of mine."

"You have had cold," suggested Phyllis. "Hush! I was wondering how to explain it."

"I don't see that there is anything which calls for explanation."

"But there is, Miss Phyllis," chimed in Wharton. "We want to speak to you about—about Dick Rake."

"Dick Rake?" she said lightly. "What about him?"

"He's going to the dance to-night—the same dance that you're going to," said Johnny Bell, solemnly.

"Well?"

"And we thought there might be some—some nice—something in the programme?"

Johnny Bell, fairly putting his feet in it.

"Phyllis, if you will whisper round some Bob, and stumped her foot indignantly."

"Curtain!"

"I think you are also peeped out at length."

And she passed on, leaving us staring at each other in blank consternation.

Our intention of doing Dick Rake a cold turn had failed!

And she passed on, leaving us staring at each other in blank consternation.

Our intention of doing Dick Rake a cold turn had failed!

And she passed on, leaving us staring at each other in blank consternation.

Our intention of doing Dick Rake a cold turn had failed!

And she passed on, leaving us staring at each other in blank consternation.

Our intention of doing Dick Rake a cold turn had failed!

And she passed on, leaving us staring at each other in blank consternation.

shining, and a cold wind swept across the Close.

Opening, the porter, was outside his lodge, waiting for the first stroke of nine to sound from the old clock-tower so that we could lock the gates.

There was only one thing that ruffled our calm. Dick Rake was on the wrong side of those gates.

Three hours previously he had gone to the dance. And it was more than likely that, in the excitement of the evening, he had forgotten the passage of time.

"Now's just going to strike," remarked Wharton. "It's all up with poor old Rake!"

But even as he spoke there was a puff of feet in the roadway, and a breathless, excited figure dashed through the school gates. It was Dick Rake.

"Just in time!" he panted cheerfully. "There was a close call, if you like!"

"You silly duffer!" howled Bob Cherry. "We've been going nearly grey with anxiety on your account!"

"Well, I didn't ask you to," said Rake. "My bad! I'm just glad I got in all right. It won't do for me to get into any scrapes in future. I've got to be a model boy. You read about it in the good-goods books. I've got to be the best school in the Form, and a perfect specimen on the playing-fields!"

"But why?" gasped Wharton.

"You, why?" roared the rest of us.

But Dick Rake smiled on towards the betting, whistling.

"He's right!" said Johnny Bell emphatically. "Let him go his own way, and be hanged! After waiting out here for good-nice hours how long, we didn't get a word of thanks. We won't keep a brother's eye on the chap any longer!"

Many questions were asked at Dick Rake to the directors that night, but his answers got very little change out of him. He undressed early, and went to bed with an expression on his face which indicated that he was going to do great things in the future.

And he did!

A series of surprises were in store for us next day.

Dick Rake set the ball rolling by his extraordinary conduct in class.

As a rule he contrived to do a little work as possible, and he usually improved the shining hour by indulging in a form of aerial gymnastics, using paper pellets indiscriminately about the room until he was tired.

But this morning it was different.

Dick Rake pitched into his work with a will, and he was one of those fellows who can do great things when they choose. His Latin class was very quiet, and he settled the dates of the great war in a manner which made Quilley sit up and take notice.

Towards the end of morning lessons Mr. Quilley singled him out for special praise.

But there was more to be said for him.

It was a half-holiday, and Dick Rake was down to play for the Esmores against Highcliffe—a match which always excited keen interest.

Although not a permanent member of the Esmores eleven, Dick Rake was a reliable player.

But this afternoon he was something more. He was necessary.

In the first twenty minutes he went through on his own and scored twice; and the crowd simply gasped.

"I can't think what's come over him," said Wharton.

And the rest of us were equally puzzled.

In whatever part of the field the ball appeared to be Dick Rake was there as if by magic for it, and when it came his way he was on it like a tempest's letter.

The crowd on the touchline cheered him to the echo; and when Phyllis Howell, who stood chatting with another girl whom we didn't remember to have seen before, waved her handkerchief, Rake fairly glowed with pleasure.

Half-time arrived with the Esmores leading 2-1.

Collectively, Highcliffe had been quite as good as ever; but with such a brilliant contribution as Dick Rake in the ranks of the Esmores, Frank Courtney & Co. were powerless.

The preparation was streaming down Rake's cheeks as we went into the garden.

