



The GEM $1\frac{1}{2}$
 BOOKS FOR
 261, LONDON ROAD
 BOOKS EXCHANGE

No. 528, Vol. XIII. May 26th, 1919.

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!



SEARCHING FOR GUSSY'S FIVER!

(An Amusing Scene in the Long, Complete School Tale contained in this Number.)

The Order of the Boot!



A Magnificent, Complete School Tale of St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Shoe Neck!

WHAT the thing do you want? It was certainly not a polite greeting.

Tom Merry generally was polite, and quite good-natured even, to fellows he did not like; but he had no politeness to waste upon Rattiff of the Fourth.

He did not like Bartholomew Rattiff—he both disliked and despised him; and his manner indicated as much at the present moment.

The Terrible Three, of the Sixth, came at the time Rattiff looked in. Misses about the last fellow in the school they would have expected to visit them in their quarters. And three expressions were conveyed to the caller that he was not welcome.

"I looked in to speak to you, Merry," said Bartholomew wearily.

"Look out again, then, sharp!" answered Tom.

"Sharp's the word!" agreed Mosey Lowther. "There's several boots here to help you, if you don't get a move on!"

Merrys did not speak, but he picked up a cushion—with the evident intention of shoving it at Bartholomew Rattiff if the latter did not depart.

But he did not depart. He came into the study, keeping a very wary eye on Merrys and the cushion.

"The fact is, you chaps—" he recommenced.

"Merris!" compressed Merrys, pointing the cushion for a throw.

"Is that what you call civil?" asked Bartholomew, with a sneer.

"If you've come to this study for civility you've come to the wrong shop!" retorted Tom Merry. "Sneaks aren't wanted here, even when they happen to be Housemaster's nephews!"

Who!

Merrys decided that it was time to get in the cushion.

But Bartholomew was wary.

He dodged, and the whizzing cushion landed on a picture on the wall. There was a crash.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Merrys.

"You silly old!" sneered Lowther.

"That's my picture!"

"All that young 'un's fault! Why couldn't he keep his head still?" demanded Merrys indignantly.

Bartholomew grinned.

"The fact is—" he began again.

Merrys jumped up.

"I'll jolly soon shoo him if he won't go!" he exclaimed. "He doesn't understand plain English. I'll give him plain boot-leather!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bartholomew. "Give a chap a chance to speak! I-I want your fellows to do something for me. I'm in a hole. Don't be short on a chap when he's down on his luck!"

Merrys stopped in sheer astonishment. "Well, I think that takes the cake!" said Tom Merry. "Go to your friends if you're down on your luck—if you've got any."

"Oh, he's got friends—Clovie's, and Chappie, in his own House, and Racks & Co. in ours!" said Merrys, with a curl of the lip. "He's friendly with every chap in the school who's at all shady. They're not exactly the fellows to lend a hand if he's down on his luck, though."

"So I've feared!" grunted Bartholomew.

"And you've got the neck to come here for help!" exclaimed the captain of the Sixth, in angry amazement.

"I-I thought you might lend me a hand," confessed Bartholomew. "I'm in a hole, and so mistake! I don't see why you're so snooty down on me. I've done you no harm, that I know of."

"Not as specially, perhaps," said Tom Merry; "but you've come about as much harm as you could, I think. You began sneaking the day you came to St. Jim's, and you've kept it up ever since. You don't get much of it, as you're in the School House, and you're in the New House. But you've made Faggus & Co. nearly tired of life. Nothing ever happens without your reporting it to Mr. Rattiff."

"He's making notes of all this to report to his merry uncle, and Missy Lowther." "We shall have old Ratty coming over with complaints to Haddon, as soon as young Ratty's made his blessed report."

"Let him report, and be banged!" growled Tom Merry.

"And while you're about it, Rattiff," said Merrys, "you can tell Mr. Rattiff that we think his nephew is a warr!"

"And a sneaking 'un!" said Tom Merry.

Bartholomew Rattiff was certainly not left in much doubt as to what the Terrible Three thought of him. Their

plain English was quite painfully plain. But Bartholomew did not seem to mind very much. Perhaps he thought that hard words broke no bones. Besides, he was used to them.

He simply waited till the captain of the Sixth had finished their remarks, and then began again.

"I'm in a hole, you fellows."

"Lend all your tin at banker!" inquired Lowther indignantly.

"Where's that?"

"Worse than that!"

"I-I owe some money—and I can't pay it. I-I want five quid in a hurry."

The Terrible Three blinked at him. They were aware that Ratty junior had plenty of nerve; but they could hardly believe he had sufficient nerve to come to their study to raise money—especially as it was pretty clear that the money was wanted to pay a gambling debt.

"I-I thought you fellows might help!" said Bartholomew, whose usually insolent manner was changed, now, into one of almost oily meekness. "I know we haven't got on since I've been here. Perhaps I've made some mistakes—"

"No perhaps about it!" growled Merrys.

"I shall get into awful trouble with my uncle if it all comes out," muttered Rattiff. "I—I can't go to him, either. He wouldn't stand me any money. He would do anything for me, except part with money. He won't do that. I-I say, I'm trying to raise five quid. Will you help?"

"Well, of all the chaps!"

"Of all the neck!"

Merrys and Lowther spoke together. Tom Merry was silent. Much as he disliked the sneak of the New House, he could feel for a fellow in a fix.

Mr. Rattiff, the Housemaster of the New House, probably regarded his precious nephew as a model of virtue. Mr. Rattiff had his own ideas of virtue—and saw nothing unvirtuous in sneaking and tale-bearing. It would have been a surprise to him to learn what some of the juniors knew about the cheery Bartholomew—that while the senior ones were addicted to reporting fellows for the most trivial breaches of rule, he allowed himself a latitude that would have earned him the "boot" if the Head had known of it.

Many of the juniors knew, and were suspected, that Mr. Rattiff's nephew smoked and played cards with Racks and

the study set at St. Jim's, and it was more than suspected that he dropped in occasionally at the Green Man—a very shady resort, strictly out of bounds for St. Jim's fellows.

If Ratty junior had been a model of virtue his tale-bearing would have been hard to tolerate; but smoking by a vicious young rascal, such as he was, was quite intolerable.

Misty Lowther took Tom Merry by the shoulder, and jacked him back into the chair he had risen from. Tom stared at him in surprise—as his chair held him in the chair.

"No, you don't!" said Lowther grimly.

"Don't what?" demanded Tom.

"Can't I read your speaking counterpane, my tender-hearted infant?" grinned Lowther.

"You're not going to lead him away, are you?"

"You're going to have nothing to do with the rotten rascal. If he's been playing cards and losing money, serve him right! No bitney of ours!"

"But—"

"But—"

"But—"

"He knew where to come, the smoking cad—his spotted you for a soft-hearted and soft-headed cheap, Tommy!"

"Look here, you see—"

"Merry!"

"Sherrin! He's not going to stink you for a single bob!"

"I can see it in your face, old chap—your're referring! Manxess, kick that young cad out while I look after tender-hearted Tommy!"

"You silly chump!" roared Tom Merry.

"Stink! Kick him out, Manxess!"

"You bet!"

"Hands off!" roared Bartholomew, as Manxess rushed on him.

"Yes, rotter! I'll hit my uncle—Yeep!"

Bartholomew Ratliff went through the doorway as if he had been propelled by a cannon. There was a bump and a bound on the landing in the passage.

Manxess descended the door after him.

"I don't think he'll come back!" he remarked. "If he does—"

But Bartholomew didn't.

CHAPTER 2. Nothing Doing!

GEOFFREY FIGGINS of the New House gave a start.

"Here comes that cad! I thought we were clear of him for a bit!"

Kerr and Paddy Wynn echoed the snort.

Evidently Mr. Ratliff's nephew was not popular in his own study in the New House at St. Jim's.

Figgins & Co. were at tea. Since Bartholomew Ratliff had been placed in their study the New House Co. had often been "set at home." They had fallen into the habit of having tea with Redfern, or Kozoni Rao, or with their friends over in the School House, to shun the charming society of Bartholomew. But on this occasion, finding the study empty when they came in from cricket practice, they had tea at home—and before they were finished Ratliff of the Fourth walked in.

Ratty junior's brow was dark, and his shifty eyes glittered under his scowling brows. He was not in a good humor. Perhaps his mode of exit from Tom Merry's study had something to do with that.

He glanced at the girls, unobtrusively frowning at his step-sister, and worried more darkly.

"Anything for tea?" he grunted.

"Anything you like to get from the tuckshop," answered Kerr. "We've not

standing you tea, if that's what you want."

"No jolly tea!" added Paddy Wynn emphatically.

"Jolly polite, I must say!" sneered Bartholomew.

"Rats!" was Figgins' rejoinder to that.

Figgins & Co. went on with their tea, while Bartholomew stood and regarded them with a frowning brow. They either hastened the process, anxious to get out of the study—more that they study-stroke had come on. There was silence as they ate, till Bartholomew broke it.

"You fellows needn't get your backs up," he said at last. "Look here! I've reported you a few times to my uncle, but—"

"You've constituted yourself superintendent for the Housemaster, and he encourages you to do it!" said Figgins.

"I'm not!" said Bartholomew. "It's smoking, and you know it!"

"Shush!" admonished Kerr.

"I'm not going to beat about the bush with the cad!"

"Futhead! He's trying to catch you, to take it to Ratty!"

"Let him!" sneered Figgins. "The fact is I think I've made some mistakes, you fellows. I'm going to stop it!"

"Gawd!"

"Honest injun! I'm not going to take any more reports to my uncle. He ought really not to have asked me in the first place."

"Well, that's right enough," said Figgins, rather less grimly. "He's as much to blame as you are, or more, if you come to that."

Kerr turned round in his chair, and surveyed Bartholomew Ratliff with a searching gaze. The keen Scottish gaze was not quite so entirely dealt with as George Figgins.

"What's your game, Ratliff?" he inquired.

"Game?" repeated Bartholomew.

"Yes. You're not sorry you've smoked, and you're not thinking of giving up smoking. You're trying to pull our leg. What's the game?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Figgins.

Bartholomew scowled more blackly than ever. Apparently he had not expected to be seen through quite so easily.

"Look here—"

"Oh, come off!" cried Paddy Wynn contemptuously. "Kerr's got it right! You're trying to pull our leg. What's the game?"

"I really mean it—"

"Rats!"

Figgins rose from the table.

"Let's get out!" he said. "That fellow makes me ill!"

"Right you are!"

"Don't go!" exclaimed Ratliff hotly. "I—I say, I—I want you fellows to lend me a hand!"

"Do you mean a foot?" sneered Paddy Wynn. "If you do, I'm your man!"

"I'm in a scrape—"

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr. "You've landed a good many fellows into scrapes; I'm glad to hear you're in one yourself. Has your excellent uncle heard that you smoke with Clumps, and play basket with 'Chove'?"

"Have you made a mistake, and smoked about yourself?" grinned Paddy Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a serious matter," said Ratliff, lifting his thin lip. "I'd be no end obliged if you fellows would help me out. I—I'm willing to say I'm sorry for having told about you sometimes. I—I really mean to chuck it in the first week. I—I'll do anything you like, if—"

"You're any thing you like, you mess—and of his!" said Kerr.

"It is a lark!" said Ratliff.

"We'll serve you there!" answered Kerr. "Come along, you chaps!"

And Figgins & Co. walked out of the study, and left Bartholomew to himself; not at all inclined to hear the details of his trouble, whatever it was.

Ratliff gnawed his teeth as they went. He had made enemies in his study, and in his House, where he might have made friends—without considering that the time might come when he would need friends. Certainly he had met friends of his own sort—Clumps and the other black sheep. But they were not the friends he wanted now.

"Bitters!" he murmured.

He sat down in the armchair and lighted a cigarette, blowing out little clouds of smoke as he thought over his problem.

A shifty face looked in at the door.

"Coming out, Figgies?" Redfern looked sharply. "Oh, I thought Figgins was here."

"Come in a minute, Riddy!" said Bartholomew.

"Thanks; I don't care for smoke!"

"I want to speak to you!"

"You can speak, I suppose—but cut it short!" said Redfern. "I've got to get down to cricket!"

"We've had our rubs since I came here," said Bartholomew. "I can see how that is with the wrong Redfern."

"That's good!" said Riddy dryly.

"I've got into rather a scrape—"

"I'm not surprised at that. I saw you lunging about the garden of the Green Man yesterday afternoon. Did Joffe or Burke win your money?"

"You've hit it!"

"Serve you right, then!"

"Well, I—I dare say it does serve me right," said Bartholomew, wincing.

"But I'm in an awful scrape, Redfern! Joffe has threatened to come up here if I don't pay him. He has me five pounds to play with Burke."

"More fool you to take it! They're hand-in-glove, of course!"

"Well, I lost the money, and I can't settle. You'll be an awful row if Joffe does as he's threatened!"

Redfern whistled.

"I should jolly well say so!" he muttered. "Your uncle couldn't see you through a thing like that. It would come before the Head!"

