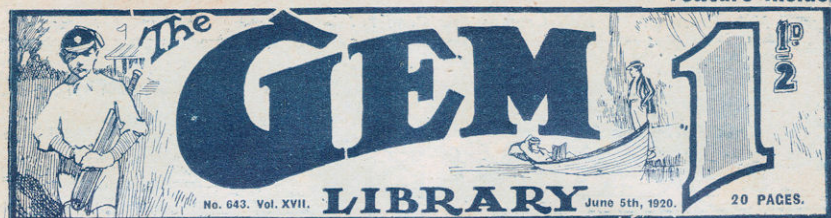


HALF-CROWNS FOR "GEM" READERS! (See Grand New Feature Inside.)



AT FIGGY'S EXPENSE! OUR GRAND SCHOOL TALE.



RAGGING THE NEW HOUSE STUDY-WRECKER!

(An Amusing Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Story.)

Grand New Feature! Half-Crowns For Readers!



A Postal Order for Half-a-crown will be remitted to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

A First-Rate Letter.

"Dear Editor.—This is the first time I have written to you, although I have been reading your books for years. I don't think that any other stories beat yours, and I don't suppose I ever will. They seem to have a more natural flavour about them than others, and I hope you will understand me. In your Readers' Notices for Correspondence, I wrote to a girl a long while ago, and we are quite chummy now. Every morning when I wake up I think—now, what am I going to read this morning? Of course, I haven't much else to do, for, you see, I have been ill, and am in bed all the morning up till about three o'clock, and, naturally, I look forward to the books. I always wish I had more pages to read.—Miss Emily Shrivens, 205, Warham Street, Kennington, S.E. 5."

Stamp Enthusiast.

"I am writing about the Companion Papers. I don't know which of them is best. I wonder if you could help my chum and I to start a Stamp Club? We have settled all the details, including the name of the club. It is to be called the British and Foreign and Colonial Stamp Club. Would you be so kind as to help us? By the way, the readers who write to you and say they don't like the Companion Papers are no readers at all. The weeklies are simply splendid! Some fellows say they do not like this character or the next, but then, everyone has his own taste.—D. Nicholson, 9, Stewart Terrace, Edinburgh."

A Loyal Reader.

"I want to tell you about my chum who came to see me the other day. If it was not for wasting your time, I would give you a full account of our rocklike friendship, which was formed 10 years ago and has never been broken. She and I were chums at school, and have been chums ever since. It is sad to think that a distance of over sixty miles separates us, when, only a few years since, we stood side by side in the same school and passed such happy days together. I will remember rushing off home to get my mother to come and have tea with us, but, talk about more haste, my poor chum was in such a hurry that afternoon that she fell into a puddle,

and you should have seen the state she was in when I pulled her out!—Miss Jessie Shroll, 94, Grafton Road, N.W. 5.

A Canadian Supporter.

"I have been a reader of the GEM for five or six years. The first story I read was about Gussy in love. I can't believe that the 'Magnet' has a bigger circulation than the GEM. Every fellow gets the GEM every week. I think the GEM is cheap at its price—5d. here. About a month ago I went in my newsdealer's to buy the GEM, and I saw a bill on the counter mentioning the Imperial News as your agents, and so I went down next day to get the 'Holiday Annual', and it was fine.—G. Dalrymple, 581, Colonial Avenue, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada."

New Readers.

"I know scores of fellows who buy back numbers galore from hobby-shops, which means they are new readers, trying to catch up stories they have missed. I have had to part with all my old numbers to friends. I can't imagine Gussy leaving St. Jim's. If he did, or any of the others, they would have to be replaced. I bought the 'Holiday Annual' at Christmas-time, and have read the ripping stories two or three times. Now I am passing my copy on to someone in England who was unlucky enough not to be able to procure one. Can you send me a photo of yourself, and is there anything I can do for you? I will do it if I can, with the greatest of pleasure.—Leonard R. Taylor, 483, Warsaw Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada."

The Disappearing Fourth.

"Dear Editor.—I like reading about Tom Merry & Co. so much that I would like to know whether you publish big books of Tom Merry with his exciting adventures in, I have just been reading 'The Disappearing Fourth,' when they were on strike.—G. Johns, 4, Bordesley, Bristol Street, Glensiel, South Australia."

The Old Stories.

"Dear Mr. Editor.—You know the huge demand for very old 'Magnets' and GEMs. Don't you think it would be

a good idea to reprint some of the stories in the 'Holiday Annual'! The possessors of those yarns must be very few, and to others it would be a great treat, to say nothing of the trouble saved in ceasing to advertise these tales in the Companion Papers. Besides, even those who had read them before would be glad of the chance to read the old favourites again. The 'Annual' was very good, but I wish there had been more stories of Herlock Sholmes.—Henry H. Thomson, Craigelea, Ayr Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire."

A Good Notion.

"To improve the health of the children who attend schools, a system could be used by which a small quantity of ozone could be passed into the different classrooms. The ozone would at once attack the carbon dioxide which the pupils breathe out, and destroy it. I think there is a machine on the market to-day which, when connected with electric batteries, will liberate ozone.—A. Salt, house, 226, Bursley Road, Accrington."

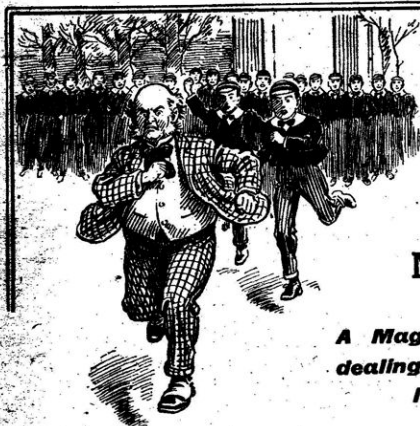
Stamps.

"Could you possibly have a column on stamp collecting?" writes A. P. Collins, of Wellington, New Zealand. "It should be for beginners, starting at buying the stamp album. I have been a collector for three years, and the paper I used to buy for its stamp articles has stopped circulating in this country.—A. P. Collins, 33, Parade, Island Bay, Wellington, N.Z."

General Comment.

D. S. Manson, of Adelaide, sends in a letter of general criticism. "Those caravanning yarns brought us back to the good old style." This wide-awake reader says he knows the difference between an orange and a cart-wheel, so he would be sound enough at the Saturday night shopping. The Chat Page seems to please him—rather like Cardew's style—but why are there two office cats? If he knew anything about office cats? There is offices he would understand. There is anxious for an appointment on the staff. They regard the staircase as the milky way.—D. S. Manson, Halifax Street, Hilton, South Australia.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, the "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."



AT FIGGY'S EXPENSE!

By

Martin Clifford.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's

CHAPTER 1.

Not a Success.

"WHAT rotten luck!" George Figgins, of the New House at St. Jim's, gave vent to an exclamation of dismay.

He was standing in Study No. 9 in the Fourth Form passage. It was Cardew's study, and in the School House, so that Figgins, as a New House boy, had no right to be there at all.

That is why Figgins was dismayed, for someone was coming down the passage and might look into Study No. 9 at any moment. And George Figgins had a particular reason for not wanting anyone to look into Study No. 9 just then.

The pictures had been turned upside-down, and the table was resting on the ground with its four legs in the air, looking more like an overturned beetle than a study table. Nothing had been left in its normal state. The large pier-glass which hung over the mantelshelf bore an inscription more notable for its candour than for its politeness. It ran:

"Rats! School House Rotters Can GO AND EAT COKE!
Which is the Cock-House?
NEW HOUSE!"

And Figgins had very grave doubts as to how Study No. 9 would take this inscription. Fellows were inclined to be hasty at times, and Figgins, looking from the inscription to the door, deemed discretion the better part of valour. With someone in the passage it was impossible to escape, so he dived behind an overturned armchair.

The armchair had been a present from a doting uncle of Cardew's, and formed ample cover for the lanky form of George Figgins by reason of its high back.

As he crouched there the footsteps came nearer, and Figgins' heart beat faster as they stopped outside the door.

"Hallo! Someone's been here. I distinctly remember shutting the door."
It was Clive's voice, and as he heard it George Figgins gave a groan of dismay. The study door was flung wide open, and Cardew, Clive, and Levison, the occupants of the study, entered. They

took a step inside, then staggered back with cries of amazement.

"What the dickens—"
"Who on earth—"
"My hat!"
"Look at the chairs!" spluttered Clive.
"And the glass! Look! New House rotters!" shouted Levison. "It's that rotter Figgins!"

Cardew gave a whistle of surprise.
"Well, I'm dashed!" he murmured.
"Why, the bounder can't have been gone long; the paint's still wet."

He strode over to the glass, and rubbed his finger across the inscription. His fingers came away wet and red.
"The bounder!" said Clive. "We must have passed him in the passage. It was Figgins right enough!"

Figgins, behind the armchair, quaked. At any moment one of the three might move the armchair, and then the game would be up. Figgins knew only too well what was the punishment awarded to New House raiders found in enemy quarters.

"He's left the paint here, too," said Cardew. "Looks like some of old Taggles'."

"No good crying over spilt milk," said Clive philosophically. "Anyway, we can't clear up until to-morrow. And we can safely leave Figgins until the morning. He'll be off his guard then. What about that letter from your Uncle George, Ralph?"

Cardew took a letter from his pocket, and opened it carefully.

Uncle George was a wealthy uncle of Cardew's. Most of Cardew's relations were wealthy, but this particular uncle was more generous than the others, probably, as Cardew said, because he was abroad, and absence made the heart grow fonder. He had not seen his nephew for many years, which also had a great deal to do with his generosity.

Study No. 9, of course, were always pleased to see Uncle George's handwriting on any letter addressed to Cardew, for money was common property in Study No. 9.

With a thoughtful frown Cardew read the letter. Evidently its contents were surprising.

Figgins, behind the armchair, had no

wish to hear another fellow's letter, but it was a question of that or self-sacrifice. The door was shut, or he would have made a bolt for it. As it was, Figgins decided to remain in the safety of his present quarters rather than face the owners of the study.

All unconscious of the enemy in their midst, the three chums of Study No. 9 gave their whole attention to the letter.

"What does he say?" asked Clive. "Anything much?"

Cardew whistled.
"Yes," he said. "As a matter of fact, there's some news. Uncle has forgotten to send something, but we'll excuse him this time, as he was probably so excited at the prospect of comin' to England that—"

"To England?" asked Clive, in surprise.

"Yaas, deah boy! And, moreover, he's comin' to the school to-morrow by the three-thirty from Wayland."

"Good heavens!" gasped Clive. "We shall have to clear up the study before then!"

"And we'd better get in some grub, too," said Levison thoughtfully.

"What's nunky like?" asked Clive.

Cardew shook his head.
"Really I can't say," he said thoughtfully. "He has probably altered since I last saw him; that was about nine years ago, when I was quite a kid. At that time he was a nice bald-headed, white-whiskered old chap with a 'huh-huh!' that he used to work off at half-second intervals. Quite a nice old chappie, an' aw'll'y generous with cash."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Levison.
"Funny old chap, rather!" mused Cardew. "Always used to punctuate other people's remarks with 'extraordinary!' Just a sec, I believe I've got a photo of him in my desk."