"You're overdoing it, old man!" said Wharton. "Energy's a fine thing, but you're simply straining."

"I'm not," said Wharton, shrugging his shoulders. "I was merely advising you to slow up, that's all."

But though the advice was good Dick Rake didn't take it. He went great guns in the second half, and the Highcliffe defence was utterly tried.

Again and again Dick Rake went through it like a knife through butter.

He was charged over time out of number, but was up again like a jack-in-the-box, smiling, and ready for more.

The crisis came gradually, however.

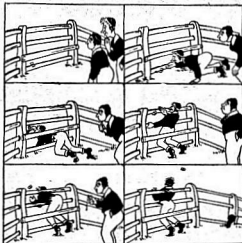
Towards the end of the game, when we were enjoying the remarkable goal of—

—Dick Rake was suddenly seen to stumble and fall.

No opponent was near him at the time, and we all wondered what was up.

There was a general rush to the spot; and the fellow who had been responsible

TUBBY & LANKY, THE TERRIBLE TWINS.



Drawn by JACK BLAKE.

"FIVE minutes to nine!" said Wharton. "And we wish you good-bye, Rake!" said Bob Cherry. "I'm sure you would happen. The silly one will run a better round his brother."

We were standing in the old gateway of Greyfriars. Overhead, the stars were

for fear of our five guineas was found to have

"I warned him," said Wharton, "but he took no notice. We would bring him round, and take him along by the study.

Some time had elapsed before Dick Rake called, and he was still very white and shaken.

"I shall be all right," he muttered. "Get on with the game! There's only a few minutes to go, and I'll stick it out."

For the remaining period, Dick Rake was a mere pawnman; but the Emperor had no badness, and a passing remark was as usual the order of the day. Bismarck had Highcliffe before him, and he was such a good margin.

Philip Howell and her fair companion approached Dick Rake as the latter came off, and drew him aside.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "I begin to be a doubtful tow. I don't Philip Howell the Rake's at his heart on—it's the other way!"

"Who is she?" exclaimed Wharton. "Is she a girl or a lady. Obviously, it was not a girl from the way we know all the girls in Miss Fingleton's school-by sight, at any rate."

"Of course," said Wharton thoughtfully. "I've no doubt she's quite a decent sort of girl, but this has got to stop. We shall have Rake doing all her fair companion and getting cracked up. Time we dropped it, I think!"

"Best, best!" said Johnny Bell. "It's a delicate business, and we shall look a set of wooden pegs. But it's up to us to do for the young lady, and probably best to give Rake our encouragement. When a fellow starts flirting there's no knowing what may happen."

It was, as Johnny said, a delicate business; but we were determined to bring Dick Rake to reason.

"Now for it!" said Wharton. "As we walked bodily up to the table. As we approached, Dick Rake spun round with a smile."

"Hello, you fellows!" he said. "Let me introduce you to my sister."

"We fairly staggered. "The newcomer!" gasped Wharton. "Rake nodded.

"She's staying in Courtfield for a few days," he explained; "and she's an old friend of Miss Howell's."

"We shook hands in turn with Lela's sister, who was certainly a very charming girl. "My sister's one of the best," said Dick Rake. "This is the first time she's paid me a visit. I believe she was under the impression that I was bit of a ducker, and all the rest of it. That's why I suddenly backed up and showed her what I could do."

"Then—then you're not so good on paper!" gasped Dick Cherry.

"Hoop!" said Rake, threw back his head and laughed.

"Do I look that sort of an ass?" he said, and the girls laughed, too.

"You've been behaving as fully worthy lately," said Wharton, "that we've thought—"

"Exactly!" said Lela. "Well, you were quite able to! When you heard me talking in the study, I was referring to my sister."

"Indeed?—who didn't you tell me?" demanded Johnny Bell.

"I wanted your permission to see what I could do," said Dick Rake, and he was such a good margin. "Indeed?—who didn't you tell me?" demanded Johnny Bell.

THE END.

The Editor's Chat.

The Magazine, The Boys' Friend, The Gem, The Penny Popular, Cuddles, Every Monday, Every Monday, Every Wed, Every Friday, Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Wednesday:

"TWO OF A KIND!"

By Martin Clifford.

The best grand long complete story of St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, deals with the archly satirical of Jilly Baxter and Buggy Tinsley.