"That's what I'm afraid of," muttered Bartholomew. "Besides, my uncle wouldn't stand by me. He's down on such things, and he doesn't appreciate anything of the kind, of course. I—I say, Riddy, can you lend me something towards it? I must raise the tin somehow!"

Redfern looked at him with cold contempt.

"You've got the nerve to ask me that, after the larkings you've got to be smoking!" he said.

"I—I'm sorry—"

"Yes, I know how sorry you are. Go and eat cake!"

Redfern walked away.

Bartholomew scowled blackly over his cigarette. He smoked it through, and then another, and another, but seemed without arriving at any solution of his problem. He rose at last, and left the study, leaving it reeking with smoke.

His face was harassed in expression as he went into the quadrangle. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth was under the elms with Hagg; Tinsdale, and Bartholomew looked for them. Arthur Augustus was a youthful youth, and good-looking to a fault, and Bartholomew's eyes roved the length of him. Here was a resource as yet untried.

"I say, Gussy?" Tinsdale was saying.

"The Cox Librarian.—No. 32.

as Bartholomew appeared in the office, so to speak.

"Woah, Twinkles!"

"Gaw, old chap!"

"Twinkles, I have repeatedly requested you not to address me as Gussy," said the devil of St. Jim's severity. "I am Gussy to my friends."

"Well, I'm your friend, you know—quite an old pal," said Twinkles, unabashed. "I saw you take that letter out of your letter, Gussy."

"You see I guess many things that do not concern you in the slightest degree, Twinkles!"

"Well, I think a fellow might chaff out to a pal in distress when he's in a heap!" said Huggy Twinkles reproachfully. "I've lost my last quid to Tom Merry—"

"Wah!"

And with that Arthur Augustus walked away, and Twinkles, his friendliness dropping off all of a sudden, shook a fat fist at him.

Arthur Augustus almost walked into Bartholomew. He recovered to avoid that unpleasant youth; but Bartholomew moved to intercept him again.

"Hold on a minute, D'Arcy!" he began.

"Paw do not speak to me, Watciff," said he.

"I refuse to hold any communication whatsoever with a scoundrel like you!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "I distinctly refuse to listen to one word from you, or to attach a single syllable in reply!"

"Look here—"

"Paw allow me to pass, Watciff."

"Wah!"

Arthur Augustus roared round Bartholomew and walked on; but Bartholomew's wrath caught him by the arm.

"Look here, D'Arcy!" he began again.

"Release my arm!"

"I say—"

"If you do not withdraw your obstinately touch immediately, Watciff, I shall strike you on the nose!"

"Dat I—"

BIB!

Arthur Augustus was as good as his word. His noble knuckles rapped on Bartholomew's prominent nose, and the Housemaster's nephew staggered back with a howl.

The devil of St. Jim's walked on towards the School House severely.

Bartholomew rubbed his nose, and stared after him. Evidently there was nothing to be hoped for in that quarter.

CHAPTER 3.

Bartholomew's Vengeance!

"ATTY!" murmured Figgins.

"Whick?"

"Ratty before. Look out!"

Figgins & Co. were coming up to their study, when George Figgins caught sight of a whiffing gown in the doorway of that apartment.

The three janitors came on very warily and softly when they found that their Housemaster was in their quarters. Not that they had any special awe of their seniors. But ever since Mr. Ratciff's nephew had been their study-mate they had been almost invariably in hot water with the New House master.

Mr. Ratciff was smiling smotheringly when they entered the study. They came in very quietly and respectfully.

"Smokes!" exclaimed Mr. Ratciff.

"Paw!" answered Kerr.

The study almost smoked, with smokes, and it looked as if the Housemaster's nephew was about to be—by his uncle. The chance worded what had brought the Housemaster there at a moment so

unlucky for Bartholomew. Nobody ever smoked in that study, but Ratty of the Fourth.

Mr. Ratciff fixed his eyes on the trio.

"Oh, it is you!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Figgins.

"You have been smoking here!"

Figgins jumped.

"All sir?" he ejaculated.

"All three of you!" snapped Mr. Ratciff. "In order to make absolutely sure I have visited the study, and I find it reeking with tobacco-smoke. Follow me. I shall punish this petty blackguardism most severely!"

Figgins & Co. exchanged a look.

"We haven't been smoking here, sir," said Kerr. "We never smoke, either here or anywhere else."

"How dare you say so, Kerr, when there is still smoke in the study?"

"Nobody else, sir,"

"Indeed! You have friends to visit you who smoke?" asked Mr. Ratciff.

"Yes, Merry, perhaps, or Blake, or D'Arcy—"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Then when do you smoke?"

"I smoke nobody, sir," said Figgins.

"It wasn't one of us. I don't see why you should fix on us. There are four in this study."

"The fourth is my nephew, Figgins, and I am not likely to suspect him of such conduct," said Mr. Ratciff angrily.

"Bartholomew very properly inferred me that you had been smoking, but I came here to ascertain beyond doubt—"

"He—he—he told you!" blubbered Figgins.

"Ah! You see that your nephew will not stand you!" snapped the Housemaster.

"Certainly he will not, as was his duty!"

"He told you a lie, then!" exclaimed Figgins sulkily.

"And I'll tell you the truth, as he's mentioned the matter to you. Nobody ever smokes in this study but Ratty!"

"What?"

"And it was Ratty who made all this smoke here."

"How dare you say so, Figgins!"

"Because it's true, sir."

"Do you venture to say that you see my nephew smoking in this study this afternoon?"

"He must have smoked after we went out—there was no smoke here when we went," said Fatty Wynn.

"You do not venture to carry your falsehood so far as to claim that you actually saw him!" said Mr. Ratciff hotly.

"Follow me to my study at once!"

He whisked out of the room, and Figgins & Co. exchanged glances.

This was evidently Ratty junior's revenge for their refusal to help him in his "scrap," whatever it was. But it was rather "thick," even for Bartholomew, to lay the burden of his own smoking upon his study-mate.

The janitors followed their Housemaster—they had no choice about that. It was in Mr. Ratciff's power to be unjust, though, as a matter of fact, he believed in his proteges' virtues, and was far from suspecting in real character. Bartholomew was a model of virtue in his uncle's eyes—Mr. Ratciff's notions of virtue being peculiar to himself.

The unhappy three passed Redfern as the landing. Reddy gave them a look of inquiry as the Housemaster whisked on down the lower staircase.

"What's the row this time?" he asked.

"Reported for smoking!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"You're smoking?" ejaculated Redfern, in astonishment.

"Young Ratty, of course—he's made the study smoky, and reported us for it!" Figgins almost gasped. "I—I—I shall

smash him some day! Old Ratty won't believe a word we say, of course! We didn't actually see the cat smoking in the room this time."

"But I did!" exclaimed Redfern wrathfully. "He was smoking cigarettes there when I looked in for you after tea. I'll jolly well tell Ratty so, if he's going to ask you for what that cat's done!"

And Redfern glared the Co. to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Ratciff took up a case as Figgins & Co. came in.

"New, Figgins, you—I did not send for you, Kerr."

"I have something to tell you, sir," said Redfern firmly. "If Ratciff has told you those fellows smoked in the study, sir, it's untrue."

"How dare you, Redfern!"

"I looked into the study after they'd gone out, sir, and it wasn't smoky then."

"Nonsense!"

"But your nephew was there, sir—smoking!"

Mr. Horace Ratciff's thin lip curled bitterly.

"This is evidently a concocted story," he said. "I saw you speaking to Figgins on the staircase, Redfern. He has asked you to come here and tell this falsehood to amuse him, I presume!"

"It's true, sir—"

"It is not true, Redfern!" threatened Mr. Ratciff.

"I should not have told you, sir, if Ratciff had not spoken falsely about Figgins," said Redfern freely. "Under the circumstances, I think you ought to know. It was your nephew who was smoking in the study."

"I do not believe a single word of this concocted story, Redfern!" said the Housemaster hotly. "I shall report you as well as Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. Not another word! Hold out your hand!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

There was nothing more to be said. Mr. Ratciff was master of all he surveyed in the New House, and his word was law. But never had the New House janitors been so near to the verge of rebellion.

There was a steady sound of walking in the study for some minutes.

Then the four janitors were dimmed, eyeing their hands dejectedly as they went down the corridor.

At the end of the passage Bartholomew Ratciff met them, and he smiled. He found some solace for his own troubles in the painful contortions of the chest of the Fourth.

Figgins cursed, and clenched his aching hand; but Kerr drove him on. It was no time for parading Bartholomew's nose, such as he deserved it. Another visit to Mr. Ratciff's study just then would have been too painful. So Bartholomew was left to smile.

CHAPTER 4.

Caught!

TOM MERRY slipped at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage in the School House.

There was the sound of a movement in the study.

But there was no answer to Tom's tap.

The captain of the B&B opened the door and looked in.

"Blake did so!" he began.

Tom Merry passed in astonishment. The study was empty.

Tom was certain that he had heard a movement in the room, but as he looked round there was nobody to be seen.

Manners and Lowther came along the passage, and stopped at the door.

"Nobody at home?" asked Leather.
"Well, I could have sworn that some body was here," said Tom. "But there seems to be nobody. I heard a sound inside as I knocked."

"Herries' building, perhaps?" said Marmess. "Come on! There's still light enough for some cricket! Blake's there already, I expect!"

Tom Merry nodded, and turned back into the passage.

"Hold on, though!" said Mooty Leather. "Herries wouldn't leave Tom's house in the study after the rows there have been about that same old reptile! More like Buggy Trimble after the task. Let's look!"

"Oh, good!" said Tom, turning back. "If Buggy's there, he lodged out of sight when I opened the door—that's it, of course!"

And the Terrible Three entered Study No. 3, hardly doubting about the correctness of the Fourth way thence—along the "back." It was well known in the Fourth that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had received a "firer" from his noble pater that day, so probably Trimble looked on Study No. 3 as a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Are you here, Buggy?" shouted Leather.

No answer.

"Show a leg there!" cried Leather, slaking the table. "I know you're under this, we fat leander! Crawl out!"

"I'll jolly soon see!" said Tom Merry. And he threw up the table-cover and looked under that article of furniture.

Then he gave a yell.

"Ratty!"

Bartholomew Ratcliff of the Fourth was crouching under the table, with a pale, stunted, spiteful face.

The chums of the Shell stooped and looked at him with very expressive looks.

"You wren!" said Tom Merry.

"What are you spring here for? Crawl out!"

Bartholomew crawled out.

He rose to his feet, his pale, scared face flushing. Even Ratty junior was not wholly imperious to the scorn in the faces of the Shell fellows.

He made a movement towards the door, but Tom Merry stopped in the way.

"Not yet!" he remonstrated.

"Let me pass!" muttered Ratcliff.

"What more you doing here?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"You came over from the New House just for the pleasure of crawling under the table when you heard us at the door!"

Bartholomew hit his thin lip.

It was really a puzzle what he had been doing in Study No. 3; but the Terrible Three did not need telling that his motives, whatever they were, were bad. In a New House study he might have been busy in his usual occupation of spying and sneaking; but why he should be spying in the School House was a mystery. Certainly Mr. Ratton would not have tolerated any of his precious reports.

Tom Merry & Co. waited for him to speak; but he did not speak. He seemed to have nothing to say.

"Well," said Tom at last. "Are you going to explain what you were up to in this study?"

Ratcliff breathed hard.

"I—I came to speak to—to Digby," he stammered at last.

"And why did you hide under the table?"

"I—I—"

"Think it out!" suggested Mooty Leather. "You can't tell me how with out stopping to think, old top! Think it out first!"

"I—I was simply joking!" stammered

Bartholomew. "I—I thought it was D'Arcy coming in, and I was going to jump out and—startle him!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Do you expect us to swallow a yarn like that?" he asked.

"Hang you! What do you think I was doing?" exclaimed Bartholomew angrily.

"I don't know; but I leave you were up to no good! I hardly think even you would be after the task, like Trimble!"

Ratcliff started.

"You—your've guessed it!" he stammered. "I—I—ever up! I—I was going to beg the cake. No harm in this—straps a House maid."

The Terrible Three regarded him attentively. Bartholomew was rather skilful in the difficult art of lying; but this falsehood came rather too late to be convincing. It was clear enough that Tom

"Get out!"

Bartholomew made a dash for it.

Leather's book landed as he ran through the doorway, and Bartholomew spun into the passage with a wild yell.

The Terrible Three followed him out.

"Hold on, Ratcliff!" shouted Leather. "I've got another for you!"

But Bartholomew was fleeing for the stairs.

"Lock the door!" said Tom. "I don't know what he was after, but he's not going in there again!"

Mooty Leather turned the key in the lock, and then put it into his pocket.

The Terrible Three descended the stairs. As they came out of the School House they caught a distant view of Bartholomew—hopping, not for his own House, but for the gates.

The chums of the Shell walked down to



"What the thunder do you want?" exclaimed Mr. Joffe. "I want my bookcase!" answered Arthur Augustus, quietly. Mr. Joffe gave a jump. (See Chapter 8.)

Merry's remark had suggested it to the young man.

"So you were after the cake?" said Tom at last.

"Ye-es."

"I don't believe a word of it! I can't guess what you were after, but I don't believe that, Bosh—!" Tom paused.