He went to the overturned desk, and, after rummaging within it for a few minutes, brought to light a photograph, which he handed to Clive.

"There you are; that's nunky!"

Levison and Clive looked with some interest at the photograph Cardew handed them. It had been taken in profile, and depicted an old gentleman with a bald head and side-whiskers. He wore

a Byronic collar and a stock. In his buttonhole was an orchid, and a monocle hung from his neck.

"Rather a knut!" said Clive, handing the photo back to his chum.

Cardew nodded, and placed the photograph on the mantelshelf.

"Well, if nunky's coming to-morrow we'd better clear up the study a bit," said Levison. "Figgins will have to wait until to-morrow; or, rather, until your uncle's gone, Ralph. We don't want any black eyes knocking about. I don't suppose nunky is at all keen on black eyes."

So the three chums commenced setting the study in order. It was no easy task, as they very quickly discovered. The puzzle was to know where to begin. The table came first, then they moved towards the armchair, as the next biggest piece of furniture.

Clive and Levison gave the armchair a mighty heave that sent it careering across the study. Then they jumped back, with an exclamation of surprise.

"G-g-good heavens!"

"Figgins!"

George Figgins gave a sickly grin.

"Yes, it's me. The game's up!"

"Of all the cheek!" gasped Clive.

"Fancy you being here all the time! You bouncer!"

Figgins rose to his feet.

It was neck or nothing. A bold stroke or sudden rush might see him clear yet.

He took a glance at the door, which was half-open, and, suddenly making up his mind, made a dart for it.

Clive and Levison went down like ninespins, but Cardew was on the alert, and tackled him low in the approved Rugger style.

Figgins landed on the study carpet with a terrific bang that knocked every ounce of breath out of his body, and Cardew had an easy task in turning him over and sitting on him.

"Now, my beautiful study-wrecker!" chuckled Ralph Reckness, giving George Figgins a playful tap on the nose.

Clive and Levison rose painfully to their feet.

Levison picked up the can of red paint, and waved the brush about in a workmanlike manner.

"Now," he asked, "where do you want it?"

Figgins eyed him warily.

"Don't you dare bring that near me!" he hooted, as Levison made a playful pass in the air.

Levison laughed.

"Are you ready, Figg?"

"No!" howled Figgins desperately.

"Well, you jolly well will be soon!" chuckled Cardew. "Very redly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You bouncer, Levison! Don't you dare!"

Quickly tearing Figgins' tie from his collar, Cardew bound the unfortunate New House junior's hands together.

Clive attended to his feet.

Troused up and helpless, Figgins could only lie and glare.

Levison, paintpot in hand, advanced towards the unfortunate junior.

Dab!

Figgins gave a gasp as the wet paintbrush dabbed his cheek.

"Now, don't talk," advised Levison; "you'll only get it in your mouth!"

"You rotter, wait—Yarooogh!"

Figgins spluttered as some of the red paint entered the corner of his mouth, and gave Levison a fenshish glare.

"There you are! What did I tell you?" said Levison. "Now, shut up, unless you want some more!"

Figgins lay and glared. There was not

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much else for him to do, but he took great care to close his mouth tightly.

Levison dabbed the New House leader's cheeks until they became a deep crimson hue. Indeed, a Royal Academician could not have taken more care in the execution of a masterpiece.

"Think a little dab there would improve it?" he asked, leaning back and squinting at Figgins' face. But this only seemed to annoy Figgins all the more.

"Put a bit over his left eye—not in it. It'll give a supercilious air."

"How'd he look with red hair?" asked Cardew thoughtfully. "I've often wondered what Figg would look like with red hair. Try it, Levison."

"You dare!" howled Figgins, throwing care to the winds. "If you bring that brush near my hair, Levison, I'll smash you!"

Levison made a pass with the brush, and Figgins' mouth snapped shut like a pocket-knife.

"Don't think it'd look well, somehow," said Levison. "A few rings round his eyes, and a large one round his mouth will do."

With painstaking care he put his plans into operation; and when at length he declared himself finished George Figgins gave a sigh of relief. But Study No. 9 were not finished yet. In fact, they had only just begun, and were warming to their work.

"Now, how about sending him back?" asked Clive. "What about labelling him, and sending him through the post? I heard only the other day of a chap being sent through the post."

"Post-office johnnies mightn't like it," grinned Cardew. "Besides, think of the poor letters having to spend a night with a face like that!"

"It'd be rather rough!"

"It would!" agreed Levison. "Too jolly rough! No; I've got a much better idea altogether. Tie him to a chair, and write a placard."

"That's good!" grinned Clive. "The very idea! But we can't use one of our chairs—"

"Shouldn't get it back," broke in Cardew. "But can borrow one from Trimble's study."

"What'll Trimble say, though?"

"Blow Trimble!" grunted Levison.

"If he can't spare a chair for the good of the House he ought to be shot! I'll run and get it!"

In a few minutes he returned with a chair.

"What on earth's that?" asked Clive, with a grin. "Not a chair, surely?"

It is, chuckled Levison. "It's only got three legs. I gave Trimble a tanner for it, and he seemed mighty pleased."

"Probably because it belongs to Mellish."

It was not much of a chair, whoever it belonged to, and it had evidently seen its best days many years ago. It was minus one leg, and the back was cracked right across.

The Co. of Study No. 9 gloated over it enthusiastically; but somehow Figgins did not seem the least bit enthusiastic, and he struggled frantically, although to no avail.

At last, panting and gasping, he was tied in the chair. A gag was fixed firmly round his mouth so that he was unable to speak, and his hands were tied to his feet, which were, in turn, tied each to a leg of the chair.

"Now for the placard!" grinned Cardew.

He picked up the paintbrush and a sheet of Bristol board, on which Clive had intended to sketch, and, with a worried, thoughtful frown, set to work on the lettering.

"How's that?" he asked, exhibiting the placard when he had finished.

It ran:

"ALWAYS READY—
SOMETIMES REDDY!"

FIGGINS, WHO SAT FOR
THE FAMOUS PAINTERS OF
STUDY NO. 9!

HOW THE NEW HOUSE TAKE
THINGS—

SITTING DOWN!"

"Not bad!" chuckled Clive. "Pin it on him!"

"Yarooogh!" came a muffled yell from behind the gag.

"What on earth—" said Cardew, in amazement.

"As I said stick it on him, not in him!"

"Oh!"

The second attempt was more successful, and the placard, a trifle smudgy, made clear the identity of the lobster-faced occupant of the chair.

"Now, ready at last!"

The three chums pushed the gagged Figgins towards the door. Figgins had no great desire to shout; the fewer the fellows who saw him the better, he would have liked it. But this was his unlucky day.

As the door was opened and he was pushed out four cheerful School House juniors were coming down the passage. At the sight of him they stopped and stared.

CHAPTER 2.

Reddy, ay, Reddy!

"WHAT the merry dickens!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

And George Herries, bereft of speech, stood and whistled.

"Hallo, Figg! Taking things easy?" asked Blake.

"Mum-mum!"

"Well, that's a funny sort of row to make!" chuckled Digby.

"Yass, wathah! What evah has happened, Figg?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his celebrated monocle into his eye and stared with undisguised amazement at George Figgins.

Figgins returned the stare with such fixed intensity that Arthur Augustus coughed in confusion, and his monocle dropped to the end of its cord.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Blake, turning to Clive.

"I trust that you have not been guilty of the bad taste of maltreating a visitah!" said Arthur Augustus, with great severity.

"Not exactly," said Cardew sarcastically. "Figg thought that, being spring, he ought to decorate our den; and, to return the compliment, we redecorated him."

"Bai Jove! And does Figgay want to be wedecorated?"

"Alum! Not exactly!"

The well of St. Jim's frowned with great disapproval. Then his eye caught sight of the placard.

"Bai Jove! That's wathah funny!" he said.

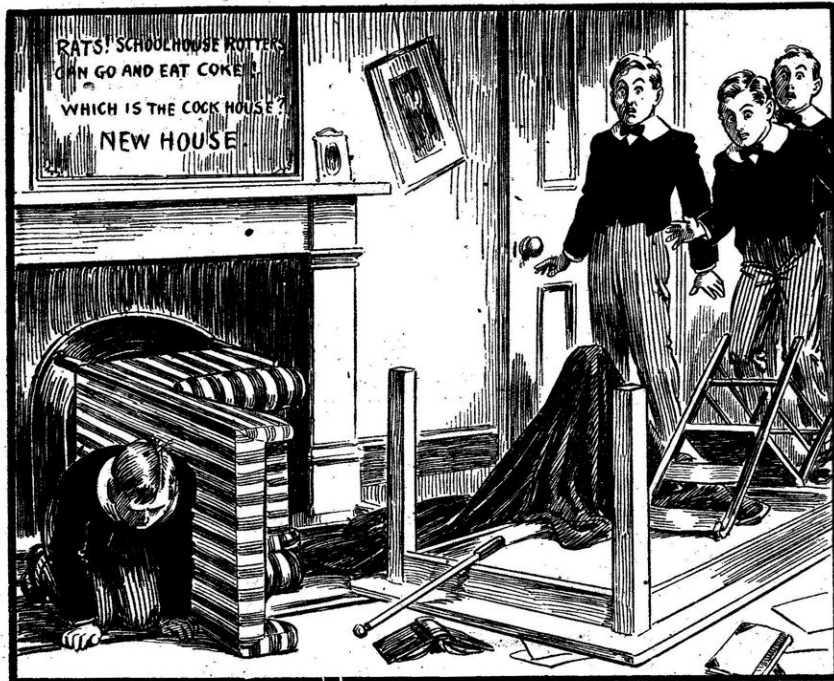
"Yes; not at all bad!" chuckled Blake.

"Good enough for the rest of the Fourth to see, anyway."

"Hi!" hooted Herries. "Rescue, Fourth!"

Herries' voice was not a particularly musical one; but when he chose to shout he could be heard throughout the school.

Doors opened all along the passage, and juniors came tumbling out, some armed with pokers, some with cricket-stumps, but all with a weapon of some



Figgins crouched down behind the armchair. The study door was flung wide open, and Cardew & Co. entered. A yell of amazement left their lips as they gazed upon the wrecked study. "What the dickens—" (See Chapter 1.)

kind, in the hope that they would have a chance to swipe the invader. At the sight of Figgins, however, they dropped their weapons and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, an' it's a funny-looking gossoon ye are, Figgys darlint!" chuckled Reilly. "Ye caught the sun, by the look o' ye!" Figgins turned redder, if that were possible, and made a feeble attempt to run. The chair proved a great hindrance; but helping hands—and feet—were near, and he was helped on his journey.

He landed on his knees in the passage, and tried to crawl away.

But, as his hands and feet were securely tied, it was not a very great success. Once again School House feet were put into operation, and he went on his journey until, by the dint of careful and generous aid, he found his way to the School House doorway.

"Better not let a master see him," chuckled Blake. "Gather round."

The chucking crowd gathered round the unfortunate Figgins, while Cardew and Clive linked hands under the chair and carted him across to the New House amid cheers.

Pratt and French, who were standing in the New House doorway, watched them coming with looks of curiosity and surprise.

"What the thunder!" gasped Pratt as Cardew and Clive deposited their burden at his feet. French stood and

gaped, too astounded to reason out the why's and wherefores.