Mr. Pepper, the Elyesian miser, figures in the story, and Tinsley—not without notice of self-interest—plays the Good Samaritan to that prosaician. Both Tinsley and Baxter have their usual propensity to daintiness between scenes and scenes—with results which are painful for both.

Curlew and Kerr both play a part—in fact, both play the same part—and the conventional common sense was announced to society everyone saw Baxter and Tinsley, who are naturally both, tarred with the same brush, and—in many respects, at any rate—

"TWO OF A KIND!"

NEW HEROES FOR OLD:

E. V. P. of Bridle, is in a bad way. Little Rachel of old, he murmurs, and will not be comforted. His gratitude is now directed against the Gem Library, but chiefly because it's "warty" little companion paper, "Cuddles."

"I have been a staunch reader of 'Cuddles' for many moons," writes E. V. P., "and I gave me quite a shock when, early in the year, I saw in the Gem another such sturdy new competitor. It was as unpleasant that I have not taken the paper since."

Not in this, old. E. V. P. attacks himself in such hot and cold, and because the late of his selection here by means of the following epigrams:

"IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF TEDDY BAXTER"

(Laird of Cherrymont Lochs, who passed away suddenly in February, 1915, leaving a host of readers to mourn his loss.

In his lifetime he was a keen sportsman and a real good fellow—a fitting ideal of Tom, Harry and Harry Warren.

The interested will take place at The Elbowy House, No. 80, St. Mary's, by request."

In reply to this plaintive communication, I would like to point out that Teddy Baxter had a long illness, and the time is now ripe to introduce into "Cuddles" new sportsmanlike characters just as low, just as sportsmanlike as the late lamented Teddy Baxter & Co. If it can be proved that the paper is foolish, hardly he would have seen that every week there appears a magnificent complete story of such high class, and of high class, by Harry Clifton, an author who writes to the "Gem" (and I think so) that includes such men as Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, and Owen Conquest.

What on this subject I would strongly recommend this best series of school stories to all my readers who have not hitherto been readers of "Cuddles." Quite apart from these stories, our sturdy companion paper is packed with splendid and novel features.

E. V. P. will be well advised to reconsider his decision, and to see nature him as well find "Cuddles" better now than it has ever been. Teddy Baxter is dead. Long live Dick Rake!

FIGHTING THE 'PLU'

Now the "Gem" helps.

The following cheery letter from one of our girl readers at Leeds speaks for itself:

"Dear Editor,—I have only taken the Gem about three months, and it is with great pleasure that I read Mr. Martin Clifford's most charming and amusing stories. Indeed, I often wish I had taken the Gem before! It contents myself by having my order renewed each week, so that I shall soon have the good things which the future holds in store.

"During the last week of last week I had the misfortune to contract that very contagious malady, 'Flu', which I thought ought to be in the London. Anyway, I became so ill and depressed that nothing would cheer me, and one day a kindly neighbour sent me a few Gem Libraries for my brother, which I returned with me."

"The result was astonishing! I could scarcely read for sheer excitement. I am certainly indebted for Gem for Depressed People. It has a most wonderful effect upon those suffering from 'Flu.'"

"I have many favourites among the St. Jim's boys, but I think Curlew interests me more than any."

"Indeed, I conclude I would like to say that I have read 'Fiddler's' children's gift. His combination of red hair (I had no very much. I have had red hair myself, but I certainly do not regard it as a misfortune.) Fiddler is not very strong-statured but his hair, with other people's hair and complexion, I wonder if himself is anything in the way of an Adonis?"

"With all good wishes for the success of the Gem Library,—Yours sincerely,—Ginger."

"P.S.—I might add that I am a girl."

"And a very nice girl, too. "Ginger"! I much appreciate your letter and loyal wishes, and thank you for the Gem which I have just got, in addition and in health, for many a year to come!"

A SPECIAL NOTICE.

Let me again emphasize the fact that those of my correspondents who desire a speedy reply to their letters should in all cases give their names and addresses—otherwise their communications are likely to hang fire for a considerable time.

A reader who signs himself "Spectator" takes me to task for not having replied to a letter he wrote some weeks ago. If "Spectator" will forward his name and address to this office I will endeavour to do him right in connection with the article he refers to.

I take this opportunity of stating that I am at all times delighted to hear from Gemmers all over the world.

YOUR EDITOR.