"You were after something. We'll see you side of the premises!"

"And lock the door!" said Marmess.

"Yes; that's a good idea! Get out, Ratcliff!"

Bartholomew hesitated.

Tom Merry pointed to the door, Mooty Leather took the key from the lock, to secure it on the outside after leaving; and then he stood by the doorway, with his right foot swinging back a little. It was so clear that that foot was to be planted behind Bartholomew as he went that Ratty junior really could not be blamed for hesitating.

"Are you going?" asked Tom.

"I—I—"

the cricket-ground, where they found Blake & Co. Blake and Herries were at the wickets, and Digby was bowing. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking on with an expression of thoughtfulness on his noble brow.

Mooty Leather jolted him in the ribs with the key of the study door.

"Well!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"Your property!" said Leather, holding up the key.

"Weally, Leath—"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyes upon the key in great surprise.

"Your study key," explained Leather.

"Weally, I fail to see why you should bring my study key to me back on the cricket-field, Leath."

It is this one of your jobs!

"We caught a burglar in your study, and turned him out and locked the door," explained Leather.

"But Jove!"

Tom Merry explained, and Arthur Augustus slipped the key into his pocket. "I really do not understand what Wally Janish was doing in my study," he said. "If I had caught him there I should certainly have given him a fustian thrashing." He next gave some advice, the horridly Puritan, though I really do not know what there was to say into. But Jove! I think I will walk over to the New House and give him a fustian thrashing, anyway."

"Too late; he's gone out," said Tom Merry, laughing.

And the thrashing had to be postponed.

CHAPTER 5.

Vanished Wealth!

"SOMETHING's vanished doesn't?"

"Eh?"

"A really good spread, I think."

Arthur Augustus D'Arny made the remark as Tom Merry & Co. came off the cricket-ground in a cheery and roddy crowd.

The swell of St. Jim's had been thinking. This was the outcome of his reflections.

"You see, dear boys, my studies in the funds," he explained, "my match has played up as of late, and now my bank. I have been expecting that fresh for quite a long time—in fact, I have mentioned it to you—"

"You have?" grinned Mesty Lovethorpe.

"I was beginning to think that your five was a distant relation to Billy Bunter's post-office account."

"Wally," said Tom Merry, "it has come all right. The gentleman has turned up promptly. It came by this afternoon's post."

"Good old governor!" said Tom Merry.

"When I go into the House of Commons, later on," said Lovethorpe solemnly, "I shall vote to give the House of Lords another run for its life. I shall remember this five, and go easy with them."

"I wish to say," said Arthur Augustus, "I have strange hopes, dear boys, that the House of Lords will shortly be the House of Commons first. However, to women to the bank, we are in funds—great funds. I have been thinking the match out, and it appears to me that the thing to do is to have a study spread."

"Dear, dear!"

"Gover, has these ripping ideas," said Blake. "I don't know how he does it, but he does!"

"Yes, wally! My idea is to make quite a party of it, you know. We are seven—"

"As the post remarks, we are seven," announced Lovethorpe.

"And Talbot will make eight—if you will branch us with your company; dear boys."

"With pleasure," said Talbot of the Shell, with a smile.

"And Leeson and Cardew and Clive—that will make eleven."

"A full team," said Tom Merry.

"Never mind, make it a Rogger ten-party—eleven."

"I was thinking of Figgins & Co. You see, it's wally wally in their own study, with young Wally there. That will make fourteen. Can we get four more fellows into the study, Bunter?"

"You could get forty, if you could get the task for them," announced Blake.

"But Jove! Percy would be wally a crowd. But I think we can manage fourteen, with a little assistance," said Arthur Augustus. "Besides, perhaps

some of the fellows here had their tea, and won't come."

"Don't rely on that," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've had our tea; but we're coming, all the same."

"You bet!" grinned Lovethorpe.

"Bully on us!" said Meston heartily. "We had tea early, to get down to the cricket. We're ready for another."

"Very good, dear boys! I will walk over to the New House and see Figgins."

"Better run to the bookshop with the five," said Blake. "I'll go and see Figgins for you."

"Thank you very much, Blake. I hope they have not had their tea yet. But I see such Fussy Wynn will come, anyway. I'll go in—"

"Right wheel for the tackle," said Horrie. "Don't waste time, Gussy. It's an hour past tea-time, and I'm famished."

"But the fresh is indoors, Horrie. I should not be likely to be so careless as to carry a fresh around at cricket," said Arthur Augustus solemnly.

"Back up, then."

"Yes, wally!"

Arthur Augustus questioned his pace towards the School House, Study No. 4, and not yet had ten, having put in extra time at cricket to make the best use of the daylight. The Terrible Three had had one tea, but they were ready for another, after an hour on Little Side.

There was no doubt that Figgins & Co. would be exacting. Mesty spreads were not to be despised, even by fellows who had had their tea. And there was no doubt that that Fussy Wynn, at least, would arrive with a good appetite if he had had half a dozen teas.

Jack Blake started for the New House, to accept the hospitable invitation to Figgins & Co. The other fellows followed Arthur Augustus. They gathered in Leeson and Cardew and

Clive, and Meston and Meston, not having had tea yet.

They could have gathered up a good many more guests, too; but they wally decided that fourteen was a sufficiently large number for a janties study. Indeed, it was rather a gratifying hour fourteen were going to find room.

Still, room could be found if the task could be found. That was the more important of the two to consider. And Arthur Augustus's confidence settled that point.

The crowd of fellows arrived at Study No. 4. They expected to meet Arthur Augustus on the way, returning to visit the bookshop. But they didn't. When they arrived at the study they found the swell of St. Jim's there, standing in the middle of the room with a pained expression on his face.

"Taken yet?" asked Digby.

"Wally, Digby—"

"Get a move on," said Horrie. "I'm as hungry as a blackbird's hon!"

"But—"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, "this isn't a time for 'but's. Can we help? Shall I start the fire? Any need about? Lead me your head, Gussy?"

"Wally, Tom Merry—"

"Here comes Blake with the New House bookshop," said Meston.

Jack Blake came in with Figgins & Co. The study was pretty full by that time. Quite a little army surrounded Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo! You fellows are looking happy!" remarked Tom Merry, as he noted that Figgins & Co. were rubbing their hands appreciatively.

"Liked!" greeted Figgins.

"Really again!" asked Tom, sympathetically.

Figgins gave a snort.

"Old Ratty and young Ratty," he said. "Enough the two of them. Life isn't worth living in the New House. It's getting too thick. You see, we had our tea early to get down to the cricket—"

"Not much of a tea," said Fussy Wynn hastily.

"And after we were gone young Ratty marked in the study, and then reported on for so long," said Figgins, broadcasting his remarks. "His own little snort, you know! He was actually snoring, and stood up for us, and got awed, too!"

"Pshaw!"

"That fellow will get lashed in the long run," said Kerr. "We can't stand much more of him. But never mind Ratty now. What's the trouble with you, Gussy? Blake said there was a five on it."

"If there's any cooking," said Fussy Wynn, "I'm your man. Anything you like. Leeson it to me."

"Gussy's brought us home to feed," remarked Lovethorpe. "Now he's got to sleep standing up, like a horse!"

"Wally, Lovethorpe—"

"Anything wrong?" asked Cardew, with a keen look at Arthur Augustus's troubled and perplexed face.

"Yes—"

"Oh, my law!" exclaimed Clive.

"Here's the five come!"

"Eh, ha, ha!"

"Yes, wally! It's over all right. But—"

"But what?" demanded Horrie impatiently.

Horrie was hungry, as he had already stated several times.

"But it's gone, Horrie!"

"Gussy!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Yes."

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Blake. "How can it be gone! Have you lost it?"

"Certainly not, Blake!"

"Then how can it be gone?"

"I really do not see how it can be gone, but it certainly is gone. You see, I put it in my desk when I changed for cricket. I considered it wally enough to leave it 'bur' about in my cricket jacket—"

"I should say so, father! But if you put it in your desk, it's in your desk."

"That is the very remarkable circumstance, Blake, that wally people say, it isn't."

"Oh, ruddy! Let me look."

"Yes, are very welcome to look, Blake."

"Of all the asses—" said Digby.

"Wally, Digby—"

"Back up, for goodness' sake!" greeted Horrie. "I'm hungry!"

"You're repeatedly yourself, old man!" announced Cardew. "I've heard you say that before."

"Here we! Got it, Blake!"

"No!" growled Blake, rooting into his desk. "The silly old man has shoved it among seven of those blotted papers. I'll up-end the desk—"

"Wally, Blake—"

"And you fellows can help out if you can."

"Good idea!" said Tom. "All hands to the desk!"

"But Jove! I wally to have my peepshow smashed in such a stunner, but Jove!"

Crank!

Blake, having thoughtfully removed the inkpot, up-ended the desk, and the contents came cascading over the floor in a shower, and thirteen janties began to search among the litter for the five-pond note, while Arthur Augustus watched them, the thoughtful frown deepening on his face.

CHAPTER 4

Gaily!

"My hat! What a collection!"
 "What on earth's this?"
 "Here's a letter from
 cousin Eben."

"Here's a tailor's bill—"
 "Unpaid!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Woe! Dear boys—"
 "What on earth's this?" exclaimed
 Cardow, holding up a paper. And he
 read out:

"I wait for thee, as waits the dove,
 At midnight, gloomy and forlorn.
 As waits the golden sun to rise,
 I wait to see thy beamless eyes."

"But Jove! Cardow, you wotiah—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wish to allow you to read out
 my poetry, Cardow, you foolish
 booby!"

"By gad! Is it poetry?" ejaculated
 Cardow. "Sorry, Gussy! Of course, I
 couldn't know it was poetry till you told
 me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus, with a crimson face,
 jerked his crimson sash away from
 Cardow. The chattering jawless
 continued their search for the banknote.
 They found some more sheets of poetry
 and several bills, and were quite
 enlightened on the subject of Gussy's
 rascally shopping for waistcoats, silk hats,
 neckties, and stiffen socks. But they did
 not find the five-pound note.

Every article the desk had contained
 was picked up, and looked at, and shaken.
 But there was no sign of the five.

Herris remarked again that he was
 hungry. This seemed to be rather a
 new point with George Herries, and he
 referred to it again and again in foolish
 tones.

"Now, the question arises," remarked
 Tom Merry, "which pocket did Gussy
 leave the five in?"

"I did not leave it in any pocket, Tom
 Merry."

"Then where did you put it?"
 "In the desk."

"Fished?" said Hiko.
 "Woe! Blah—"
 "Goodman," murmured Cardow,
 "with your kind permission, we will
 retire, and help you again after tea. I've
 been certain myself whether Olive and
 Lovison plays' cricket, and I'm a bit
 peckish. You'll excuse us, I'm sure."

"But Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in
 distress, as Betty No. 5 made a movement
 towards the door. "I am woefully
 sorry for this delay, you fellows. Per-
 haps it would be better for you to have
 your tea, as I wish the banknote to not
 turn up in a hurry."

"You've got such a thumping lot
 of pockets to go through!" grunted
 Herries.

"Come along with us, Talbot!" sug-
 gested Lovison.

Talbot glanced at Arthur Augustus,
 who nodded assent, and the three fellows
 left the study with Lovison & Co., Fig-
 gins & Co. and the Terrible Three
 remained with Study No. 5.

Study No. 5 was getting rather
 oppressive. But the other fellows, having
 had tea already, were more patient.

"Shall we go up to the dorm, and go
 through all Gussy's sags?" asked Mosey
 Lovison.

"I suppose we'd better," growled
 Hiko. "Goodness knows which pocket
 he's left it in!"

"That would be quite useless, dear
 boy," said Arthur Augustus sternly.
 "I remember distinctly putting the
 banknote in the desk."

"But it's not there!" roared Hiko.
 "I am awash of that!"

"Well, if you'd put it there it would
 be there now, wouldn't it?"

"You're wrong—"
 "Unless what, fellow?"
 "I refuse to be called a fellow,
 Blah!"

"Unless what?" shrieked Hiko.
 "Unless it has been taken away,
 Blah—"

"Who's at it?"
 Arthur Augustus' words had an
 electrifying effect upon the juniors. He had
 named their school, so far, that the
 locksmen had been taken from the desk
 by a fishing hand.

There was a sudden, startled silence.
 "Taken!" said Tom Merry at last.

"Yes."
 "You—you don't mean stolen?"
 "I am afraid, Tom Merry, that that
 snag has been deliberately taken from
 my desk. It is too absurd to suspect
 that it has been stolen. I trust it will
 turn out to be merely a silly, practical
 joke."

"Oh, rot!" said Herries bluntly.
 "Nobody would be idiot enough to take
 money from a fellow's desk for a joke.
 If it's been taken, it's been stolen."

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom
 Merry.

He remembered Bartholomew!
 The Terrible Three exchanged quick
 glances. The snare thought came into
 their minds at once.

"Young Ratty!" murmured Man-
 nose.

"Ratty!" repeated Figgins, with a
 stare. "Ratty can't have been here.
 What do you mean? Ratty never comes
 to this study."