Clive and Cardew, feeling that no explanations were required of them, made good their escape before an alarm could be raised.

"Who—what is it?" stuttered French. "Looks like Figgys."

George Figgins wagged his head to and fro in an alarming manner until French, struck by a brilliant inspiration, undid his leader's gag.

Figgins, free now to talk, explained at great length what he thought of French and Pratt.

"You— Couldn't you see it's me? Couldn't you let me free, you mug-wumps? You— Oh, get away!"

But the sight of Figgins' red face was too much for Pratt and French. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins, half-standing, limped past them, the leg of the chair cracking French's shin as he passed.

French gave a fiendish yell, and hopped round on one leg. "Oh! Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

And George Figgins, somewhat relieved in mind, hurried on as best he could into the New House.

In Study No. 4 all was peaceful and calm. Kerr, the red-haired Scot, was studying Xenophon; Fatty Wynn, with a beatific smile on his fat, cheery face, was eating one of Dame Taggles' celebrated steak-and-kidney pies.

Into this haven of peace George Figgins burst like a cyclone.

At the sight of their leader's face Kerr and Wynn jumped to their feet in dismay.

"What's up, Figgys?"

"Up!" hooted Figgins. "Everything! The bouncers caught me. And this is what they've done!" he choked.

"Look!"

Kerr and Wynn looked, and with difficulty kept straight faces.

"What rough luck!" said Kerr, with a whistle. "I quite thought the bouncers had gone out for the evening. Clive said they'd be out till nine."

"Well, they jolly well weren't!" snapped Figgins irritably. "And, what's more, they didn't give me a chance to escape. Tied me to a chair, and painted some fool placard. What are you grinning at, Fatty?"

"Ahem! Was I?"

"Yes, you were! Nice pally way to treat a cham. There's nothing funny in being painted red, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha—I mean, nothing!" "Well, then, for goodness' sake shut up! Kerr, you're about the only sensible fellow I've met. Come and help me get some of this stuff off!"

Kerr, with a wink at Fatty Wynn, followed his leader from the study.

And for the next quarter of an hour nothing could be heard in the bath-room but the sound of industrious scrubbing.

and running water. But that red paint stuck; indeed, it seemed to have quite an affection for Figgins' face. But Kerr, nothing daunted, scrubbed till Figgins called a halt.

Then energetic application of a rough towel worked wonders. And Figgins, slightly redder in the face than hitherto, returned to the peacefulness of Study No. 4.

"Get it off?" asked Fatty Wynn sympathetically.

"No!"

"Tough luck! Have some pie?"

"Blow the rotten pie!"

"Rain't a rotten pie!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "It's a jolly good pie!" And his face lit up with evident enjoyment. "Come on, have some! It'll cheer you up! It does me!"

"Blow the pie! Hang the pie!" howled the exasperated Figgins. "All you can think of is grub!"

"Well, I like that!" said Fatty, in hurt tones. "Didn't I plan this raid?"

"Yes, you jolly well did! And see how it's ended!"

"Ahem! That wasn't my fault. You see—"

"I see a fat idiot! If you can't think of a way of kidding those School House bouncers, shut up!"

Fatty Wynn leaped into indignant silence, whilst his two chums thought furiously.

"How did it happen, Figgy?" asked Kerr.

"Why, I'd just finished painting on the glass when I heard footsteps in the passage, so I slipped behind the armchair—"

"Well?"

"And they came in. Cardew read out a letter he'd had from an uncle—uncle coming to see him. Hadn't seen him for a year or something. And then they started putting the study in order."

"Oh!"

"Of course, they had to start with the armchair; and—well, you can guess the rest."

Kerr nodded thoughtfully. Then he looked up.

"What was that you said about an uncle?" he asked.

"Oh, Cardew's Uncle George is coming! But you're not going to suggest disguising as his uncle, are you? That's too old!"

Kerr shook his head.

"No; I've got the prince of a stunt. Lend me your ears, and I will tell the unfold."

Figgins leaned forward eagerly, and Fatty Wynn stopped with a piece of kidney half-way to his mouth.

And in a low whisper, lest the walls had ears, Kerr unfolded the deep, dark plot. And from the chuckles of the three it seemed to meet with much approval and satisfaction.

A few minutes later George Kerr could have been seen riding down to the Rylocombe post-office on his bicycle.

Evidently there was trouble in store for Cardew & Co.

CHAPTER 3.

Removals.

"LOOKS pretty hopeless!" grunted Clive, looking despondently round the dismantled study. "Where on earth shall we make a start?"

"Doesn't look particularly festive for dear Uncle George," drawled Cardew.

"But where there's a will there's a way. I've always been told that I have a will, and you chappies can find a way easily enough. I'll superintend."

"You'll jolly well get a broom and

sweep the floor!" grunted Clive. "No slacking!"

And Ralph Reckness Cardew gave a sigh and went in search of a broom.

"If that ass is going to handle a broom it would be a good deal safer to put that beastly paintpot on the table. We don't want any accidents!" grunted Levison.

With great care Clive lifted the paint on to the table. Levison set to work to right the pictures.

Cardew returned with the broom, and lost no time in getting to work.

In less than a few seconds he had raised a cloud of dust so thick that the three chums could scarcely see one another.

"Atishoo!"

Levison and Clive sneezed frantically, but that only served to spur the energetic Cardew on to sterner effort.

"Chuck it, fathead!" hooted Clive.

Cardew sighed, and leaned on his broom.

"It's a weary world!" he sighed.

"First you tell a chappie to get a broom and sweep the floor, then you tell him not to. Wasn't I doin' it well? Look at the dust—"

"Yes, fathead, look at it!"

Cardew released the broom suddenly, and Levison gave a howl as the handle landed on his toe.

"Ow, fathead!"

Cardew stooped, and, regaining the broom, recommenced work.

"Stop it!" shrieked Clive. "You—atishoo—chump!"

He made a grab at the broom, clutching the bristly end.

Cardew gave it a playful push, and Clive received the bristles in his face.

He went staggering back, and crashed into the table.

"Out!"

Levison gave a warning shout, but it was too late. Clive's arms, waving wildly for some support to clutch, became entangled with the can of paint.

In a second he was drenched from head to foot in paint, and the wall and carpet were disfigured by large red blotches.

"Groof!"

Clive scrambled to his feet, with red paint oozing from his hair. It trickled down his neck, and made him give little shivers of discomfort. Red paint streamed down his trousers and formed small pools on the carpet.

Cardew and Clive burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—groof!" spluttered Clive, waving a red hand in the air.

He made a frantic rush at Cardew. But the noble, scion of the house Reckness was "not having any." He lodged and eyed Clive warily from behind the armchair.

"You wait!" said Clive thickly, through the paint. "Just you wait!"

And he sped away to wash off the paint.

Levison looked at Cardew, and Cardew looked at Levison.

"I'm waitin'," said Cardew, with a slight grin.

"Fathead!" grunted Levison. "Look at the study. What about your uncle!"

Cardew whistled blankly.

"I'd forgotten that. By Jingo!"

"Well, what's to be done?"

For a moment Ralph Reckness looked about him with a puzzled frown, then, struck by a bright notion, he burst into a chuckle.

"That's easy. We'll borrow Study No. 6."

"We'll what?"

"Borrow Study No. 6. Gussy is bound to oblige, and, after all, it'll only be for a day."

But—

"No 'buts.' Come along!"

Cardew led the way out of the study, and as one in a dream Levison followed.

Cardew tapped gently on the door of Study No. 6. From inside the study came sounds of a terrific argument.

Cardew tapped again, this time more loudly.

"Come in, fathead!"

"That's you, Levison," said Cardew. "Wonder how they knew it was you?"

"Oh, get in, chump!"

Cardew pushed open the door and entered.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "What do you want?"

"Ahem! Nice day—what?"

"Eh?"

"Nice day!"

"Have you come here just to tell us that it's a fine day?" demanded Blake in measured terms. "Can't you hear the rain?"

"Ahem! No. The fact is that my Uncle George is coming to-morrow."

"Well?"

"As our study is in such a mess, I thought perhaps you'd like to lend us yours."

"What?"

Cardew repeated his surmise.

"Well, of all the cheek!"

"Of all the nerve!"

"Yass, wathah!"

And George Herries reached for the poker.

"Now, don't be rash, dear boys! Really, our study is awful—couldn't possibly take Uncle in it, you know. And I am sure Gussy could never allow a nobleman to soil his trousers by sitting on a chair covered in red paint—"

"Bai Jove! Wafahh not!"

Blake looked at Herries, and Herries took the poker in a firm grip. Levison backed warily to the door. But Ralph Reckness was not to be put off so easily.

"Noblesse oblige, Gussy," he said.

"Think! He's a relation of yours, you know. A noble—a gentleman. Gussy, you—"

"Weally, Cardew! Of course, if we can have the study back the day aftah to-morrow—"

"Of course," said Cardew.

"Vewy well, then. Cawwy on, deah boy!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Blake.

"Whose study is this, Gussy?"

"Ours, deah boy. I have considered the mattah, and have decided to let Cardew use the study."

Blake looked at him speechlessly. Then he turned to Herries and Digby with a chuckle.

"Let him rip!" he said, with an enigmatic wink.

Digby and Herries stared at their leader in mute surprise, but gave way. They trusted Blake, and if the affair did not end satisfactorily, they could blame him.

"Thanks!" drawled Cardew. "We'll move in. Ahem! We'll have to bring in a few of our things, and I suppose you'll want some of yours?"

"Exactly!" grinned Blake. "We'll clear out before you start moving. Come on, you chaps!"

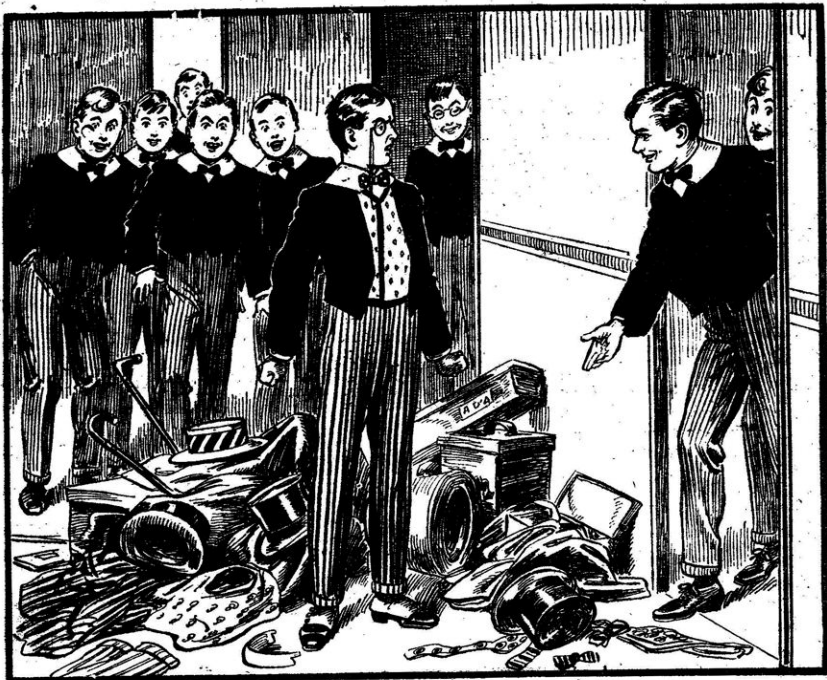
Blake rose from his comfortable seat in the armchair, and made his way to a heap of hatboxes.