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc.

James Claxton, 28, Edinburgh Road, Clapham Park, W. (American) would like to correspond with those who have been interested in football and sporting subjects generally.

Henry Simpson, St. George's Street, Clapham, Cape Province, South Africa—with readers anywhere.

Miss M. West, 4, Kirkwood Street, North End, Port Elizabeth, South Africa—with girl readers anywhere.

Financial Club—Members, wanted: 15/100 all kinds of sports—football, boxing, cricket, etc.—Wm. G. Hallow, St. Ghisl Street, Athol, Liverpool.

A. Chase, 31, Pembroke Road, Watlington, E. 15—with readers almost 15/100.

B. Kennedy, 27, Barnsley, W. 15—with readers almost 15/100.

Barrow Books, Nawab Market, Wadda Street, Fuzhou, Bombay—with readers, 15/100.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" LIBRARY,
THE BEST BOOKS
PUBLISHED.

Now on Sale
Price 4d. each

HOLDING THE FORT!

Telling How a Fighting Editor was Engaged on the Staff, with
Disastrous Results.

By YOUR EDITOR.

ALTHOUGH I have been an Editor now for many years, I have never yet discovered an effective method of keeping off the long legged trail of annoying petty poets, idle journalists, and other nuisances who pour their scorn from the rising up of the sun to the rising down thereof.

I have tried all sorts of Judges. On one occasion I placed an imposing notice on the outside of the door:

"BEWARE OF THE DOG!"

Shortly afterwards a long-haired gey hard in, bringing with him an "Idle to Decaying Turpin."

He stared at me for a long time without speaking.

"Well, I'm puzzled," he exclaimed at length. "You're the man who's got the dog I've struck as this is your kennel—what? Well, I hope you're comfortable. Sorry I've no leisure to offer you. What's your name, by the way?"

"That was more than good and blood could stand."

Something in a broken head of Billy Butler, I looked it at my tailor, and the manner of his going was so quick that the manner of his coming is.

After which I removed the misleading notice from my door.

I then thought of another brilliant idea. By means of a large paper bag, in which I placed a quantity of "Blackhead" paste and some stale newspapers, the proceeds of the "Chickadee" advertising I placed up a most impressive hoody flag.

"That will work the trick," I murmured. And it did!

Consequently, the victim was Mr. Frank Richards, who had drifted in to discuss the plot of the book "Magnet" story.

The paper bag descended and upon the innocent author's head and the contents dropped themselves down his cheeks.

I regret to state that since that time we have not been on speaking terms.

Do not forget, I repeat, mine, definitely.

Another brilliant idea then occurred to me. (Being an Editor, I bristle with brilliant ideas.)

I placed a large placard on the outside of the door, worded as follows:

"THE EDITOR IS AT LUNCH."

For the first day it worked like a charm. I was able to carry out my duties without let or hindrance.

The next day I happened to meet at my Club a celebrated writer of long stories.

"Hello!" I said. "When are you going to write another ripping serial for the 'Boys' Friend'?"

He regarded me sternly.

"I've already written one," he said. "A topping yarn, packed with thrilling incidents—the best of anything you've read, but I've sold it now to another editor."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"I brought it up to your office at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, but you were still at lunch, so I took the manuscript elsewhere. I'm an editor taking six hours for lunch," he added, in shocked tones. "You deserve to lose good contributions."

Of course, I lost the offering placed down at the first opportunity.

Three days elapsed before I had my next brain-wave.

During those three days visitors had simply packed into my mansion, and there was a queue which extended down three flights of stairs and along Farringham Street as far as Ludgate Circus.

I recognized artists who for twenty years had been assiduously trying to sell the same pictures. I recognized writers of crowd stories who numbered the head in the first chapter and strewn the happy churchyard with his bones in the second. I recognized transient numbers of ideas who, by some miraculous means, had made good their escape from Russell and Colney Hatch. And the usual spring poets were there, extending far into the distance.

Yes, these three days were a nightmare!

At length, however, after partaking of several strong ginger-beers at the Joseph's Club, a really brilliant idea leapt to my mind.

Ho, I had hit it at last!

The only really effective way of keeping my unwelcome visitors at arm's-length would be to engage a Fighting Editor!

The former Fighting Editor is in the Army. Having struck down his colonel and other combat officers, he is not yet demobilized. Neither is he likely to be released for some time to come.