"We found him here."
 "Oh!"

"But Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.
 There was another silence.

Nobody thought well of Bartholomew
 Rattiff in any way, but to suspect him
 of theft was far beyond what the St.
 Jim's juniors had imagined as far.

"Now!" murmured Fatty Wynn.
 "I know his hand up. He was trying
 to borrow money of us only to-day."

"And of us!" said Tom Merry.
 "But Jove! And I wotiah think he
 was going to try it on me," said Arthur
 Augustus. "He came up with Terrible
 was talkin' to me about my banknote in
 the quad below we went down to the
 canteen, and persisted in speakin' to me,
 and I searched his checky case!"

"He knew you had a banknote, then?"
 asked Hiko.

"Well, he must have heard what
 Terrible was sayin', as he was quite
 wotiah."

"But this is realty thick!" said Figgins
 unusually. Figgins did not like Bar-
 tholomew, but he was jealous of the
 honor of his House, and Bartholomew
 belonged to the New House. "Look
 here, boys, have the old plan before
 anything's said outside this study. Is it
 quite certain that the note's gone?"

"Yes, wotiah!"
 "When did you put it in the desk?"
 asked Kerr.

"Just before I went down to garden."
 "And you fellows found Rattiff here
 after that?" asked the Scottish jester.
 Tom Merry nodded.

"We looked in here for these snags,"
 he said. "Rattiff was here, and he hid
 under the table when I opened the
 door."

"How?"
 "He open to a year about being here
 to sell a cake; but we didn't believe
 that, even at the time, though we
 couldn't guess why he was here."

"When was that? How long after
 Gussy had gone up?"

"Very soon after, I am sure," said
 Arthur Augustus; "because I had not

been on the cricket-ground ten minutes
 when Tom Merry sawed there, and
 Lovlish saw us on the top of the study."
 "The boy!" repeated Kerr.
 "We turned Rattiff out and locked
 the door, and took the key to Gussy,"
 explained Tom. "We didn't know what
 he was after here; but, of course, we
 knew he was up to no good. So we
 thought it would be better to lock the
 study."

Kerr's face was very green.
 "Was the study locked when you came
 in, D'Arcy?"

"Yes, wotiah! I unlocked it when
 I came in."

"Then it was locked all the while you
 were at cricket?"
 "Yes!"

"That makes it pretty clear," said
 Hiko. "Rattiff must have seen us go
 down to cricket, and he slipped in here
 as soon as the coast was clear. Tom
 found him here as he turned his hat out,
 and ever since that the study door was
 locked. Nobody else could have got at the
 banknote if he'd wanted to."

The juniors looked at one another.
 The matter was narrowed down now
 to Bartholomew Rattiff! And fresh in
 the minds of the juniors were Bar-
 tholomew's efforts to raise money only that
 afternoon—his attempt of a gossamer
 doll up Green-Mean. "They did not
 need much more evidence."

"Then Rattiff is the thief!" said Kerr.
 "Mr. Rattiff's nephew! My hat!"

"It is how'd!" said Arthur Augus-
 tus, in great distress. "Of course, we
 know that the fellow is a sneak, and a
 spy, and a scoundrel and card-sharp's
 wotiah. But—but wotiah!—oh dear! It
 is too awful!"

Figgins gritted his teeth.
 "The cowardly wotiah!" he said.

"He's disgraced his House in nearly
 every way, but this is the limit! He's a
 thief!"

"But Jove! What's gain' to be
 done?"

"He ought to be kicked out of the
 school!" said Hiko angrily. "We
 don't want a thief here!"

"No fear!"
 "It will be a fearful disgrace, dear
 boys," said Arthur Augustus, earnestly.

"I—I—I think if the school wotiah will
 return the money, postage—postage
 it was only a silly joke—"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Herries.
 "I—I wotiah think I will go and see
 him," said Arthur Augustus. "I have
 the number of the note—the governor
 put it in his letter for me to keep,
 because I lost a banknote last term, you
 know. I've got the letter. When I see
 young Wotiah I have the number—"

"He went out, after we kicked him
 out of the study."

"Probably he is back by this time—
 it is nearly lockin'-up time. I think I
 will see him—"

"He may have parted with the note
 already," said Kerr. "It's pretty clear
 what to look it for."

"I trust not, Kerr!"
 Arthur Augustus, in the goodness of
 his heart, was evidently clinging to the
 faint hope that Rattiff had taken the
 banknote without intending to steal it.
 Certainly the hope was very faint—and
 would hardly have been entertained by
 anyone but Arthur Augustus.

"Fussy don't say anything about this
 yet, dear boys," said the wotiah of St.
 Jim's. "I will see young Wotiah first,
 anyway."

"We haven't had tea yet," returned
 Herries.

"What?"
 "I'm jolly hungry, you know!"

"Wait!"
 And Arthur Augustus left the study.

too distressed in mind to worry about tea, though he was hungry, too.

Horrie grunted.
" Luckily, we've got some sardines left," he said.

And Horrie commenced operations on the sardines; while Arthur Augustus headed for the New House, in search of Bartholomew Ratcliff and a five-penny note!

Figgins & Co. followed him, more slowly. The "new" in Study No. 6 was off, but even Fatty Wynn was not thinking of the spread now. The shadow of daggers loomed over their House, and that was in their minds.

"After all, if it all comes out we shall get rid of that old!" said Kern. "He will be turned out of St. Jim's."

"That's one comfort!" said Fatty Wynn.

"But the daggers to the House!" sniffed Figgins.

And they were almost. Even the departure of Bartholomew Ratcliff was too deeply bought at that price.

CHAPTER 7.

Face to Face!

"WEDDIE, best boy!"

Horrie was shouting with Owen and Lawrence in the doorway, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the New House. Reddy was giving his hands an occasional rub; he was still feeling the effects of the stinging in Mr. Ratcliff's study. And the remarks he was making on the subject of his Housemaster, though fully endorsed by his chums, would have made Mr. Ratcliff's scanty hair stand on end if he could have heard them.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"Have you seen young Waddy, Weddy?"

"I've seen the old!" answered Reddy. "He was grinning at us after his blessed uncle asked us—that was some time ago, though. Are you looking for Ratdy?"

"Yes!"

"You'll very likely find him with Charlie or Clump, playing basket!" growled Reddy. "That's the sort of fool he is! Might be in his study, though, having a smoke."

"I'll go up, I think."

Arthur Augustus went up the staircase to the Fourth Form studies. He planned to find Figgins' study first, and found Bartholomew there. That cheery youth had returned, and had apparently only just come in. His boots were dusty, and his cap lay on the table. He was moving about the study restlessly, with a cigarette between his lips, which he had forgotten to light.

The expression on his thin, harsh face showed that he was in a disturbed mood—as D'Arcy was not surprised to find.

He looked round at the onset of a footstep, and the colour warmed in his face at the sight of D'Arcy.

The effort he made to pull himself together was visible to the eye.

Arthur Augustus entered the study and closed the door, Bartholomew watching that proceeding with a scowling brow.

"What do you want here?" he growled out savagely.

"A few words with you, Watchif," said Arthur Augustus very quietly.

"Get it short, then!"

"I shall cut it very short, Watchif. I require the return of the five-penny note you have abstracted from my desk."

"What?"

"A few words with you, Watchif," said Arthur Augustus very quietly.

"Get it short, then!"

"I shall cut it very short, Watchif. I require the return of the five-penny note you have abstracted from my desk."

"What?"

"I trust I make my means' clear, Watchif!"

Bartholomew beamed, his face, his look growing more benign and early as he faced the swell of the Fourth.

"You'll have to make it clearer!" he said. "Are you joking?"

"I am not joking, Watchif."

"Then, what do you want?" demanded Bartholomew roughly.

"I mean precisely what I say—nothing more and nothing less," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "A five-penny note has been taken from my desk in my study in the School House. I require its return."

"Do you dare to accuse me—"

joined Watchif.

"Yes!"

"You were in the study a few minutes when I left it. Tom Morrey turned you out and looked the death. Nobody could have entered the study afterwards. The note was gone when I returned. The facts are clear, Watchif."

"I deny—"

"You did not enter the study when Tom Morrey found you. You did not wish to be seen in the study. It is pretty clear why. You had already taken the banknote from my desk."

"I—I did not—"

"Wah!"

"You—you accuse me of theft—"

joined Bartholomew.

Arthur Augustus gave a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

"I have no desire to make a scandal in the school," he said quietly. "If you return the banknote at once, Watchif, I am willing to believe that you took it only for a foolish joke. At any rate, I am willing to let it go at that. But the money must be returned at once, of course."

Bartholomew licked his dry lips.

"I don't know anything about your banknote!" he said. "I never even knew you had one!"

"That is hardly correct, Watchif. You certainly heard Tom'sle speak!"

"I—I did not—"

Bartholomew gasped for breath. "I—Do you think I'm in want of your rotten banknote? My uncle would give me money if I asked him—"

"I suggest that as very unlikely, Watchif. In fact, I am aware that you have been trying to borrow money this afternoon in several quarters, even to a debt you have contracted among your wassally associates!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

Bartholomew opened his lips and closed them again. The unlighted cigarette fell unheeded in the floor. In spite of his nerves and impudence, Ratcliff of the Fourth was pale, and his shifty eyes had a hunted look.

Arthur Augustus waited a full minute, but as the sound of the New House did not speak, he remained in the same quiet tone:

"To avoid a foolish scandal and disgrace in the school, Watchif, I am ready to accept any explanation you choose to offer—if you return the money. If you have any sense you must know that that is better for you all lightly."

A better look came over Bartholomew's face. It indicated, probably, that it was too late for the wretched being round to return the money—even if he would have dared to return it, and face his difficulties in another quarter. The amateur blockhead had been, in fact, between the devil and the deep sea, owing to the position his reality had landed him in—and Arthur Augustus in the study was probably easier to face than Mr. Joffis at the Green Man.

"I am willing for your answer, Watchif!" said D'Arcy, as the Housemaster's nephew was still silent.

"I've nothing to say, excepting that you're—you're making a mistake," said Bartholomew in a low voice. "I want to your study to speak to Digby—I was going to ask him about buying his white rabbits. That's all."

"And why did you hide under the table when Tom Morrey came in?"

"I did not!"

"What!"

"If Tom Merry says so, he lies!" said Bartholomew savagely. "And I'll deny it before the Head himself!"

"I know whose word to take, Watchif. In a match between you and Tom Morrey?" answered Arthur Augustus contemptuously.

"But it doesn't rest with you; it rests with the Head!" sneered Ratcliff. "And my uncle will support me, too!"

"The banknote is mine, Watchif!"

"Perhaps Tom Merry took it!" suggested Bartholomew.

"Wasn't it?"

"He was in the study after I was!" said Ratcliff, puffing courage as he went on. "If you suspect me, why not him?"

"Because I know you to be a shaly wassal, Watchif, and Tom Morrey is as straight as a die!"

"You can tell that to the Head, if you like."

Arthur Augustus looked at him.

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"You wish me to take the motto-book before the Head, Watkiff?"

"You can do as you choose. I have nothing whatever about your booknote, and don't want it. If it comes before the Head, I shall certainly suggest that Tom Merry may have taken it."

D'Arcy's eye glauced through his eye-glass.

"Watkiff, you are an utter wretch!" he ejaculated.

"Get out of my study!"

"Povvage I had bettah reason, Watkiff, that I have the number of the note, and it can be traced."

Ratcliff started.

"The number?" he repeated.

"Yes, wathah!"

For a moment there was a dead look in Bartholomew's eyes. He had recovered himself.

"You mean it will be put into the hands of the police?" he asked in a low voice.

"The Head is certain to call in the police if the booknote is not found," said D'Arcy.

"The police will trace the note by the number, but if it is passed, it will be traced to you, Watkiff!"

"No! if it was stolen by Tom Merry?"

answered Bartholomew.

"Go to the Head with your yarn. Get out of my study, wathah!"

"Very well, Watkiff."

Arthur Augustus left the study without another word, and went downstairs. He found Figgins & Co. there with Hedder, but did not stop to speak. He hurried back to the School House, to his own study.

The Terrible Three were gone, and Arthur Augustus was relieved to find only his study-essays in No. 6. Horrie was finished the articles, Blako and Dig had already finished. It had been a funeral tea in Study No. 6, after all.

"Get it!" asked Horrie, looking up. "The wathah's not closed yet—"

"I have not got it, Horrie."

"The cat won't give it up?" asked Blako.

"No."

"Then you'll have to go to the House-master or the Head."

Arthur Augustus was silent.

"Don't be an ass, Gussy," said Dig. "You can't sit down quietly and lose five pounds—and you jolly well can't shield a thief, either! You've got to go to Ratcliff!"

"I shall have to consider—"

"What is there to consider? We all know that Ratcliff had the booknote, don't we?"

"Yes, but—"

"But what?" snapped Blako.

"But the wathah is gone! to accuse Tom Merry!"

CHAPTER 8. D'Arcy Dodges.

TOM MERRY!
Blako and Horrie and Dig greeted the name together in blank astonishment.

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yes. That's his name."