Herries and Digby followed him. Herries took a firm grip on a large box of neckties, and piled them out on the floor.

"You wotahh. Howwie! Don't you dare touch those ties! Blake, my hats! Digby, you bounbah, don't touch those waistcoats!"

Blake gathered three hatboxes in his arms, and dumped them in the passage.

"Refuse!" he said briefly.



Arthur Augustus stood in the passage surrounded by hats and ties and waistcoats of all descriptions. He was monarch of all he surveyed. "Any more rubbish?" asked Blake. (See Chapter 3.)

"Blake, bring them back! Hewwies, drop those ties—"
 Meanwhile, Digby had dumped the waistcoats in the passage.

"Can I help!" grinned Cardew.

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Blake. "Join in. All this rubbish can be thrown away! There are too many toppers, ties, and gaudy waistcoats in the study. This is the new dress reform."

Nothing loth, Cardew and Levison helped in the moving.

Arthur Augustus stood in the middle of the study and literally tore his hair.

"Blake, you wottah, put those hats down!" Cardew—Cardew!

Arthur Augustus' voice rose to a shriek as Cardew, having dropped a hatbox, fell clumsily on the highly-polished topper that rolled out.

"That's torn it!" gasped Cardew.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed the damaged hat forlornly. But he dropped it and rushed to the rescue of his fancy waistcoats.

"What the dickens!"

Clive stood in the doorway of Study No. 6 and surveyed the wreckage. By this time quite a small crowd had gathered. Tom Merry & Co. had come

down from the Shell passage, and were enjoying the scene.

"What, moving, Gussy?" asked Lother.

"Yass, but—Hewwies, if you touch that hatbox—"

"Can't pay your rent?" asked Lother sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Study No. 6, minus chairs and hatboxes, looked rather bare. But it assumed a more cheerful hue as Cardew wheeled in the big armchair.

Arthur Augustus stood in the passage surrounded by hats, and ties, and waistcoats of all colours and descriptions. He was monarch of all he surveyed, and apparently none seemed to want to dispute his right.

"Any more rubbish?" asked Blake.

"Yes," grinned Digby, "here's a cornet!"

Herries, who rather prided himself on his abilities as a cornet player, made a grab at his pet instrument, and managed to save it from sacrilegious hands.

"Right-ho! Then you chaps are settled?"

"Yes, thanks," said Clive. "So good of you all, especially Gussy. 'Noblesse oblige.'"

"You wottahs! Look at these hats and—"

"Toujours la politesse!" grinned Levison. "Always the little gentleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus, in the silence

that stamped the caste of Vere de Vere, collected his many chattels, and with tender care escorted them into Study No. 9.

"Blake, I considah you are a wottah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"From to-day we cease to be fwiends!"

"Good!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and as enemies the four chums sat down to a supper of bread and cheese which had been left in the cupboard of Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 4. Noblesse Oblige.

TAP! Toby, the School House page, tapped at the door of the Fourth Form-room. He held a telegram

in his hand—a hand that was, to tell the truth, none too clean. But then, Toby could not be expected to keep his hands clean in addition to cleaning knives, etc.

Receiving no reply to his first knock he repeated it, slightly more loudly.

Tap!

"Come in!"

Mr. Lathom, the mild-tempered little master of the Fourth, looked round curiously as Toby entered.

"Well, Toby?" he said.

"Telegram for Master Cardew, sir," grinned Toby, and extended the buff envelope.

"Ah, yes! Er, Cardew, a telegram!"

Cardew stepped forward and took the telegram, looking at it in rather a puzzled manner.

"You may open it," said Mr. Latham.

"Toby is waiting."

Quickly Cardew slit the envelope, and glanced at the message.

"No answer, Toby," he said briefly, handing the page a shilling.

"Thank you, Mr. Cardew," said Toby, and went out of the room.

"Really, Cardew, that—er—gratitude was most unnecessary," said Mr. Latham reprovingly. "Toby is paid for the work he does, and paid well, and there is really no need to pay him anything when he brings a telegram."

"No, sir," said Cardew, with a slight grin. And he returned to his place.

"Bad news?" asked Clive in a whisper.

"No."

Cardew could say nothing more as he had Mr. Latham's eye upon him, and Clive had to be satisfied with that curt reply. He thought that the wire might have come from Cardew's uncle, and he wondered what was in the wind.

The New House Fourth-Formers shared a Form-room with the Fourth-Form of the School House, and Figgins, in the back row, gave Wynn a surreptitious wink, and Wynn winked a knowing wink back.

The telegram was evidently of interest to the New House Co.

The lesson proceeded smoothly, and Mr. Latham was deep in a treatise on Shakespeare. Mr. Latham was very fond of the works of the Bard of Avon, and his class had to be content to sit still and listen. Unfortunately, the class did not know nearly as much about William Shakespeare as Mr. Latham, and, apparently, they did not want to.

Kerr, Mr. Latham's brightest Shakespearean pupil, had been excused lessons that morning, having come into the classroom with a face bound in swathes of bandages, and an exceedingly pained expression on his face. Kerr was an actor to the finger-tips, and Mr. Latham became so genuinely sympathetic that Kerr felt no little remorse at having pulled the kind-hearted master's leg. But it was in a good cause, and it had to be done.

Mr. Latham was in the middle of a long description of Rosalind and her character when another tap sounded on the Form-room door.

With an irritated look, Mr. Latham snapped:

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Toby entered.

"Well," asked Mr. Latham, a trifle shortly.

"Telegram for Master Cardew, sir."

"Oh—Cardew, another telegram!"

Mr. Latham gave the aristocratic Fourth-Former a queer look as he came forward and took the telegram. Cardew took the second telegram from Toby, at the same time pushing a shilling into the pageboy's ready hand.

Then he opened the envelope, and a startled look overspread his face as he read the contents.

He crumpled it in his hand, then looked at Toby.

"No reply," he said. "You had better leave any other telegrams that come for me in my study."

"Yes, sir," said Toby, with a grin.

Cardew returned to his place, followed by curious glances from all the fellows.

"Cardew!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew looked round as that whisper came to his ear.

Baggy Trimble sat behind him, and there was a look of extreme curiosity on Baggy's fat face.

"That a wire for money?" he asked.

"No, you fat chump!"

"From your uncle?"

"Yes; shut up. You'll have Latham on your track!"

Baggy gave him an indignant look and shut up. Baggy was not at all sure that Cardew's uncle had not wired his nephew some money, and Baggy meant to have a finger in the pie, or, at any rate, a hand on the cash.

Figgins, in the back row, had heard the whispered conversation, and drew his own conclusions.

"That's ours," he whispered to Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn nodded.

It occurred to them that the first telegram might have been a private one, having no connection with their jape, or with the uncle's arrival, and their minds were set at rest.

At last Mr. Latham finished with Shakespeare and all his works for the morning, although not for good, and the Fourth, to their great relief, were dismissed.

Directly they were outside, Clive and Levison went up to their chum with looks of curiosity, for they, too, had heard the conversation with Baggy Trimble.

Figgins and Kerr were standing near by, and Figgins was looking well pleased with himself, and appeared quite amiable. His complexion was still quite reparkable and very red, but he did not seem to mind that. In point of fact, in the excitement of the wheeze it had slipped his memory.

"Uncle coming?" asked Clive.

Cardew looked round at Figgins.

"Yes," he said. "I think he's here now."

"Here now? What the dickens!"

"Thought he was coming by the three-forty," said Levison.

"So he was, old son, but read this."

Cardew drew from his pocket a telegram, and handed it to Clive, who read it. Levison looked over his shoulder for the same purpose.

"Oh! Then he is here. With the Head, I suppose?"

"Yes, I should think so," said Cardew rather absent-mindedly.

"I rather want to see uncle."

"Yes, of course; so do we."

Kerr, and Wynn went off jubilant.

"Hurray!" yelled Figgins, throwing his cap into the air.

"Good old us!" cheered Fatty.

"Hallo! What are you kicking up a fuss about, porpoise?"

Monty Lowther, Merry, and Manners came down the passage, and stood in surprise at Figgins and Wynn.

"You look rather red, Figg," chuckled Tom Merry. "What's the matter?"

Figgins scowled.

"What's that to do with you, ass? Think you're the only chap entitled to be merry?"

"Not exactly," chuckled Tom.

"You're entitled to because you've got a win to your credit."

"That funny?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, don't you see—Wynn and win?"

"Oh, yes! He, he, he!"

"Hallo! Still here, Figg?" chuckled Cardew, coming up the passage with Clive and Levison.

"Yes; still here!"

"Are you still ready?"

"Fathead!"

"I do like your complexion!" chuckled Clive. "It's so healthy. I'm not quite sure, though, that it isn't rather hectic." He heard of consumptive people having a complexion like that.

"Oh, Figg's not at all consumptive!" said Clive. "Fatty is, though. Look at the bums and things he consumes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When is the New House going to wake up?" asked Levison.

"You'll know soon," said Figgins.

"Wait and see, my son!"

And Figgins and Wynn made a dash for it while they could. In less time than it takes to tell they were across the quad and in their own study.

"Now, what did Figg mean by that?" asked Cardew.

"Oh, nothing!" said Manners. "He says that sort of things seventeen times a day, and nothing ever happens."

"H'm!" said Cardew.

And with that somewhat cryptic expression of feeling he moved off, followed by his two chums.

CHAPTER 5.

A Roland for an Oliver.

"NOW Ralph, what's up?"

"Clive shut the door of the study behind him."

"Up?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, fathead! I can see you've something in your bonnet."

"This!" said Cardew. And he drew two telegrams from his pocket. "Read this, my sons!"

Clive picked up one, and Levison the other.

"Fishy," said Levison.

"Exactly what I thought," said Cardew. "Read out the first one."

"Called on business—come next week.—GEORGE CARDEW."

"Now, where was that handed in?" asked Cardew.

"London, this morning!" replied Clive.

"Good! Now the other one!"

Levison read it out.

"Coming earlier train than anticipated. 11.35, Wayland. — UNCLE GEORGE."

"Handed in where?"

"Wayland," said Levison, with a slight frown.

"Well, there's nothing queer in uncle staying in Wayland, because a friend of the pater's lives there. But there are two other points. One, the name. Uncle always signs himself 'George Cardew'; the other point is that the first telegram is briefer, and uncle, though generous to friends, always saved his ha'pennies on the off chance that they might develop into real golden sovereigns."

"Levison whistled.

"By Jove! So that's what Figg meant then?"

Cardew nodded.

Clive looked blankly from one to the other.

"What's old Figg to do with uncle?" he asked.

Ralph Reckness Cardew smiled.

"Several things," he said. "First, when I read that letter last night, Figg was in the study, and probably heard."

Secondly, he knew I had a photograph—a photograph that is now missing."

Thirdly, Kerr was not in class this morning."

Fourthly, and lastly, Figg's jubilation in the passage this morning."

"I see. Then Kerr is coming as uncle?"