Accordingly, I placed an advertisement in "The Strapper" newspaper for buyers for letters—as follows:

FIGHTING EDITOR WANTED. For rough work on boys' papers. Must turn the scale at fifteen stone, and be able to disperse crowds in five minutes. Salary, sixpence for every column. Apply in person, with copies of your chief recent publications, to the Editor of the "Companion Paper."

I hadn't long to wait.

Shortly after my lamping offer appeared in print, a rattle-snaking fellow trotted into my mansion.

Carrying a massive fist, he regarded me sternly.

"Are you the Editor of the Gem?" he followed.

"Yes," said I, as boldly as I could in the circumstances.

"Oh, you're no good!" he said contemptuously. "I would see the Editor of the 'Magnet'."

"I will the 'Magnet' also."

"Know?"

"I know the 'Boys' Friend'—"

" Likewise the 'Penny Post'—"

"My eye! You'll be telling me you're the Editor of 'Chickadee' next!"

"No I am!"

"My tidler gasped."

"Goodnight!" he exclaimed. "You did all those? Then what do you do in your spare time?"

"Supervise the 'Gresham Herald,'" I said, smiling.

"Well, you're some real!" said the body one. "No wonder you want a Fighting Editor! Still, don't try to control your newspaper. Any sort of an editor can't run these papers, or his head!"

"Thank you!"

"It's so beautifully simple," he went on.

"Frank Richards writes the 'Magnet' story, Martin Clifford writes the 'Gem,' and Green Compost and the other fellows write the 'Penny Post' yarns. As for the sketchbook, Warwick Reynolds and C. H. Chapman

tackle the majority of these! So it leaves you with nothing to do."

"Indeed?" said I, with heavy sarcasm. "There are no manuscripts to read—no replies to send—no correspondence to answer? Oh, no! An editor mostly does all day in an easy chair. Let me assure you that you are O.K. of the matter, Mr.—"

"Gentle George, is my name," said my visitor. "I endeavor, as far as possible, to live up to it."

"In that case," said I, "you can thank me! It's no use having a name, harmless sort of person for a Fighting Editor!"

"True! Harmless!" he shouted. "Oh, my stars! I'll jolly soon show you! Watch me!"

The "Chickadee" office-boy came in at that moment.

Gentle George strode towards him, caught him up in a grip of iron, and with a swift jerk of his wrist sent the unfortunate youth spinning into the coal scuttle.

I rose to my feet in alarm.

"Stop!" I exclaimed. "The office furniture isn't insured! You'll break the window if you start banging about like that!"

Gentle George grinned.

"I merely gave you a taste of my quality," he said. "Now, Mr. Editor, can I consider myself engaged? If not—"

He clucked his big, black, piggy eyes.

"Certainly, certainly! I could hardly. You may take up your duties at once. It will be your place to remain on guard outside and prevent an invasion of my mansion."

"All wrong!" said Gentle George. "I guess you'll be able to work in peace after this."

"And I did. I sat down and proceeded to wade through the eight hundred odd readers' letters which had arrived that morning."

"And ever and anon came a distant sound of bumping, intermingled with yells."

I raised my eyebrows.

Certain long-haired poets—and others—were being thrown the way out by Gentle George.

"At its attack the low Fighting Editor strode into my mansion. He extended a hand and bonny pain."

"The said, please!" he said, in businesslike tones. "I've pitched two hundred people down the stairs at a twenty a time!"

"Oh!"

"None of them got any trouble except once—a tall, athletic-looking one with a dark mustache."

I gave a violent start.

"The fellow was a holy terror!" said Gentle George. "He fought like a tiger, and I had all my work cut out to shag him down the stairs. You ought to give for a special bonus for picking him out."

"I've pitched him out!" I stammered.

"Yes, he went away with his coat in tags—like a pig!"

"Why, you—you—!" I gasped. "Do you know who that was?"

"Not the fuggest notion!"

"It was Mr. Martin Clifford."

"Oh, excuse!"

"You've your prize football!" I roared.

"You've probably put a full stop to the career of the Gem."

"My dear sir—"

"Take your feet, and travel! And never come within a mile of the Electricity House again!"

Gentle George departed from my mansion, a swollen and a wiser man, leaving me to compile a forty-page letter of apology to Mr. Martin Clifford.