"But—but how can he accuse Tom Merry?" exclaimed Horrie. "He knows that Tom never touched the five?"

"He is gone! to accuse him falsely, Horrie."

"Oh!"

"But—but how can he?" stammered Dig. "Tom Merry was"— Oh, my hat! Yes, he was—he was here when posing Hatty was here, of course!"

of course, that the note was stolen. If the hobbles were it to Jollifrog—"

"He will have to say whom he got it from."

Arthur Augustus nodded thoughtfully. "And young Watkiff will deny it," he said. "He let out to Figgins that he had borrowed money from Jollifrog when he was very ill to stick Figgins for a month. He has paid the money to Jollifrog, of course. I—I suppose he will be proved guilty, as Jollifrog will have to confess; but he hopes to get cloth by lynx, I think. Povvage Jollifrog will not be able to prove that he had the note from young Watty. The fawbly wathah may crowd out of this. And—and it will be a foolish wathah, with poor old Tom Merry's name mixed up in it—"



Mr. Ratcliff pointed to the door. "Go!" he said in a choking voice. "Go and pack your box at once! Get out out of my sight!" (See Chapter 11.)

Blako's face set grimly.

"That fellow is a dashed criminal!" he said. "I dare say he would be better off enough to accuse Tom—or me, for that matter, or anybody, to save his dirty skin! But that won't help him! The five can be traced by the number."

"Watkiff did not seem alarmed at that."

"We'll shoo him his face enough when we get the House-master on the job!" said Jack Blaker Dorsey.

"I shall, Blako, that he has already parted with the money. That is where he was gone" when the Blak chaps saw him gone out wathah leaving his study. We can guess where he took it."

"The Green Man?" said Horrie, with a sniff.

"Yes, wathah! Jollifrog will not know,

Blako gave a start.

"If you're thinking of letting it drop, Gussy, you won't let you! It would be wrong, too. It's wrong to let a thief keep his plunder."

"I am not thinkin' of droppin' it, Blako."

"Then what are you driving at, ass—if you are driving at anything at all!"

"I refuse to be called an ass, Blako!"

Jack Blako's hand strayed to a cricket-bat, but he restrained himself. His noble chest was trying his patience a little.

"My idea is to avoid a foolish wathah in the school, especially as poor old Tom Merry's name will be mixed up in it by that awful wathah," said Arthur Augustus.

"It's all right, dear boy; you can rely on a fellow of tact and
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judgment, you know. I know the propah thing to do."

"And who's that?"

"An' gair to see Joliffe—"

"John!" howled Blake. "And where?"

"At the Green Man."

"You—you— you— It's out of bounds!"

"I am awat, Blake, that that unpleasant matter is very propahly placed out of bounds by Dr. Holness. Do the present occasion, however, I feel justified in stretching a point and gair there."

"But—"

"I regard it as the propah step to take, and the sign" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Joliffe will not want to keep the barmaids when he knows it has been stolen—he will not wish it, even if he does want to. If the barmaids is returned, the matter can drop!"

"I don't know whether that's legal, after a theft has been committed," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

"I surely do not know, D'Arcy, but I trust that it is. As my wife, regard it as best up to me to avoid a howl and a row!"

"You'd get into a fearful row if you're seen anywhere near the Green Man."

"I feel it my duty to wish that."

Blake & Co. looked at one another. They had doubtless shared the opinion of Arthur Augustus's course of action—they often had. But in this matter Arthur Augustus had to give his head, as it were, to the breeze. And it was pretty clear that agreement would be useless.

Arthur Augustus had a fine reliance upon his own tact and judgment. And perhaps the opinion had a lingering doubt whether Bartholomew, if cornered, might not assume in wriggling out of his predicament, and even in casting his gaze upon other shoulders. They had had some experience already of the manner and ability of Mr. Raiton's nephew.

Arthur Augustus led his way to the door. He left the steady, quiet forgetting tea. However, that did not matter, as Horace was quite able to deal with the waitress that had become so troublesome.

The sound of St. Jim's hurried down to the gutter. It was close on locking-up; but the gates were not closed yet. Tuggles was coming out of his lodge as the wall of St. Jim's passed out into the road.

"Hi! Master D'Arcy!" called out Tuggles.

Arthur Augustus considered it judicious to be deaf at that moment. He walked on in the gathering dusk towards Ryecroft.

Tuggles granted, and changed the gates that.

The wall of St. Jim's stood on quickly. He had to rime call-over, and take the consequences; but all-over was a matter of little importance compared with the business in hand.

Dusk was deepening into darkness when he reached the entrance of the Green Man.

There he paused.

That respectable inn was strictly out of bounds for St. Jim's fellows; and in any case Arthur Augustus would not have cared to enter such a resort. There was a glow of light from the windows, and the sound of rough voices raised in a raucous chorus. Arthur Augustus hesitated some little time, uncertain what to do. Mr. Joliffe, probably, was serving in his bar, and the jester stunk from the thought of entering the bar-room. Besides, his business with the landlord of the Green Man was private.

It was not a matter that could be spoken of in the presence of the bar-room loungers.

But Arthur Augustus had retences so far in order to turn back again; and he made up his mind at last. There was a little lane beside the building, leading to the inn garden, and Arthur Augustus entered it. He looked for a side door, and found one and knocked on it. He had to knock several times before the door was opened by a bell-shaped man in his shirt-sleeves, with a dirty white apron.

"He staved at D'Arcy."

"I have called to see Mr. Joliffe, please!" said Arthur Augustus quietly. The man blinked at him.

"Mr. Joliffe's rather busy just now," he said.

"It is walkin' important business. Pray tell him I should like to speak to him in private for a few minutes!"

The man looked D'Arcy over, and nodded at last and went away. Probably he knew of his employer's dealings with some of the "merry blades" at St. Jim's, such as Racks and Crooks, and concluded that Arthur Augustus was one of them. He came back in a few minutes.

"Step inside, sir!" he said civilly.

Arthur Augustus followed him into a dark little passage, dusty and smelly. At the end was a stuffy little room, reeked of stale tobacco, into which the jester was shown.

"Sit down, sir! Mr. Joliffe won't be a minute or two!"

"Thank you very much!"

The man disappeared, and Arthur Augustus waited. He did not sit down, standing in the middle of the dirty, stuffy room, the elegant vest and St. Jim's buckled quietly out of place—and he felt somewhat of place that he had.

From beyond another door came the sound of clinking glasses and a murmur of voices. Arthur Augustus guessed that the little parlour he was standing in adjoined the bar. He stopped back a little to avoid being revealed to the general gaze when the door was opened—guessing that Mr. Joliffe would prefer that way.

He was not long waiting long. In ten or six minutes the bar door opened, letting in a swirl of tobacco and spirits, and Mr. Joliffe stepped in. He closed the door behind him, and stared at D'Arcy. No doubt he had expected to see Racks, or Crooks, or perhaps Bartholomew Raiton; but he had certainly not expected to see the smell of St. Jim's, and he was surprised—and far from pleased.

"You, Master D'Arcy?" he ejaculated.

"Yess, Mr. Joliffe—"

"What do you want here?"

"I have called to see you, Mr. Joliffe, with—"

"Oh! what?" said Mr. Joliffe rudely. Arthur Augustus's eyes gleamed.

"Very well, sir! I have reason to believe that you've received a barmaid from a St. Jim's club to-day—"

Mr. Joliffe blinked.

"If you've brought me a message from young Raiton you can say so without so much palaver!" he said gruffly.

"I have not brought you a message from young Raiton."

"Then what the blunder do you want?"

"I want my barmaid!" answered Arthur Augustus quietly. And Mr. Joliffe jumped.

CHAPTER 8.

Catch Up!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had spoken very quietly; but his quiet words seemed to have the effect of a thunderbolt in the dingy inn parlour. Mr. Joliffe stared at him with wrath and amazement and very palpable confusion in his counten-

ance. The graft incident disappeared from his manner at once.

"Your barmaids!" he repeated slowly.

"Yess, wath!"

"I don't quite follow," said Mr. Joliffe.

"Such as I've mentioned, I may as well tell you, since Master Raiton paid me a little debt to-day. You seem to know all about it, so it don't matter. But what do you mean about your barmaid?"

"Watdill paid you a five-pound note!"

"S'pose he did!"

"That barmaid was raised!"

"D'ye mean to say you lost it to him?"

"I mean to say nothin' of the sort, Mr. Joliffe! I mean to say that he abstracted it unexpectantly from my desk!"

Mr. Joliffe's thick lips closed over his pipe-stem grimly.

"Talk English!" he said. "I'd be wial your friend!"

"Yass!"

"I reckon you'll love to prove that!" said Mr. Joliffe, springing Arthur Augustus with mingled anger and amazement. "If he did, I don't know nothin' about it. If you're thinking of makin' accusations agin an honest man you can call it off. My business is safe enough, for all you say, so I tell you!"

"I do not suppose you know the bank-note was stolen, Mr. Joliffe," answered Arthur Augustus. "But you know it now that I have told you?"

"You've come 'ere for no!"

"Yass, wath!"

"And you can prove—"

"I can show you my general's letter, in which the number of the note is written down!" said Arthur Augustus brightly.

"Some 'is believe!" remarked Mr. Joliffe.

As a matter of fact, he would have taken D'Arcy's word; for, regard as he was himself, he had judgment enough to see that the word of St. Jim's was the word of God. But there was good that Mr. Joliffe could not have doubted, if he had wished to. Arthur Augustus quietly laid Lord Raiton's letter on the table, and indicated the number written there with the tip of his finger.

"OBBERS!" muttered Mr. Joliffe, with a curious glance over the letter.

"Yass! If that is the number of the note Watdill gave you, Mr. Joliffe, you will see that it is my property!"

"I reckon 'll see."

Mr. Joliffe took out a well-thumbed pocket-book, and opened it slowly. He glanced into it, and then glanced at Arthur Augustus.

"S'pose it ain't the same number!" he said.

"Pawpaw! I had better speak quite plainly, Mr. Joliffe. I am sure that it is the same number. If you show me a barmaid with a different number, I shall be compelled to think that you are tryin' to mislead me."

"Do you mean speakin' you?"

"Yass."

"And then what'll you do?" asked Mr. Joliffe, watching him. "Go to your 'admirer, p'p'?"

"No. I shall call in at the police-station, and make my statement there, and give them the number of the note," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "I want you will send some note-dork 'agin' of the sort."

Mr. Joliffe was silent for a minute or two, thinking. Arthur Augustus wondered if he was debating in his mind whether to destroy the note. Certainly, in that case, it could not have been traced. But Arthur Augustus would have made his statement to the police, and an investigation very disagreeable to Mr. Joliffe would follow, with nothing to

show for it. If Mr. Joffie was to lose the note in any case, it was evidently best for him to hand it over and avoid trouble.

Apparently he came to this conclusion, for he took a newspaper note from his pocket-book and tucked it on the table.

"Look at that there!" he said earnestly.

Arthur Augustus picked up the bank-note and read the number.

"000304!" he read. "Yea, that is right! That is my note, Mr. Joffie!"

The inkmaster breathed hard.

"I know nothing of it being stolen," he said.

"I am sure of that, Mr. Joffie," said D'Arcy indignantly; and, indeed, there was not much doubt as to that point. Mr. Joffie might be forced enough to take a stolen bank-note, but he certainly was not fool enough.

"Young Randall give me that note to square a little debt for money lent," said Mr. Joffie. "I gave him back his I O U when he paid up. He's clear of me—or I don't think he is. But you can tell Mr. Randall from me, sir, that I ain't the man to be done with like this there!"

"Really, Mr. Joffie—"

"Tell him," said the inkmaster, "that I give him one hour to bring me my money. Tell him that if I ain't paid in one hour I'm going to show him what I do to a young rascal and thief who might 'ave handed me in quid with his tricks!"

"I fear, Mr. Joffie, that I cannot consent to take any message from you to young Watford. I refuse to have anything whatever to do with that stinky young rascal!"

Mr. Joffie gave him a look which said "Then get out!" he said. "You've got what you've come 'ere for. Good-bye to you, and be 'anged to you into the bargain!"

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Joffie went back into the bar.

"Really, that person's manners have worse to be desired," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I shall be very glad to get out of this wretched place. I suppose I had better let myself out."

And he did.

He breathed more freely as he left the Green Man behind, and walked back through the cool evening air to St. Jim's.

He rang at the gates when he arrived, and Taggles came grunting out of his lodge to greet him.

"I am sorry to trouble you, Taggles," remarked Arthur Augustus, as he entered.

"Grant!"

"I meant you did not find it very much trouble to come out and open the gate, Taggles!"

"Grant!"

"Bai Jove! You appear to be in a wretched sorry temper this evening, Taggles!"

"Grant!"

The old porter closed the gates with unnecessary emphasis, and retired to his lodge, closing the door thereof as he had done after him thoughtfully.

After a little reflection the swell of St. Jim's walked to the lodge door and knocked.

Taggles opened it.

"What?" he asked.

"I feel bound to ask you, Taggles, that I am quite distressed to have the trouble of your wove," said Arthur Augustus, with great consideration and courtesy.