"I think so. Their original plan might have been to come in the morning, and clear off before uncle arrived."

"Hardly that," said Levison. "By the time you see your uncle it will be past lunch-time, and Kerr, I should imagine, wants a chance to jape us. No, keep a strict watch on the other two, Figg, and Fatty; for they'll keep uncle away from the school by taking him on some fool's errand!"

"Yes, of course!" agreed Clive. "It

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

wouldn't do for the real man to come to the school while Kerr was still in disguise."

"Rather not! And Kerr's too canny to miss a point like that!"

"You bet! Kerr's all there, my son! Possibly Figgins has gone to palm himself off as you, Ralph!" chuckled Levinson.

"By Jove, yes!"

Cardew slapped his leg. "Of course," that would be his game. Why didn't I think of that before! He knows that uncle hasn't seen me for years—it would be as easy as rolling off a log."

"And now uncle isn't coming," said Levinson. "What a pity! Still, we can rag Kerr!"

"Just a sec," interposed Clive thoughtfully. "We'd better go easy. As yet we've got no definite proof that it is a jape, and we mustn't rush things. Uncle might come after all—these old johnnies have queer ideas—and we don't want to rag him."

"Besides, supposing he changed his mind, and returned from London, having finished his business, stopped at Wayland, and sent the second telegram?"

"H'm!"

"He might, for in his telegram he only says that he's catching the 11.35 from Wayland."

"Good heavens, yes!"

"Hold, though," said Cardew. "What about the vanished photograph? It might be a coincidence, but—Ha, ha, ha!"

Leivison and Clive stared at their chum blankly.

"What the dickens!" ejaculated Levinson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, ass, what's there to cackle at?" demanded Clive impatiently.

"Oh, dear! Why didn't I think of it before? Was that photo taken private?"

"Was it? Yes!" said Clive. "But what's that to do with it?"

"Everything, old son! Uncle has only one eye!"

"Only one eye?"

"Yes. You see he's a big-game hunter, and had an eye torn out in an argument with some ferocious animal. He's rather a vain old boy, and he always has his phiz taken in profile so that the glass eye won't show. Kerr doesn't know that!"

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all right!" chuckled Levinson.

"We can soon spot whether or not it's the real man at that rate!"

"Yes, rather! He's certain to lurch with the Head. You can trot along to the Head's house and ask to see uncle on some pretext," said Cardew. "It shouldn't take you long to find out whether or not it's the right man."

"Right—ho!"

"Half a sec. We don't want Figgys and Fatty to be disappointed, do we?"

"Eh? What on earth are you driving at, chump?"

"Listen!"

Cardew leant forward, and for a few seconds nothing was heard but his cultured tones as he expounded his great idea.

Clive and Levinson chuckled.

"Can you do it?" asked Clive doubtfully.

"On my head, old gun!"

Clive nodded his head rather doubtfully.

"H'm!" he said, "Still, I'll trot along and interview uncle."

And he trotted off to the Head's house. It did not take him more than a few minutes, and as there were fortunately no prefects about, he managed to enter

the forbidden ground without, being spotted.

As he entered the gate he espied, a little farther up the path, a white-whiskered little gentleman, with a rather striking lounge suit, and wide collar encircled by a flowing bow. The bald head announced him as being Uncle George.

He was standing on tiptoes against the wall talking to someone on the other side.

It did not take Clive long to discover that the fellow to whom uncle was talking was Figgins.

Clive gave a discreet cough, and Figgins dropped suddenly from view.

Uncle George took a ferocious sniff at the ivy—a sniff so ferocious that he inhaled half the dust from the ivy, causing him to sneeze violently.

"Ahem!" said Clive.

Uncle George turned abruptly, handkerchief in hand, and gave Clive a somewhat wooden smile.

"You—huh-huh!—want me, my boy?"

"Yes, sir; I'm Clive."

"Really! That's—huh!—most interesting! Very—huh-huh!—pleased to meet

whereat Taggles, the school porter, flook and stared.

But Clive paid no heed to Taggles. He was then thinking of the glass eye that Uncle George had not got. If additional proof were needed, the fact that uncle had been speaking to Figgins would have supplied it.

So Clive returned to Study No. 9 in a cheerful frame of mind. The door was locked, but at the sound of Clive's voice Levinson turned the key in the lock.

"Well?" asked Cardew. "And who was it?"

"Kerr!" grinned Clive. "Anyway, he had no glass eye—and I caught him talking to Figgys."

"Good! That settles it, then!"

"Now, what about telling the others?" Cardew shook his head.

"Tell Blake, Digby, and Herries, and Tom Merry & Co.; but don't tell Gussy—he'd probably call Kerr by his right name."

"Ha, ha! Yes! I'll tell them," said Clive.

"Good! I'm cutting dinner." And Clive cut off to tell Blake and Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 6.

Entertaining Uncle.

"H UH-HUH!" Kerr, or, rather, Uncle George, poked his head in Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Clive, looking up from his book. "Won't you come in?"

"Er—huh-huh!—yes, I will, thank you! Extraordinary day—what?"

"Yes, sir—quite."

Leivison came in, and gave Uncle George a swift glance. Clive introduced him as another friend of Ralph's, and all seemed to go as merrily as a marriage bell.

"If you'll excuse me a sec, sir, I'll go and hunt up Ralph."

"Yes, certainly! Huh-huh!"

Clive rushed along the passage to Study No. 9 and flung open the door.

"Hallo!" grunted Blake. "Uncle arrived?"

"Yes," grinned Clive. "He's in our study now—Ralph!"

Arthur Augustus was not in the study, so Clive shut the door and gave vent to a prodigious chuckle.

"Where's Gus?" he asked.

"Upstairs, dressing for the occasion. He's only been there two hours!" sighed Digby. "So you needn't expect him for another three yet."

"Splendid! Now, don't you forget, you chaps, Blake's Cardew. You haven't told Gussy that?"

"Yes; he had to be told sooner or later."

"Good!"

"He's a bit wild with his noble kinsman for exhibiting such bad form to visitors, though."

"Never mind! Can't be helped. Come when you're ready." Kerr can't say much except that you've changed. You see, he's not supposed to have seen you for years."

"No; but I want to see his face when you call me Ralph!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clive ran back to Study No. 6.

Kerr had seated himself comfortably in an armchair—or, rather, the armchair, for the study only boasted of one.

"Huh-huh! Where's the young rascal—what?"

"Won't be long now, sir," said Clive.

"He said he'd be along any moment." Kerr looked daggers at Clive and

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you! But I'm afraid that I—huh-huh!—don't know you. Extraordinary!"

"I'm a friend of Ralph's," explained Clive hastily. "Ralph cannot come—he's detained, so he asked me to come and pay his compliments, and I think he'll be able to see you after dinner, sir."

"Yes, yes! Huh-huh! And how's little Ralph?"

"Very well!" said Clive, looking closely at Uncle George.

"Oh, yes! Huh-huh! What's that? Extraordinary!"

"That's the dinner-bell, sir! I must be off. Shall you come to tea, sir?"

"Tea? Huh-huh! Yes, yes, of course! Good-morning!"

Once clear of the Head's garden, Clive gave vent to a loud yell of laughter, and executed an impromptu fling,

Levison. But they sat without even a smile, and stolidly returned his glare.

"By the way, sir, do you remember a fellow named D'Arcy?"

"D'Arcy? I seem to know the name."

"He's a cousin of Ralph's, sir," explained Clive.

"Yes, yes!" said Kerr hastily. "My Jove, yes! Lord Eastwood's son—what? Lord Eastwood and I were at school together. Young boulder! Extraordinary! And young D'Arcy is here! I must—huh-huh!—see him."

"Yes, sir. Shall I fetch him?"

"Ah, yes, if you would, my boy!"

Clive went off to fetch D'Arcy, while Levison remained to see that the New House junior did not damage the study.

Kerr stared at Levison, who seemed to be highly amused at something.

It occurred to Kerr that it was possible that the plot had been discovered. Yet—but there was nothing to warrant suspicion. Only he, Figgins, and Wynn knew the plot, and none of them had disclosed it.

The study door opened, to admit the noble person of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Huh-huh! Master D'Arcy! Good-afternoon! How are you—what?"

"Very well, thank you, dear sir! My path has often spoken of you."

"Ah, yes! Extraordinary! Sit down, my boy, and have a chat."

"Yes, wathah, dear boy—I mean, dear sir!"

Arthur Augustus sat down carefully, and hitched up his well-oiled trousers, displaying a few inches of socks of startling hue and even more startling pattern.

Kerr's eyes were riveted on the socks, and Arthur Augustus coloured slightly.

Here was Kerr's chance to test whether his secret was known. It would be an easy matter to trap D'Arcy. As soon as D'Arcy told him he was Kerr, he would make a bolt for it.

"Ah, and you are in the New House, my boy?" asked Kerr, watching Arthur Augustus narrowly.

But the swell of St. Jim's answered without the ghost of a smile.

"No, sir; the School House."

"Ah, I was in the New House!"

"Weally? The gov'nah was in the School House, I think. I wemembah him sayin' so."

"Yes, yes, we often had little argu-

ments—huh-huh! I suppose you do now?"

"Yaas, wathah! Of course, we get the best of it, you know; but Figgy & Co. are good sports."

"Ah!"

"My young friends here were telling me about a—huh-huh!—actor, Kerr—"

"Oh, yaas, Kerr is jolly clevah! As a mattah of fact, theah is only one bettah actor in the school—"

"Oh!"

"Yaas; but modesty forbids my mentionin' his name."

"Oh, you!" said Kerr, in a somewhat disparaging tone.

"But Jove! How evah did you guess that, sir?"

Kerr grinned.

"Wheah's Blake—I mean, Cardew?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Just coming," said Clive, giving Arthur Augustus a dark look.

The door opened, and three juniors entered.

"Here's Ralph!" said Clive, bringing Blake forward.

Blake gave Uncle George a cheerful grin, and a hearty handshake that made Kerr's fingers ache.

Kerr gave a gasp of amazement. This was distinctly a new development. What was in the wind? From Arthur Augustus' innocent remark he felt assured that he was safe. But what did this mean?

His mind worked quickly, and he decided that Uncle George might be an uncle whom Cardew particularly wanted not to meet.

"Well, well! Extraordinary!" muttered Kerr. "How you've changed! When I first saw you, you were a nice, good-looking little fellow—"

Kerr shook his head sadly at the change that had taken place in the years between.

"Tea's all ready," said Clive, with a slight grin. "Come on! Here's your place, uncle!"

Kerr sat down in the chair Clive had motioned him to, and gazed at the feast before him with pleasurable anticipation.

Anyway, if his real identity were known, there was time to have a good feed, and that he intended to do.

"Cake, uncle?"

"Pass uncle the jam!"

And so the feast started.

But how would it end?

CHAPTER 7.

Uncle "Stands Sam."

"WONDER how old Kerr's getting on?"

Thus George Figgins, as he paced the small platform at Wayland Junction. He made the remark aloud, and apparently to Fatty Wynn. But Fatty Wynn was too busily occupied with an automatic machine to bother about his chum's remarks.

So Figgins answered the question himself. It had suddenly occurred to him that Cardew's uncle might refuse to be kept away from St. Jim's. He might be some crusty little tartar who would insist on seeing the Head. If he were, then the fat would be in the proverbial fire.

But all thoughts of Kerr's possible misfortunes at the school were banished from his mind as the express dashed into the station.

It would not be a difficult matter to pick out Uncle George from the farmers who usually alighted—that is, if Uncle George came by that particular train.

Fatty Wynn tore himself away from the machine, and wiped a smear from his mouth, leaving a dull brown mark on his cheek.

The train drew to a grunting halt, as

if it were disgruntled at having to stop at the little market town, and wanted to dash off again.

Doors opened all along the train, and the ancient porter, who seemed part and parcel of the station, called out:

"Way—land! Change here for 'lloombe!"

From a first-class compartment farther up the train an elderly gentleman alighted, slamming the door behind him.

He stood for a moment looking round him, as if expectant to see a friend.

Figgins gave him one glance, then determined that it was Uncle George. And he was right.

From the top of his light-brown hat to the tips of his patent boots the little man was distinctly what Figgins had expected to see.

The hat was tilted on one side, giving the wearer a look of reckless abandon; which in a younger person might have been dubbed "doggy," while the wide-necked collar and flowing bow added greatly to the picture. Monocle, spats, orchid, everything was there.

Figgins strode forward, with Fatty Wynn at his heels.

"Hallo, uncle!" he exclaimed, extending his hand.

"Huh-huh!"

Uncle George, with an elaborate gesture, fixed his monocle into his eye, and regarded Figgins through it.

"Extraordinary! How you have altered, Ralph!"

"Yes, uncle. Let me introduce you to a great chum of mine—Wynn."

"Huh-huh! And how are you, Master Thin?"

"Wynn, sir!"

"Windsor!"

"No, sir! I mean my name's Wynn," explained Fatty.

"Ah, yes! Of course."

Several farmers stood open-mouthed at the "sporty" old gentleman, wondering who he might be, and Figgins was rather anxious to get off the station.

But not so Uncle George, apparently.

"Well, well, Ralph! What a fine colour you have! Huh!"

Figgins reddened. There was still some trace of the red paint left on his face, and he felt it useless to explain how it happened.

"Yes, sir," he mumbled. "Hadn't we better be going?"

"Eh? I hope you're not consumptive. Huh-huh! When I was in Africa in '83 I knew a man with a colour just like that. He died in three weeks, poor fellow!"

"Yes, but—"

"I'm not so sure that you ought to be about. I'll speak to Dr. Holmes about it. Huh-huh! Have you seen a doctor, my boy?"

"Nunno! It's nothing, uncle, really!"

"Ah, that's what this—huh-huh!—fellow said! Just like you, too! Nice fellow; rather ugly, though! Extraordinary!"

Figgins went redder as some of the farmers chuckled. He wondered if the game was going to be worth the candle. But it was too late to turn back now, for Kerr was in the enemy's camp.

He picked up Uncle George's bag to prevent further converse, and led the way to the exit.

"This way, uncle!"

"Huh-huh—yes!"

The three made their way to the entrance, followed by two or three yokels.

Uncle George gave up his ticket, and they passed through the entrance.

Outside, Figgins gave a gasp of dismay. Three juniors stood on the pavement,

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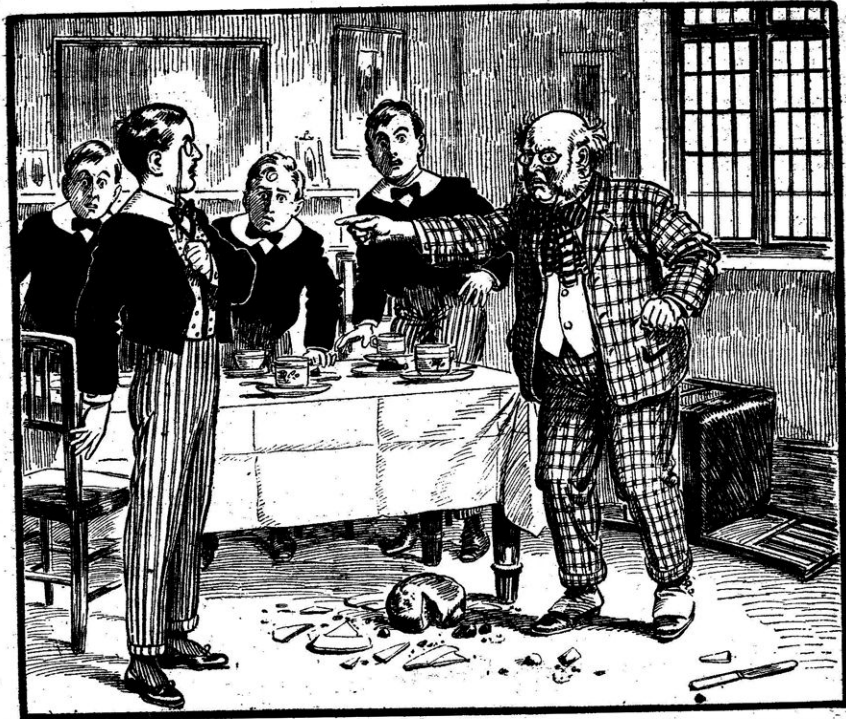
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4 Splendid Stories

Prizes for Painting



The bogus Uncle George took the cake suspiciously, and took a bite. A yell broke the silence, and D'Arcy staggered back in amazement as the vis for flung the cake on the ground. "You—you—you—young scoundrel!" spluttered Uncle George. (See chapter 8.)

and greeted the New House leader with cheerful grins.

"Tom Merry!"

"Hallo, old man! Fancy meeting you!" Figgins whistled in dismay. Here was a poser. If Tom Merry called him Figg the game would be up! And he couldn't let Tom Merry into his confidence.

"Huh-huh! Friends of yours?" said Uncle George.

The Terrible Three grinned amiably.

"Nunno! I mean, yes. Let me introduce you, uncle. Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther!" said the confused Figgins.

The Terrible Three bowed respectfully. "Very pleased to meet you, sir," they said.

"Huh-huh! Well, well! Quite a merry party—what? Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha! Good joke!" chuckled Lowther.

"Didn't know you had your uncle coming, Figg," said Tom Merry, with a mysterious grin.

"Nunno!"

"Huh-huh! What do you boys say to something to eat?"

"Jolly good idea, sir!" said Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn could always "do" with a feed at any moment of the day. "I know a place near here—"

"Fatty always does!" chuckled Lowther. "If Fatty ever dies and sends messages from beyond the veil, the very

first thing he'll say will be, 'I've found a little place where you can get topping steak-and-kidney pies, just round the corner—'

"Ha, ha! Huh-huh! Well, come and have some now, boys! Reminds me of the good old days—what?"

"I suppose so, sir," said Tom Merry.

Figgins marched along in silence. Apparently Uncle George had not noticed that Tom Merry had called him "Figg," and, after all, what reason had uncle to suspect?

"Shall we go to the Majestic?" asked Fatty. "That's the best place, Figg!"

Figgins gave him a glance, but it was too late.

"Figg!" said Uncle George. "Is that your nickname, my boy?"

"Er—yes, uncle!" said Figgins confusedly. "As a matter of fact, I once made a fig-pudding that went wrong," he added, with one eye on the Terrible Three.

"Really?" said Uncle George. "Quite a good name. 'Pudding' might have been appropriate."

But the Terrible Three only grinned.

"It's rather early for the Majestic," said Tom Merry. "They don't serve afternoon teas."

"Oh!" said Figgins. He had hoped to spend some considerable time in the Majestic.

"Well, well, never mind! Is there a theatre?" said Uncle George. "We can have dinner afterwards. I came down—huh-huh!—to treat my nephew, so treat him I will. We will go to a theatre."

"Right-ho, uncle! It's awfully good of you!" said Figgins, brightening up. By the time the show was finished Kerr would have finished his fell work.

They reached the Empire, and found that the matinee had just begun.

"Well, here we are, boys!" said Uncle George cheerfully. "Now, where's the box-office? Well, here's a note, Ralph. Get six stalls."

Figgins took the note, and glanced at the Terrible Three to see if they had heard the "Ralph." But apparently they had not.

He took the note and passed it through the netting to the painstakingly-blonde damsel behind.

"Ten pounds!" she said. "Can't change it! Haven't you any smaller?"

Figgins took out his pocket-book and gave her two pound-notes in silence.

"Here you are, uncle," he said. "The girl couldn't change the tenner."

"Oh! Well, I'll change it at the Majestic. How much do I owe you?"

"One-ten," said Figgins.

And he led the little party into the somewhat smoky interior.

The Empire was not a particularly brilliant theatre, being occasionally a music-hall, at its name inferred. To-day, however, Blobson's Celebrated Company was giving a performance of "Blood Talk," which was, naturally, a cut above vaudeville. At least, so Mr. Blobson thought.

The show was far from being funny; but throughout the whole performance the Terrible Three bore cheerful grins, and seemed to be shaking with suppressed mirth, at which Figgins wondered much and puzzled more, but found no solution. Uncle George also seemed very cheerful. Figgins was finding the afternoon rather expensive. For, as uncle had no change, he had to pay for the large box of chocolates that uncle ordered and Fatty Wynn consumed. But it was in a good cause. And as he thought of Kerr, Figgins, too, found something to chuckle at.

And so, while around them the local people wept at the life-tragedy being enacted on the stage, five of the party of seven in the front row gave vent to spasmodic chuckles, while the sixth munched chocolate.

CHAPTER 8.

Facing the Music.

KERR rubbed his hands, and took one of the cakes that had been proffered him.

Then he took a sip at his tea. Then he pulled a wry face.

"Ugh!" he said, with a shudder. "Have you—huh-huh!—put any sugar in this?"

"Yes, sir; two lumps," said Clive.

"H'm! I'll have some more, please!" He passed up his cup, and watched Digby put in another lump. His suspicions that Uncle George might be an unpopular uncle were confirmed, and he determined to feel his way, and, in the words of the proverb, look before he leapt.

He took another sip at the tea, and, though not wholly pleasant, it was better than it had been before.

"This is tea?" he inquired sarcastically.

"Yes, rather, sir!" replied Digby.

"Jolly good tea!"

"H'm!"

Kerr took a bite at his cake, then, to the apparent amazement of the tea-party, jumped wildly into the air, sending his cup and saucer flying, and sending the air with a terrifying yell.

"Yarooogh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus sprang to his feet in surprise. He knew Cardew's uncle to be somewhat eccentric, but he had not thought the old gentleman mad until now—and certainly madness alone could account for his present conduct.

"What on earth—!" said Levison.

But a faint grin played round the corners of his mouth, which Kerr was too excited to note. Herries managed to turn a laugh into a cough, and in so doing dislodged a crumb, so that he had to be led, half-choking, from the study.

Kerr, still with a tinge of red of face, glared round him savagely.

"You—you—you—!" he spluttered.

He grabbed a cup of tea and wished some of the beverage round his tortured mouth. Then he picked up his cake and examined it.

"Inside was a quantity of mustard!"

"We are awfully sorry!" said Blake.

"Try another!"

"You young imps!" he roared. "Is this the way you treat your uncle?"

Kerr was distinctly annoyed, for, apart from the unpleasant taste of the mustard, he had the feeling that he, instead of

being the ragged, was the ragged. And that was decidedly annoying.