Taggles stared at him.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"Possibly Taggles did not think it was worth while to leave his archaic second time as soon to George's polite regrets. Certainly his face indicated as much.

"You see, Taggles— Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped back. His aristocratic nose had had quite a narrow escape.

"Bai Jove! I wouldn't wish to be mistaken with Taggles' conjecture Arthur Augustus. He means quite warty about something!"

And—leaving that problem involved—Arthur Augustus walked on to the School House, to receive his lines from Mr. Hutton for mixing call-ow!

CHAPTER 10.

Keeping It Dark:

TOM MERRY & CO. surrounded Arthur Augustus as he came away from Mr. Hutton's study. Blake had informed the Terrible Three of George's mission, and the juniors had awaited his return in some anxiety.

Arthur Augustus' benighted soul as they searched him down the corridor was possessing. Quite a little army surrounded the returned swell of St. Jim's—his large study-master and the Terrible Three, and Piggles & Co. from the New House. And, as soon as they were well out of hearing of the Housemaster's study, nine voices asked at once:

"Well!"

"Well, dear boys?" answered Arthur Augustus.

"What's the result?" demanded Blake.

"Fifty lines."

"What!"

"Mr. Watton has given me fifty lines. However, I do not complain," said Arthur Augustus magnanimously. "Of course, I could not tell Watton my reason for mixing call-ow!"

"Never mind your lines, fathoed—"

"I have a strong objection, Blake, to being alluded to as a fathoed!"

"Have you any objection to having your napper banged on the wall?" asked Blake.

"Yes, wath!"

"Then you'd better tell us what you've been doing."

"I was gair' to do so, Blake, but you have been interruptin' me, you know. It is all wigh."

"What about the bank-note?" asked Tom Merry.

"Look," smiled Arthur Augustus. He held up a crisp, shining five.

"That's it!" exclaimed Piggles.

"Yea."

"Joffie had it?"

"Yea, wath!"

"And he got it from young Randall?" asked Kerr, in a low voice.

"Precisely. Watford paid it to him to settle a debt, and got back an I O U which he appears to have left in Joffie's hands. Joffie is in a foolish wog with him, I think."

"No wonder!" said Mervin. "He might have gone to drink at a receiver of stolen goods if the police had got hold of the matter."

"Yea. Probably that accounts for his wags; he looked awfully spirited and warty. I wath think that young Watford's game is up in that direction; he will not be welcome at the Green Man any more, will-I Arthur Augustus."

"That will be all the bother for him, however."

Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"Joffie must have been threatening him for money to make him act like this," he said. "The man's a rascal. But as for Randall—it's clear enough now that he's a thief, as well as a spy and a sneak and a tall-tale. The question before the meeting is, are we justified in keeping it dark?"

"He ought to be kicked out of the school," declared Mervin.

"Yea, wath! But—"

"Should I know what we ought to do?" said Blake. "But I suppose Mr. Gussy, that's got to decide, as it was his five."

"Gussy's such an ass, though!" remarked Digby.

"Pawdly, Dig—"

"Pawdly, indignantly," said Mervin Loudon. "The question is, what is the ass going to decide?"

"I refuse to take further steps in the matter, dear boys. I refuse to have a howled, wathed, in the school an account of a worthless wotch like young Watford!"

"But—"

"Remember, there is his confidence."

"Is that?"

"Of course, dear boys. He is bound to report when he reflects what a howled, wathed, cringing, dishonest wotch he is. He is such a selfish, feckally keen wotch, you know."

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake. "I think young Ratty's got a pretty tough conscience—he doesn't look much of a Cussy!"

"He is bound to feel awfully wotted, Blake. I see such that it is impossible for a child to feel easy in his mind. We shall all wogged him with foolishness, and I am wath that it will make him wogged. To turn to a more important matter, what about supper?"

"Eh?"

"You see, I have missed my tea, and I am wath hungry; and we have the book, you know, and the tablecloth is not yet closed. I suggest putting off prep a little, and having a tremendous supper to celebrate the recovery of the bank-note."

"Jolly good idea!" said Fatty Wynne heartily.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, it's not a bad idea," he said.

"We've got to give Gussy his line in this matter, you believe, and he may be right. Let's have a spread for supper, and let Ratty junior go and eat notes!"

"Good egg!"

Arthur Augustus' excellent idea was carried out at once. The wretched bank-note was changed at the school shop, and in a very short time St. Jim's No. 6 was crowded with happy guests. Talbot and Lovison & Co. had had their tea, but they cheerfully came to supper, only as it was, and Buggy Trimble appeared in, and was allowed to remain, in the general good humour of the moment.

"Look," said Arthur Augustus, but when St. Jim's No. 6 was well filled, but when Julian and Ratty came along, and then by Darnace and Kangaroo of the Shell. But when a song, ill-favoured face looked in at the open doorway, there was a general chorus of:

"Get out, Ratty!"

Bartholomew Randall looked savagely into the open doorway.

"I beggin."

"Run off!"

"Do you think I've come to your far spread?" boomed Bartholomew. "I haven't. I want to speak to D'Arcy—"

"I refuse to be spoken to by you, Watford, and I refuse to answer you, wathed Arthur Augustus. I wogged you as a woggle!"

"Look here—"

"I refuse to do anything of the sort." Bartholomew snatched his handkerchief.

"I want to speak to you quietly!" he blazed.

"Wath!"

"I—I saw you come in late—"

"Was away?"

"Where have you been?" blazed Bartholomew.

Some of the guests in the study, who did not know the history of the bank-note, blinked at Bartholomew in amazement.

They did not understand his interest in D'Arcy's movements that evening.

"What on earth does it matter to you where Gussy's been?" said Cardew, "or're growing impatient old hen."

Bartholomew did not heed Cardew's slight eyes were fixed upon the creek of the School House.

"I refuse to say a word to you, Wat-Jiff. It is no business of yours whether I have been to the Green Man or not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woolly, you fellows—"

Bartholomew started.

"You—you've been there?" he muttered between his teeth.

"I decline to satisfy your curiosity, Wat-Jiff. If you want to know whether I have waddled 'yot backnote, you can ask your friend Joliffe. I warn you that you will find him wath' wath' yot!" added Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle.

He regards us as having swindled him out of five pounds, as he had to part with the book."

Bartholomew's face was a study.

"You—you've been to Joliffe!" he stammered.

"I refuse to answer. You can remain in doubt on that subject, Wat-Jiff."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woolly, I see no reason for his nervousness—"

The parson pulled Gussy's way of giving information to the inquisitive Bartholomew was really rather extraordinary.

"You will oblige me, Wat-Jiff, by clearing off," said Arthur Augustus. "I am not 'guy' to listen to your waddles, or to search them, and I decline to give you Joliffe's message. I dare say you will find out for yourself, sooner or later, that he is very wath' and wath' wath'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Preavay, however," added Arthur Augustus, smiling, "preavay I mean as well mean that he is not that if you did not pay him five pounds within an hour there would be trouble, or something to that effect: However, as that was more than an hour ago, it is probably not worth while mentioning it, and on several thoughts I will not do so. Win away! Your face remains me!"

"Oh!" muttered Bartholomew.

"Preavay, oh! And if you want to pay Joliffe, dash boy, you must look for somebody else's book, in some other job—I have changed mine at the book-shop!"

Jamieson of the Third, a New House wog, came along the passage.

"Young Batty here!" he called out.

"Oh, here you are! Your uncle wants you, Batty. I've been looking for you in several or more, bother you!"

"My uncle? What does he want?" muttered Bartholomew.

"Didn't ask him?" grinned Jamieson.

"The telephone-bell had just been ringing, so it may be something on the phone. That's all I know!"

Bartholomew set his lips hard as he turned away.

"On the phone?" murmured Figgins.

"Is it possible—Joliffe?"

"But Jove!"

"What's all this about?" inquired Joliffe, who had listened to the talk in wonder. "Has young Batty been bagged by a backnote?"

"Preavay come me from Joliffe's?" you, Joliffe. I have decided to keep it dark about young Wat-Jiff's backnote."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Woolly, you fellows—"

But Arthur Augustus' voice was THE GREEN LIBRARY.—No. 122.

drowned in the roar of laughter. In point of fact, it was not likely to be long before all St. Jim's knew the story of the stolen Five—Sons Arthur Augustus' masterly evasion of keeping it dark.

CHAPTER II.

The Pool for Bartholomew!

BARTHOLOMEW BATHURFF entered his week's study in the New House slowly and reluctantly, as if he could hardly force his unwilling feet to drag him thither. He was accustomed to entering that apartment cheerily enough, to take Mr. Ratcliff his reports and tales of the other fellows. But fear lay heavy upon him now. The resources and honesty of his character had never done him any harm with his uncle, but he was quite aware that the affair of the backnote was a very different matter. If that came to his uncle's knowledge, he would not shield Bartholomew, and probably could not if he would. It would, in fact, open Mr. Ratcliff's eyes very considerably.

Bartholomew was conscious that he stood on very slippery ground now. He was at last, despairing resource that he had perished the backnote, taking the risk as being better than the certainty of being exposed by Mr. Joliffe if he did not "square."

He had hoped to elude discovery—or, at least, proof. But now that D'Arcy's prompt action had recovered the stolen note, Bartholomew knew how furious his friend at the Green Man would be.

He had registered his I O U from Mr. Joliffe, so that the sharper had no actual proof against him, and the cheery Bartholomew was wondering, in great doubt, whether his remarkable powers of lying would save him.

There was a very considerable doubt, and it strengthened as he feared himself under Mr. Ratcliff's sharp, penetrating eyes.

The Housemaster was standing by the telephone.

"You—you wanted me, uncle?" said Bartholomew, speaking as freely as he could.

"Close the door, Bartholomew."

Bartholomew obeyed.

"I have received a call on the telephone, Bartholomew, from a—by a person," said Mr. Ratcliff—"a person of the name of Joliffe. Do you know any person of that name?"

"Never heard it before, uncle."

"He states that you owe him five pounds."

"Nothing of the sort!"

"You deny it?" said Bartholomew.

"Absolutely!" said Bartholomew; "this afternoon with a five-pound note which was claimed from him as the property of D'Arcy of your Farm, Bartholomew."

"Oh!"

"He states that he handed the backnote to D'Arcy, who proved his ownership, telling him that you had stolen the book."

Bartholomew licked his dry lips.

"It—it's not true, uncle!" he breathed.

"Of course, I do not place faith in such an extraordinary and improbable story," said Mr. Ratcliff, though his keen eyes lingered sharply on his nephew's face as he said it.

"There—there isn't a word of truth in it, uncle," gasped Bartholomew. "I—I don't even know the man!"

"It is very extraordinary that a man you do not know should ring me up on the telephone and tell me such a story. This Joliffe, I believe, is a publication of bad character. I hope and trust, Bartholomew, that you have never had any dealings with any such person!"

"Never!" gasped Bartholomew.

"Very good. He states that he intends to call here and see you, to collect a debt."

"Oh!"

"I shall see him when he comes," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I will make him, if possible, repeat his statements in the presence of witnesses, and will then take legal action."

"Oh!" gasped Bartholomew.

"Meanwhile, I will question D'Arcy, who will doubtless assure me that he has no knowledge of the matter at all," added Mr. Ratcliff, with a very sharp look at his nephew.

Bartholomew almost tottered.

He knew what the result of questioning Arthur Augustus D'Arcy must be. The avowal of St. Jim's intended to keep the affair dark—in his own way—but, if questioned, he would certainly tell the truth. And his statements would, equally certainly, bear out those of the landlord of the Green Man.

The young lord and disquietude in his nephew's face were not likely to escape Mr. Ratcliff's sharp eyes.

His look grew sterner.

"If you have anything to tell me, Bartholomew, you had better tell me at once, before I send for D'Arcy!" he said, in a gruffing voice.

"I—"

Bartholomew's voice failed him.

He realised that all was up; that, in spite of his cunning, luck had gone against him. He had taken the risk, and it had turned out—like this! The game was up!

Mr. Ratcliff's brow grew darker and darker as his nephew stood dumb and terrified before him.

The silence in the study was painful. The New House master looked it at last.

"Bartholomew!"

His voice was like the rumble of distant thunder.

Bartholomew gasped.

"You, uncle?"

"What does this mean! Is it possible, Bartholomew, that what that man has said is the truth—that if I see him here he will make statements that can be proved, and that will cover my name with disgrace in this school?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

"I—I—"

The Housemaster gasped his own.

There could be no further doubt in his own case. Bartholomew's knees were knocking together. Gilt was "wot large" all over his ill-favoured countenance.

"Then it is true!" said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly. "You are a frequenter of low resorts—you owe money to a man of bad character—you have stolen from a schoolfellow to pay such a debt—"

Bartholomew's good heavens! And you see the reason? You bear my name—and through you my name will become a byword in the school!"

He gasped for breath.

"Uncle—I—I—"

"Hush!" thundered the Housemaster.

"It—it needn't come out, uncle," stammered Bartholomew, throwing further attempts at deceit to the winds. "D'Arcy—"

"—and the others—don't mean to say anything. And—and Joliffe will keep his mouth shut if he's paid his money. It—it's only five pounds!"