"Nunno!" stuttered Blake, concealing a grin. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!"

Kerr pointed a trembling hand at the offending cake.

"Mustard!" he gasped hoarsely.

"Bai Jove! How wotten! It must be those New House wotkaws!"

"What?"

This indeed added insult to injury. But Arthur Augustus' face was perfectly calm, and as innocent as the day.

"Yas, sir. We wagged them the othah day, and pewwaps they have wetailed in this mannah. Twy mine, sir!"

Kerr gave the swell of St. Jim's a penetrating look. The offer was made in all sincerity, and he could but accept.

It was hardly feasible that mustard would be placed for Arthur Augustus' consumption.

So the bogus Uncle George took the cake, and, after looking at it rather suspiciously, took a bite.

A yell broke the almost painful silence.

"Bai Jove!"

D'Arcy staggered back in amazement as the visitor flung the cake on the floor and danced round it.

If looks could kill, Arthur Augustus would have dropped dead.

"You—you—you young scoundrel!" spluttered Uncle George, in a choked voice, shaking his fist at the amazed D'Arcy. "You did that purposely—you—"

Arthur Augustus blinked at the New House junior in mute amazement. Not being in the plot, he could not understand it at all.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped at length.

"I will not sit at table with that unprincipled young scoundrel!" shouted Kerr, pointing to the swell of St. Jim's.

"You'd better go, Gus!" whispered Blake.

As in a dream, D'Arcy wandered to the door. It was quite clear in his mind that Figgins had prepared the cakes knowing that Cardew's uncle would arrive. But he could not explain to Uncle George. For that gentleman was not an easy person to whom one could make explanations.

So Gus, like the Arabs, folded his tent, and as silently stole away, but with as much dignity as he could muster.

"Young scoundrel!" muttered Kerr. "Huh-huh! Another cup of tea, please! The last one seems to have met with a rather unfortunate fate!"

Blake, as he looked ruefully at the soaked carpet, had the consolation of knowing that the roof of Kerr's mouth must be very warm.

Kerr took the second cup of tea, and swallowed it in a mouthful. There was no salt in it this time.

He looked at his watch.

"I shall have to be going," he said.

"But first—huh-huh!—I must see the old New House—what?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, my boys, would you like to see how we used to clear the table in the old days—what?"

"Nunno! Ahem! I mean—"

But what Blake meant never transpired, for Kerr, raising the table at his end, tilted it until the cakes, dishes, jam, butter, tea, and crockery slid down on Jack Blake's lap.

Blake gave a dismal howl.

"M-my hat!" gasped Digby. "Mob him!"

Already Kerr had been allowed too much licence.

Kerr made a rush for the door, and Herries, who was returning, met him half-way. There was a yell, and the two sat down suddenly.

Kerr hopped up and grabbed a poker from the grate.

"Stand back!" he gasped.

Clive, Levison, and Digby jumped back as Kerr made a reckless swipe.

Crash!

The clock fell to the grate, where it lay in a thousand fragments.

But, before he could do more damage the School House juniors bore down on him, and he went to the floor once more.

"Now, you funny New House bouncer, you're going through it!" hooted Herries.

Kerr started. So they had known him all along then.

"You rotters!" he gasped. "I give you best!"

"Good! It will save trouble!"

"You knew all along, you rotters!"

"We did, grinned Clive, "and we know where Fatty and Figgys are."

Jack, who the extricated himself from an unwholesome mass of crockery, jam, and butter.

"We'll spare you, Kerr," he said. "No teasing, and no buttering. We'll leave you to your friend the enemy."

"What's the game?" muttered Kerr.

"Wait and see!"

And with that historic injunction Kerr had to be satisfied.

CHAPTER 9.

Paying the Piper!

"WELL!" said Uncle George, as the party emerged from the theatre. "What now?"

"Oh, anywhere!" said Figgins, rather vaguely.

"How about some dinner?" asked Uncle George, rubbing his hands.

"Jolly good idea, sir!" said Fatty Wynn, as usual.

"Come along, then! A little dinner—huh-huh!—will be most appropriate—what?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" grinned Lowther.

"To the Majestic!" said uncle, in imitation of the theatre tragedians.

And Fatty Wynn once more led the way to the Majestic.

The people in the lounge stared rather curiously at the party as it wended its way through the swing-doors.

Uncle George insisted on going round twice, because, he said, he liked it. It reminded him of crossing the Channel.

When they had succeeded in extricating him from its fascinations, they made their way through the large dining-hall to a corner table.

"Not large enough for six," said Uncle George, with a wise shake of the head.

"We want another table."

"Yes, it would certainly be better," said Lowther.

And the others nodded agreement.

"No waiter to be seen," said uncle, scanning the room while he shaded his eye, sailor fashion. "Then we had best help ourselves."

Walking up to an inoffensive table that stood near by, he dragged it unresistingly across to the other one. The two together provided ample seating accommodation for the party.

"Now, uncle rubbed his hands—"I think we will dine a-carte—what?"

"Oh, rather, sir!" said Fatty Wynn. "Your tables d'hotel are awful! I usually have three sets."

"Really?"

Figgins gave his fat chum a dark look.

"Yes, sir?"

A waiter came strolling up, and took the orders.

In a few minutes the party was taking the keen edge off its appetite.

Fatty Wynn, as usual, was going strong.

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Uncle George, who appeared not to be a big eater, gave up, and took to watching Fatty Wynn. He said it gave him as much pleasure as eating himself.

And, really, it was well worth watching. Two portions of each course were served him, and he had finished them before the others had finished their one. "Extraordinary!" murmured uncle faintly. "Would you care for a third helping, my poor boy?"

"Nunno, thanks, sir! It's the weather. This weather always makes me hungry."

But even Fatty had had enough at last, and with a contented sigh he leaned back in his chair.

"Coffee," said Uncle George. And coffee was brought.

"Won't you have a cake, Thynn?"

"No, sir, thanks very much, but I—I don't think I'd better!"

"I see, I see! Waiter, some cakes!" The cakes were brought, and with them a cigar for uncle.

Tom Merry frowned. But whether at the cakes or uncle's cigar was a moot point. There seemed nothing wrong with the cakes.

Fatty found that he had room for the cakes, and they vanished in record time.

Figgins began to speculate as to the size of the bill—a small item that to uncle seemed to be non-existent as he smoked his expensive cigar.

Suddenly he took a watch from his pocket, and whistled in dismay.

"Phew! I've missed the last train!"

"What?"

Figgins gave a gasp of dismay.

"Yes, very unfortunate. Still, I have no doubt Dr. Holmes can put me up at the school."

"Oh!"

"I should think so, sir," said Manners.

"Er—er—suppose the Head's not in?" said Figgins desperately. "Better drop him a—a-a line—"

"No, my boy. I must see him. It would—huh-huh—be extremely discourteous, extremely so, not to pay him a visit when I am in the vicinity."

"Water!" called Mr. Cardew, in blissful ignorance of Figgins' predicament.

"Bill, please!"

The waiter made out the bill, and Mr. Cardew drew some change from his pocket.

"All the change I have; just about right," he mumbled, and left it on the table.

Figgins fetched the hats and coats, and they made their way to the pay-desk.

Bill in hand, Mr. Cardew advanced. Then, with a look of pained surprise, drew his hand from his pocket—empty. He felt in all his pockets, and found nothing.

"Extraordinary!" he muttered.

"Perhaps I have been robbed."

Figgins gave an audible gasp. He had caught a glimpse of the bill.

"This is very annoying," said Uncle George.

"Very!" echoed Figgins, somewhat sarcastically.

He wondered who was going to pay the bill.

"However," said Mr. Cardew, "I have my cheque-book!"

The queen of the pay desk shook her golden locks.

"Nothing doing!" she said, in a tone that was far from polite. "We've been there before!"

"B-been there b-before! What does the girl mean?" ejaculated Uncle George.

"She means that cheques are napoo," chuckled Lowther. "You have received a severe check, sir."

"Dear me, yes! Well, Ralph, you pay now, and perhaps Dr. Holmes will cash a cheque for me. Let me see, I owe you one pound ten shillings for the theatre, and four pounds now—that is five pounds ten."

"Yes, uncle," said Figgins.

He felt in his pocket, and dragged out a handful of papers. Luckily he had received a remittance that week, and had some money left. The theatre had diminished his funds, but he still had three currency notes for a pound each, and these he handed over to the girl. With a resigned shrug of the shoulders, he turned to the others.

"Another quid wanted!" he said briefly.

"I think I've got a ten-bob note," said Fatty Wynn.

He dived into his pockets, and from the clutches of a piece of toffee and a penknife he extricated a ten-shilling note.

Figgins took it, and turned to Tom Merry & Co.

In silence Tom Merry handed him a two-shilling piece.

Manners solemnly gave five shillings, while Lowther, with a grin, made up the required amount.

"Well, thank goodness that's paid!" said Figgins, in relief.

"Yes. Thanks awfully for the feed, Mr. Cardew!" said Tom Merry.

"It was splendid!" agreed Manners and Lowther.

"Ra-ther!" said Fatty Wynn reminiscently.

And Figgins made a curious noise in his throat.

Tom Merry led the way back to the school, while Fatty lagged behind; he had more to carry than the others.

The gates loomed into sight, and Figgins had half a mind to turn and run. Examination would have to be made, and Figgins had doubts of how Mr. Cardew would take them.

For some reason there was quite a little crowd in the gateway, and Figgins' fears were doubled. It seemed rather as though Kerr had been bowled out.

Blake & Co. greeted Figgins with cheerful grins. Someone appeared to be concealed in their midst; but Figgins' mind was too busily occupied with other things to notice it.

Suddenly Uncle George stopped dead.

"Cheer-up, Figgys!" he said.

George Figgins jumped clear of the ground, and blinked at Uncle George.

"What the— Cardew!" he howled. Cardew, wig and whiskers in hand, bowed dramatically.

"The same!" he said. "Many thanks for a most enjoyable, though somewhat expensive afternoon!"

"You— you— you bounder! You swindler! Lemme gerrat him!"

Figgins made a mad rush, but the crowd, which was noticeably School House in composition, warded him off.

Cardew dodged behind it.

Then a figure darted out across the quad—a somewhat stout figure in a light lounge suit.

Figgins, with a bellow of rage, dashed after it, with Wynn at his heels.

Strange to say, the crowd now hung back.

But Figgins paid no heed. He overtook the stranger and bore him to the ground. Wynn dashed up, and plumped on the disguised junior's chest.

"Take that!" hooted Figgins.

"And that!" supplemented Wynn.

The unfortunate victim took them protestingly, and his muffled yells rang across the quad.

The crowd doubled itself up in unsympathetic mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Geroot, Figgys!"

Figgins jumped off his victim as though he had suddenly become red-hot.

"What— Kerr!"

"Kerr!" stammered Wynn.

George Kerr sat up and blinked at his chums.

From across the quad came a shriek of laughter. And a shadowy form, distinguishable as that of an elderly gentleman, could be seen doing a wild war dance.

"Done again!" came the yell.

"What feed?" mumbled Kerr to his chums.

"A—a feed we had in the village—"

"At Figgins' expense!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "But, my! It was prime!"