Mr. Ratcliff gave him a glare.

"You—you dare to confess! Good heavens, how I have been deceived by you! But you shall not escape me with disguise and riddles! I insist that the New House master."

"This very evening you shall leave the school—you shall not stay here another hour. Somehow, the affair must be hushed up, or I can never hold up my head again here! Five pounds! Yes, I will pay the money, to silence that man's tongue and save my name; but you, sir, I will punish as you

deserve, before you leave the school for ever?"

And the New House master, almost beside himself with rage, advanced upon Bartholomew, grasping the cane. Such a thrashing as had never before been administered within the walls of St. Jim's was bestowed over the Housemaster's nephew—till of late, his favourite and pet.

Bartholomew dodged round the table.

"Ugh!" he gasped.

"Rascal!"

"I—I—"

"I will thank you, sir, till you can scarcely breathe!" transferred Mr. Hatfield.

"I—I will— Come here, sir!" Bartholomew panted.

"If you touch me, I'll go out and tell all the fellows—"

"What?"

"I'll tell the whole story to the whole school if you touch me!" said Bartholomew resolutely.

"Then you'll see how you like it!"

Mr. Rap-Id glared at his nephew across the table.

For a moment the expression on his face was worthy of a Prætorian Guard in his most ferocious mood.

But he lowered the cane.

His only hope now was to keep the shameful matter secret—and that, certainly, he could not do without Bartholomew's collaboration. There was a minute

of deadly silence. Then Mr. Hatfield pointed to the door with his cane.

"Go!" he said, in a choking voice.

"Go—and pack your box of coals! You will be taken to the station by a prefect within the hour. I stand word of explanation to your father! God Get out of my sight!"

And Bartholomew got out of his uncle's sight fast enough—greatly relieved to be able to do so.

Tom Merry & Co., when Bartholomew had left the merry party in Study No. 4, had little guessed that they were looking their last upon the snook of the school.

But so it proved.

When Figgis & Co. returned to the New House they did not find Bartholomew in the study. When they went to their depository Bartholomew was not there. There was a rumour in the Fourth that he had gone—gone for good; but it really seemed too good to be true.

That night, at least, his bed was empty in the dormitory, and the next morning was missing from his place in the Fourth Form-class.

Tom Merry & Co. heard the news joyfully, but still with a lingering doubt that it was too good to be true.

That afternoon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ventured to reach the master in the last, by asking Mr. Latham, the master of the

Fourth, when the Form assembled for lessons.

"Pray excuse me, sir—"

"What is it, D'Arcy?"

"May I inquire, sir, whether young Waddy—I mean, young Waddell—has left St. Jim's?"

"Yes, D'Arcy; Hatfield has left."

"Is he returning, sir?" asked Arthur Augustus, and the Fourth Form being breathlessly upon Mr. Latham's reply.

"The Form-master shook his head."

"No, D'Arcy—I am given to understand by Mr. Hatfield that his plans are changed with regard to his nephew, and that Hatfield is not returning to the school."

"Herrick!" ejaculated Blake.

And when the news spread through St. Jim's, "Herrick!" was the general remark with which it was greeted. Heavy junior warts unregretted; and as Blake remarked, there were plenty of *dey* upon whom it was known, beyond doubt, that Bartholomew Hatfield had received the Order of the Boot.

THE END.

(Don't miss "RIDING TO WIN!"—Next Wednesday's Magnificent Long, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co.—by Martin Clifford.)



CARDEW'S LITTLE JOKE. - By Sidney Clive.

"I DENIED!"

Mr. Benn, the proprietor of the big confectionery store in Watford, stood outside his shop with a frown on his brow, and scratched his head thoughtfully.

Something was wrong. Mr. Benn told it to the air. What it was he couldn't say. Every Wednesday, at about four o'clock, his shop was crowded by St. Jim's fellows, jokers and snobs, who ate cream-puffs and tarts, and stayed gleefully at a stallery that only Mr. Benn would provide.

Miss Benn, the pretty daughter of the proprietor, came out, with a puzzled frown on her usually sunny face.

"What ever can be the matter, father?" she asked. "We hoped I can't think where they have all got to. There were some yesterday, and so a rate there are one or two who come in to the evening."

"I dunno, my dear!"

And Mr. Benn scratched his neatly-combed pate again.

Miss Benn pointed to a sandwich-board man who was coming down the road.

"Look, father!" she cried.

There was nothing curious about the man, but the board he carried caused Mr. Benn to give neck to a case of identity.

But the sandwich-board man studied an unaccountably an ever, unconcerned of the importance of his board to Mr. Benn.

It was doubtful if he knew what was on his board, even.

But it mattered to Mr. Benn—very much. For the board was:

"BOYS! BOYS! BOYS! BOYS!"

Boy Benson's Best Buns; The Best Buns for Boys in the

Only Bunsop of Epitome; Year the Best.

Season-Tickets on Easy Terms.

Walk up, and Buy now!

BRINCKER'S THE BOY'S BUNSHOP!"

"Well, it's blessed!" gasped Mr. Benn.

"Bunsop!" exclaimed

Miss Benn's pretty face wrinkled into a frown.

"That means that Benson's have got our customers!" she said grimly. "They've stolen us, father!"

Mr. Benn gave a dismal groan.

"How can I compete with a big bunshop in Epitome?" he gasped. "They've a far bigger board than we carry, and best look at the list! All the St. Jim's boys will go to Benson's. Season-tickets on easy terms!"

And Mr. Benn gave an audible gasp.

"They'll never lose their board!" he said, unconcerningly. "It's a nice day—weather with boys. It's bonny, and can't last!"

the cream-puffs or the bun-tarts. All wanted! All these beautiful tarts!"

"And Master D'Arcy was going to have a party—a tea, they call it—this week! Now Benson's will get the best of that tea!"

Mr. Benn scratched his head again.

"I dunno!" he groaned. "Bang Benson!"

"We've got to get rid of the tarts and get's attention. Why, here's Master Car-

Mr. Benn brightened up. Ralph Sedgwick Corder, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was a good customer of Mr. Benn's. It was exceedingly impossible, however, that he would be able to buy up the whole supply of tarts and puffs.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Benn!" said Corder, raising his cap.

And Levin and I followed left.

Mr. Benn looked exceedingly pleased.

We walked into the shop, where two deserted, and an dows at one of the round, marble-topped tables. The tarts had been given; even the best cream-puffs, a little in Watford. When Mr. Benn first opened his shop it was called a new place to shop for the little Bunsop town, and Benn had done a roaring trade. For Benson's, with their modern methods and their huge amount of attention, had evidently taken Mr. Benn out.

"Couldn't get to Benson's shop?" said Cardew lately to Miss Benn. "The glass was crowded out, you see. And also, there's a Bp. let alone three Bunsop fellows. But my

(Continued on page 15.)

STARTING THE SEASON IN STYLE!

A Vivid Account of the Great Cricket Match between "Magnet" Readers and "Gem" Readers.

Specially Contributed by FRANK RICHARDS.

TALKING-A-LING-A-LING!

I awoke with a start on the morning of Wednesday, May 7th.

My telephone-bell was ringing loudly.

"Dad! It's 7 o'clock!—at words to that effect. 'Who are?' they leave a fellow in a daze. I was up till one o'clock this morning reading my 'Magnet' story, and now as it is looking forward to an extra hour or two is it not too late to start this season's reading?"

"That's a fine idea! Here's a story!"

"That's all! I suppose it's the Editor again! The fellow never goes to bed himself, and to think everybody else is the same."

"Slipping on my dressing-gown, I shuffled across to the hated instrument."

"Hello! Who's that?"

"Editor of the 'Magnet' speaking. Is Mr. Richards there?"

"Yes," I grunted. "What do you want to tug me up in the middle of the night for?"

"Keep your wool on, Franky," came a voice across the wires. "I am up to tell you—"

"I refuse to touch wires!"

"'Magnet' starts early! I've had two hours in bed!"

"I'm not a machine, you know!"

"Ed!"

"Ed!"

"Ed!"

"That's a very frivolous expression for an editor to use," I said severely.

"This is a frivolous occasion, old sport. Jump up and get on it! I want you to come and see a real live cricket match."

"Eyes on the 'Magnet' have challenged yours, readers of the 'Gem'!"

"Oh!"

"I smiled at once. I have been interested in cricket from the cradle."

"Magnified!" I said.

"I know you would be. I've got the teams together at very short notice, but it ought to be a good game."

"Get an early start, and come along to the Annapolis Grounds, please!"

"Magnified!" I said.

"I smiled at once. I have been interested in cricket from the cradle."

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"Get an early start, and come along to the Annapolis Grounds, please!"

"Magnified!" I said.

The "Magnet" team looked a very slim and distinctive lot as they took the field. Young Sam Carr, one of their bowlers, looked quite a little better. The wickets would have slipped him into his pocket with ease.

But Carr was all there, as Haineson knew to his cost.

"The 'Gem' player scored two, and then a hat, doing his level best."

The "Gem" wicket continued to fall freely. Williams scraped up 12 before he was sent back, but it was Despatch who scored the side from early disaster. He netted an 22 in hazardous style, and the first innings closed for 85.

I thought the Magnetites would easily top this, but not so easily as they did. The wicket-keeping methods of J. K. Brown, one of the best wicket-keepers I have ever seen, pleased me to watch.

Brown did the "bat-trick" in his first over, taking three wickets with three consecutive balls; and goodness knows what would have happened if Clifton and Wood

snatch-the-strange-to-millions variety, he knew he was quite safe in offering such odds.

Mason and Carr went in to open the "Magnet" second innings. Carr was wicketed "the fourth of Brown," but I believe the little fellow knew that the "Magnet" position wasn't quite so hopeless as it appeared on paper.

The first-wicket partnership was good to watch, but after a time Carr felt Mason for a short run, and they were wicketed. Over-point whipped the ball in so shortly that Mason was hit out by a run. A starting roller followed, and when the seventh wicket fell, only 10 more had been registered.

The game seemed to be all over, but Clifton, Despatch and Foster got together, and there was some lively batting.

Foster's game thick and fast. It looked as if the Magnetites would make a half of 2, after all.

And they did.

O'Connor was clean bowled shortly afterwards; but Wicks came in for Foster, and he, too, was wicketed. The batting sustained the bowling. Foster made one last break, being elevated on an over catch to point, but somehow the ball slipped through Despatch's fingers. A very lucky escape!

So once these were given, however, and both batsmen hitting freely, the "Gem" total was raised amid a burst of cheering from the pavilion. The Magnetites had beaten the Gemites by one wicket!

SCORE OF THE GREAT MATCH.

| "GEM" READERS. | | "MAGNET" READERS. | |
|-----------------------------------|----|------------------------|----|
| M. P. Haineson, b. Carr | 0 | S. Carr | 59 |
| E. B. Brown, not out | 0 | J. K. Brown, b. Foster | 12 |
| E. Mitchell, c. and b. Carr | 0 | S. Carr | 4 |
| K. Williams, b. Foster | 12 | S. Carr | 10 |
| E. G. Gooden, c. Clifton, b. Carr | 0 | F. Wood, b. Foster | 15 |
| C. Gooden, b. Carr | 0 | E. Wicks, b. Foster | 15 |
| D. Despatch, not out | 22 | S. Carr | 4 |
| T. Smith, b. Foster | 7 | S. Carr | 0 |
| J. P. Wicks, c. and b. Foster | 2 | S. Carr | 0 |
| E. Jenkins, not out | 0 | S. Carr | 0 |
| K. Stacey, b. Carr | 4 | not out | 10 |
| Extras | 4 | not out | 12 |
| | 63 | Extras | 6 |

| "GEM" READERS. | | "MAGNET" READERS. | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------|-----|
| E. V. Mason, b. Brown | 0 | not out | 12 |
| J. Carr, b. Brown | 0 | S. Carr | 12 |
| J. P. Wicks, b. Brown | 0 | S. Carr | 4 |
| C. E. Clifton, c. and b. Williams | 0 | S. Carr | 0 |
| E. P. Wood, b. Brown | 1 | E. Wicks, b. Brown | 0 |
| J. P. Wood, b. Brown | 12 | M. P. Haineson, b. Brown | 0 |
| E. G. Gooden, c. Smith, b. Williams | 4 | S. Carr | 0 |
| E. B. Brown, not out | 12 | S. Carr | 0 |
| E. P. O'Connor, not out | 12 | not out | 12 |
| K. B. Foster, hit wkt., b. Brown | 2 | not out | 27 |
| T. Wicks, not out | 2 | not out | 12 |
| Extras | 2 | Extras | 6 |
| | 50 | (One 5 wicket) | 118 |

hadn't got together and stopped the net. But the Editor had won the day. He had a look for a money value, and the "Magnet" side was disposed of for 50.

An interval for tea followed. I don't know how many tea-means Haineson discovered during that interval. Anyway, he started the "Gem" second innings with a great retirement. He hit up a sparkling 20 before Carr wicketed his off-stump.

The Gemites were putting up a much better show in their second innings. They were the bowlers a good deal of trouble, and the "Magnet" wicketed freely. At length, however, they were dismissed for a score which fell just short of the hundred.

At this juncture the Editor wagged his six to the "Gem" side, and the Gemites were 4-10. This he was much too generous. Considering that the Magnetites wanted 118 to win, and that the "Gem" bowling was of the

This was the first game of cricket I have seen this season, and I must say I was immensely struck by the generosity of the players, and particularly by the behavior in the field.

I am glad to think that the Gemites were a little unlucky to lose. They played sterling cricket, and their methods were more polished than those of their opponents.

At the same time, great credit is due to O'Connor, Foster, and Wicks, on the "Magnet" side, for their play in an early match, and I sincerely hope the Gemites will obtain their revenge.

After the match we all went along to the Editor's office to see the Gemites and a cricket record. It was a very well-kept "Magnet" edition which eventually rolled up to his own edition in an ancient and venerable wooden box.

The Editor suggested to a combined team of "Magnet" and "Gem" readers should play a cricket match against "The Daily Mail"—a suggestion which evoked loud "chuckles."

THE END.

CARDEW'S LITTLE JOKE.

(Continued from Page 22.)

"Come-puffs and heat? You knew what! And be smiled knowingly at Miss Benn.

"—Come-puffs enough to feed an army," yelled Mr. Benn, "but no one is out there! All the boys have come down."

"Hand back!" I said sympathetically. "After Jones and old Mother Green don't eat cream-puffs, I suggest—"

"They don't eat—they don't!" said Mr. Benn fiercely.

"Got many puffs in stock?" asked Leighton. "Then!" yelled Mr. Benn. "Enough to feed the whole of your school four times over!"

"See!" said Cardew. "That's a heavy loss for you, Mr. Benn," said Leighton.

"But he started the little man shouting. "But he started those tanks would have been sold—sold at two-thirds a time, too, as well as to assist the gauger—but that would have washed them down!"

"Cardew sat with a thoughtful frown on his face. "Look here, Mr. Benn," he said. "We're not planners of yours, and it's up to you to think of a scheme to reach home!"

"Well, sir, it's me at headcar," said Mr. Benn. "There ain't room for two of us, and he's got the trump-card. You see what I mean! It's as if these were only machines that's made to think of."

"That's so," agreed Cardew. "There's Nigger. Look here, Benn, old man, you leave it to me! If I don't squash old Bumper in less than a week I'm a Dutchman!"

"—He won't last no longer than a week, sir," said Mr. Benn. "But it's no present proof of perishables that I want out of it, and you can get a party of your friends to come here and take up that bit, I—!—I stand you a tea!"

"Then!" said Cardew.

Leighton said I exchanged glances. Cardew then said a great thing, and we wondered if it was one of his little jokes.

"Good!" said Mr. Benn. "There's a lot of tea shops come here, as a rule, on a Saturday afternoon. They don't come this week, and we should get a party of your friends to come here and take up that bit, I—!—I stand you a tea!"

"Just then Miss Benn entered with our tray, and old Mother Green with a lady hand."

When Miss Benn had returned to the counter Leighton and I gazed at Cardew. "What?" I asked.

"What's in your fatherland mate now?" demanded Leighton.

Cardew smiled. "You took us on Friday for 1890's, old top?" he grinned.

"But how are you to get the fellows to come here, see?" I demanded. "You know that some of them have already bought seasons at that place. They won't waste that merry season to come here and get the same fare, not to mention the walk or the railway fare!"

"Cardew merely grinned and waved a lady hand."

"My dear son, I've got a strat on the strat of the giddy season?"

"—!"

"Four whines always are!" I said.

"And this one is, too, old son. Lead me and you can see I will a lady hand!"

"And he took us down the stairs into Leighton's hall, first with amusement, then with amazement, and he finished with us in the of laughter, though Ralph looked himself merely satisfied by a lady hand."

"—!"

"Top-hole!" he chorused. "And so it was."

II.

W E were sitting in the Common-rooms on Wednesday afternoon, when Cardew drew our attention to the following announcement in the Personal Column of the local paper:

"A Wretched gentleman wishes to make the acquaintance of the intelligent-looking Mr. Benn's boy who is known to have been at home on Wednesday last. If the boy is present will he be Benn's chap in the High Street, Weymouth, and order cream-puffs, loose, and whatever, and have them delivered."

(Continued on page 25.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOY'S FRIEND. THE GEM. THE PENNY POPULAR. BRIDES' ALLY. Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Sat. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

Far Next Wednesday:

"RIDING TO WIN!"

By Martin Clifford.

Quite a number of people have been following themselves lately because we have heard nothing for a long time of that first character Jerrild Lemley-Lemley. These people may not set their minds at rest, for a last week's grand long complete story of it, Jim's Lemley grandad's storybook. You, and the Terrible Three. It would be unfair to Mr. Clifford to change too much of the plot. Shrewd readers will, however, be able to gather a good deal from this. What does Lemley ride to win? A million-dollar? A Tale's super-tion, probably? No—a romance; and the many exciting adventures which await Jerrild Lemley-Lemley before he is successful in.

"RIDING TO WIN!"

are narrated with the charm and skill which no one can equal, save, perhaps, Mr. Martin Clifford's friend and colleague, Frank Richards.

FRIDAY'S THE DAY:

THREE PERSONAL MESSAGES TO MY READERS.

On Friday of this week there will appear in the "Magnet" of a few minutes' and very much of the "Penny Popular" containing not the old reprint stories, but—

THREE SUPERB NEW STORIES OF SCHOOL LIFE!

The following messages, written by our own favorite authors to you, should convince you of the folly of entering this week's issue of the "Penny Pop."

Here are the messages:

From Mr. Frank Richards.

"Dear Readers.—The Editor of the Companion Papers has asked me to say something to you about my new stories in the 'Penny Popular.'"

"At the risk of being scolded of blowing my own trumpet, I am going to say that—what I regard my new sports series in the 'Penny Pop' has been the best interest of all my Greyfriars stories."

"I am sending Harry Whitson & Co. on a very tour of all the English counties, and they will meet representative teams of British boys on the various fields. I intend to write an introduction; and I have made a special tour of the country myself, in order that all details shall be accurate."

"The writing of these new stories has been a light task, but I have done my best, and I trust I have the thanks of the best of you, my people."

Thinking you for your welcome and world-wide support in the past,

"Your slavers friend,"

"FRANK RICHARDS."

From Mr. Martin Clifford.

"Dear Readers.—The editors of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's have enjoyed such a long spell of popularity that I have no doubt you are all delighted to hear of the introduction of new stories in the 'Penny Popular.'"

"I do not hesitate to say that in these new stories I have given of my best. I do not claim that they are better than my stories at present appearing in the 'Gem.' But they are as good; and I don't think any of you will need any persuasion, either on my part or the Editor's, to purchase this week's issue of the 'Penny Pop.'"

With hearty good wishes to each of you,

"Yours very sincerely,

"MARTIN CLIFFORD."

From Mr. Owen Conquest.

"Dear Readers,—I've been asked to say a few brief words to you to-day. I'm not much good at talking shop,

but it's about the "Penny Pop." Some sharp critics this little book would be much improved with some of Bookwood's best staid reports, but hard-new stories to add to all our modern shrewd.

Although it seems a trifling change, embarking on a new change, I have no doubt that it's a step that will reduce the "Pop," as—Yup! The new you will not think it odd if Jimmy Oliver, Tommy Dool, and all the merry Bookwood chaps

combine in new and novel ways to write the pages of the "Pop."

Whom fame is ever on the hoof, no gentle reader, on the hoof! Support this venture, one and all! And then you won't be out the grand quest of happiness. Yours, OWEN CONQUEST."

These three messages from our famous writers of school stories speak for themselves. I need add nothing more, concerning the

"PENNY POPULAR" No. 18.—OUT ON FRIDAY!

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted.

Miss Emily M. Hatfield, 500, West 15th Street, Newark, N.J.—with girl readers, servants and upwards, interested in athletic and all sports. Great Britain and Colonies.

Miss Pearl Collett, 21, Cecil's School of Music, 125, William Street, Scarborough, England. New South Wales, Australia—with help in the United Kingdom, South Africa, etc., Canada.

Elizabeth Kaye, 25, Market Road, Colchester, Essex, wants reader at Wades who can speak Welsh. Would learn, and pay for lessons. Please state price.

E. C. Hill, Box 1, Kankakee, Ill., East Coast, New Zealand—with old school chaps who reside in Munster Road, Wellington, Middlesex.

W. E. S. Cunningham, 26, Bond Street, Denbigh, North Wales—with readers anywhere, 1617.

F. Witty, 11, Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury, W.C.1, wants members for Girls' Correspondence Club, Compulsions.

Miss Firth, Bellows, Swindon, Devon, Devonshire—with readers anywhere, 1621.

N. Deane, 20, Kensington Road, Lambeth, S.W.—with readers anywhere.

Tan A. S. R. Federal Railway Camp Co., Fremantle, South Settlements—with readers anywhere, 1626.

Back Numbers Wanted.

A. Graye, 11, Homerton Road, Blackfriars, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia—"Who Shall Be Captain?" also Galtrey sketch of Great Forest.

Walter Evans, Malpas, Cerriggton, or Bungalow, India—back numbers of Companion Papers from the earliest up to 200. Good price. Write first.

W. Lewis, 10, Strand, Broadway Common, Bromley, Kent—No. 14 'Penny Popular'; also "Gibbs at Glyn," 3d, offered.

Robert Sammut, 90, Brompton Road, Brompton, "Magpies," 191 to 198, 5d, each copy. Write first.

Jack Gilchrist, 26, Fifeville Street, Perth, Perth, New South Wales, Australia—"Gem" containing No. 22 of Galtrey with Blake; also Gem Christmas Number, 1913, "Winning His Spurs," with suggestions.

Football.

Tromaville Villa Football Club—11-11-11—Johnnie Hart, Addison Road, Hazton, New Zealand—write first.

Please write, aged 11—E. G. Mason, 26, 1/10th Road, Shepherd's Bush, W. It stamped and returned advised.

R. E. R. (FOUR EDITOR.)

ing up, between the hours of four and five on Saturday afternoon, to sell him something to his advantage."

"By his?"

Kerridge looked astonished and interested. As practically the whole of the Fourth and said he had been in on the day in question, the notion was worth giving.

"I say, you fellows, that refers to me!" said Harry Trinkle.

"He, ah, he!"

Both players hurriedly left the match.

"Well, that's all," murmured Trinkle.

The others just left, leaving him, for there was a general note in the door, with Harry Trinkle's note in the front.

And then it occurred to Trinkle that he had to the necessary length where, in his last letter, about the, etc., in accordance with the conditions of the advertisement.

However, George Alfred Grandy happened to be present. There was some starting on the subject, and it led round to Trinkle's knowledge that Grandy's study contained what was stuffed with good things. So he went off all the more to do so, and then went alone to help himself.

Notably, the invasion of Mr. Bann's little study took place.

The place was crowded.

There was no doubt as to that. It was everywhere but at the tables. No one was sitting there, and the various part was that they were all something or something or other.

Mr. Bann was surprised, but he was also pleased—very pleased.

There was a merry band of talk on all subjects, but the one that was the subject of the most talk, apparently it was a subject they wished to avoid under the pretence that they were there for other reasons.

"What's the matter with today?" murmured Harry of the Fourth.

"What?" asked Thomas. "Father being, really. We came here to read the great of Bann's."

"All right," murmured Harry. "Let's see what we can do."

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"What?" asked Thomas. "Father being, really. We came here to read the great of Bann's."

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"All right," murmured Harry. "Let's see what we can do."

"So I would," said Harry, "but for the crowd. What is this or that or intended to represent?"

"Just an usual customer, Mr. Bann," said the man in white, you know. Here's the pleasure."

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The afternoon had been too much for him. He had never moved but for the clock striking six, and he was still there.

"Well," said the man.

Mr. Bann's eyes were nearly starting from his head, and he was still there.

"What is this, Bann?" asked the man.

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Greyfriars Epitaphs.

No. 3. By BOB CHERRY.

TREAD LIGHTLY!

For beneath this spot lies

THE LANKY FOM

of

HORACE COKER,

who was despatched from this world by a stroke about four M. Frost's time.

In his lifetime he was a celebrated comedian, and his comic parts have never been equalled before or since.

HE PLAYED FOOTER,

and kicked many brilliant and energetic goals—for the opposition!

HE PLAYED CRICKET,

and it was a sight for gaily and men and little boys!

HE PERFORMED SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS,

and George Baker and William Bird had pleasure in his distinguished words.

HE WROTE POETRY,

and it was fitting—no fitting that it should be so—his poems and dramas, his devoted admirers, to compile hereunto!

He was the greatest giant of his time—no doubt as strong as the First, and as strong as the First, the pride of the plucky folk, and put his foot on all other things in the opinion of George Baker!

Well might the doxy grating under the tomb contain:

"ALAS, MY POOR BROTHER!"

"When the last day of all comes round
No longer need be down;
Nor need the hand trumpet sound—
For Coker knows his own!"