And across the quad floated another burst of laughter, which, like the feed, was at Figgins' Expense.

THE END.

(Another grand, long, complete story of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "Tabbot's Find," by Martin Clifford. Order your "Gem" Library in advance.)

GEMS.

NOT HIS FAULT.

A little boy went to school for the first time, and the teacher, as soon as he noticed the new face, called him out.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Thomas Richards, and I'm five years old," he answered.

The teacher seemed to be very doubtful about this, so told him to bring his name, age, and date of birth on a piece of paper.

In the afternoon, when Tommy appeared again at school, he searched—in his pocket, only to find that he had lost the paper.

"I've lost it, ma'am!" he cried, bursting into tears.

"Lost what?" asked the teacher kindly.

"Please, teacher, my excuse for being born!"

HE WANTED IT.

A gentleman was walking along the street one day when he saw a diminutive youth place an apple on a doorstep and turn away.

"Here, my lad!" he said. "You do wrong in placing that apple there. Some poor boy might be tempted to steal it!"

"That's just what I want," guffawed the youth. "I've hollowed the inside out and filled it with mustard!"

IN HASTE.

On his way home the other day Jones met a married friend of his running homewards at top speed, with a curious parcel under his arm.

"Hallo, Jim!" he yelled. "Why this hurry?"

"Jim did not stop, but shouted over his shoulder:

"New hat for my wife! Running before it is out of fashion!"

AWKWARD!

Cook: "The gas stove has gone out, mum!"

Lady: "Well, can't you light it again?"

Cook: "But it's gone out through the roof!" was the reply.

Another of Michael Poole's Immensely Popular School Stories.

THE BOY FROM AUSTRALIA



A Splendid Tale of Dickie Dexter & Co. at St. Katie's. By MICHAEL POOLE.

CHAPTER I.

The Kangaroo Arrives.

"It isn't quite playing the game," Bill Strong said slowly. "Mean to say, it's turning this jolly little stuffy of ours into a sort of nursing-home for mothers' pets!"

He didn't speak nastily or bitterly, but you could tell he felt hurt about it, and he looked at the Kid and Dobbie for agreement with his views.

The Kid spoke first, and let himself go.

"Playing the game?" he demanded.

"It's finished me, Bill! I can see everything now. We know where we are and what we are. Playthings, puppets, and all that sort of thing, for the amusement of the Beak and Jolly Roger, and any other creature that happens to wear a gown. We're learning sense at last, Bill. Never again! When Sammy Steed said 'Take it easy' we slacked; when Jolly Roger said 'Reform!' didn't we reform? Look at us now! We're the best and brightest collection of tame mice in the whole school!"

"That's right!" agreed Dobbie.

"And when they pushed the untamed Brontosaurus on to me, did I kick? Did you kick?" The Kid was getting quite hot with righteous indignation.

"Not a bit! I looked after the Bronto, licked him, and loved him. What's the reward?"

They take the tamed and gentle Bronto from us and say: 'Here is a wild and woolly Australian aborigine, sent to us for special treatment. We expect you to make him happy, and break him in gently. We shall hold you responsible for his future! My giddy aunt! Hold me while I weep!'"

When you come to look fairly and squarely at the facts of the case, it really did look as though the Beak and Jolly Roger were amusing themselves with Study No. 10. Brontox, the untamed

American, had been pushed into their study. They had brought him up to be a gentle little lamb, and now he had gone to another study with two other fellows.

Jolly Roger himself had admitted that the Kid had done well. Yet almost before the Bronto had departed the three were informed that a new boy, who was coming all the way from Australia, was to be put in their study for a time.

"He has never been to England before," Jolly Roger had explained while they were still gasping. "and I want you to take him in hand, and just show him gently all our methods and customs. I have no doubt you will find him interesting, as I gather that he has spent a great part of his life on a sheep-farm. Doubtless, he will need a little—ah—taming, but I am quite sure I can leave him safely in your hands. He will probably arrive during the course of to-day, and the headmaster wishes me to say that he is holding you responsible for the boy's future. His name is Curtis."

Roger had beamed upon them, but they were too crushed for a time to think of any funny questions to ask him. Not until he had gone did they sit up and discuss the matter.

"He thinks we'll tame him as we did the Bronto," said the Kid. "We will! But this will be swifter! It took us nearly three weeks to change the bucking Bronto, but three hours will settle the noble Kangaroo! I s'pose he'll come in with a boomerang and a stock-whip, and have one of those lassoes tied round him? Right! We'll tame him! Listen to me, Bill!"

The Kid proceeded. He laid down the plan of campaign and the method of procedure. From the first moment he entered the study the Kangaroo would have their strict attention. There was to be nothing gentle about the business, and if Roger complained—let him! It would

be Bill's duty to play the heavy father part of the programme, but Dobbie and the Kid would support him.

"Don't make any mistake, Bill," the Kid urged. "In the first five minutes we give him the shock of his life. We'll make the Kangaroo think he's met the real original bushrangers from his native hills, and we'll have him gasping. Before the day's out he'll be following me round like a pet lamb. We'll tame him!"

"Then we'll go to Jolly Roger," Dobbie suggested, "and tell him gently that—"

A tap came at the door, and Bill Strong yelled out. The door opened, and a fellow about as tall as Bill stood in the doorway. He was not so broad as Bill, however, and there was a sort of easy grace about him, which you couldn't help noticing. It might have been the fact that his clothes fitted him perfectly, or it might have been the pleasant little smile which flickered about his lips, but even Dexter realized that the stranger was a good-looking kind of fellow.

His complexion was rather like Jolly Roger's—a glowing, cheery red, but his eyes were more like Dickie Dexter's. Just a shade more wide-open than they ought to be, it seemed, and this gave him that same innocent, wondering, plaintive sort of look that the Kid himself had.

"Hallo!" he nodded, with a very faint touch of nervousness. "This is Study No. 10, isn't it? My name's Curtis. I had a letter saying I'd be put in Study No. 10, Transitus Form."

Bill Strong looked swiftly at the Kid. It was a bit awkward to start the programme, because this chap really wasn't like the Kangaroo they were expecting.

"Oh, come in!" said the Kid. "You've found the right spot. We heard a short time ago about you, and were arranging a little welcome for you. 'Tm

Dexter, otherwise the Kid, the world's celebrated tamer of brontos, rhinos, tigers, and kangaroos. This is Bill Strong, heavy-weight champion of the earth and the planet Mars. And this is Dobbin, the famous Turkish torturer. Just to let you know how we amuse ourselves in our leisure hours, Professor Strong will now show you—

He winked at Bill, and the big man of Study No. 10 stood up. He didn't quite like this part of the programme at all, especially now that he had seen the Kangaroo, who seemed quite a pleasant animal. However, the taming programme had to begin.

He advanced calmly towards Curtis, who was now standing, a little puzzled and uncertain in the centre of the room. Bill brought his arms up in the manner of a wrestler.

"It's all for your own good," he murmured softly, as he suddenly flung his arms out to grip the Kangaroo around the waist.

The intention was to lift Curtis from his feet, give him a few jerks and twists, and plant him firmly on his back on the floor. Bill, Dobbin, and the Kid would then proceed to sit upon him, and explain a little more fully what their desires were.

Of course, it was bound to be a surprise for Curtis, but as the Kid had said, he would be all the better for it later on, and Bill Strong had also remarked that it was all for his own good.

So Bill's arms went out. Just exactly what happened in the next two and a quarter seconds even the Kid, watching intently, did not quite grasp. Curtis seemed to stiffen up in astonishment; one of his arms flew up and accidentally hit Bill on the chin. The other arm appeared to flash round like a well-greased streak of lightning.

Then the onlookers had a cinema picture of big Bill Strong tucked away somewhere under Curtis' left arm, and for a fraction of a second both were doing a Salome dance. In the next fifth of a second Bill seemed to release his hold and simply dropped to the floor, his arms outspread, while his feet made ineffective wriggles, the only result of which was to kick over the chair nearest him.

Curtis was still standing upright, and was still smiling very gently and a little apologetically.

It roused the Kid. He realised that the programme was somehow going completely wrong.

"Come on, Dobbin!" he jerked out. "Get up, Bill! Now, Curtis!"

He flung himself on to the Kangaroo, and Dobbin charged in after him.

"Ah—I'm sorry!" Curtis was murmuring, and again even a wise-fight reporter would have found it difficult to follow exactly what happened in the next one and seven-eighths seconds. The Kid didn't really stop in his whirlwind charge at all. Apparently he miscalculated where Curtis was standing, and got mixed up with the right arm that the Kangaroo shot out.

Anyhow, the net result was that Dickie Dexter turned a somersault, and landed in the middle of Bill Strong's shoulders just as he was trying to get up.

Dobbin put up his arms wildly, trying to do quite a lot in a short time. He was intended to keep the Kid on his feet, help Bill Strong up, and put Curtis down, but in less time than he had thought all this out he was sprawling ungracefully over his two friends on the floor.

"I—I really am sorry!" Curtis was trying to explain again, as Dobbin began

to struggle to his feet. "It was only a joke, wasn't it? I haven't hurt—"

The door opened. As Dickie Dexter extricated himself from Bill Strong, and managed to stand upright, he saw another figure standing in the doorway. It was the Beak himself!

"Dexter—there was an unpleasant sting in the Head's voice—what does this mean? You are not— Ah, Curtis! I heard that you had arrived. You should have reported to me first."

"I'm very sorry, sir," Curtis was standing very upright, and even the Head felt that he was nervous and a little afraid. "I thought I ought to come to the study first of all. I'm sorry, sir!"

"That's all right!" the Beak snapped. "But this—" He waved his hand quickly to the overturned chair and the slowly-rising form of Bill Strong. "They were not trying to fight with you already. Were you fighting, Dexter—Strong?"

The Kid, just for the moment, felt a little dazed, and he wanted time to think out a decent excuse. Before he could begin the Kangaroo was explaining.

"It's my fault, sir," he said contritely. "I was just showing them a few tricks in j-u-jitsu, sir. They were interested. But perhaps I did it a little too roughly, sir."

"Oh, I see!" The Head laughed at that. Just for a moment he had had a vague suspicion that Strong & Co. had been trying games on the new boy. Apart from that he hadn't the least objection to the study occupants amusing themselves with new knowledge.

"You had better come to my study at four o'clock, Curtis," the Head went on. "I should like to see you before you really settle down. Meantime, I'm sure that Dexter and Strong and Dobbin will tell you anything you wish to know, and will make you very happy."

"They—they've been telling me that, sir," Curtis said, still a little hesitantly and nervous, because he was a new boy. "We—we're quite good friends already, sir."

"I am glad," said the Beak, and passed out again.

Bill Strong and the Kid, to say nothing of Dobbin, regarded the Kangaroo in wonder. He felt their gaze upon him, and turned to them.

"I'm so sorry, you chaps—" he began. "I mean— Of course, it was only a joke, wasn't it? But the Head turning up— That was the Head, I suppose? I didn't let you down at all, did I?"

He really looked very anxious and perplexed. Bill Strong tried to think out a suitable remark—a sort of apology and compliment combined—and, as usual, it was the Kid who spoke first.

He picked up the chair which had fallen, and waved the Kangaroo towards it.

"Welcome home, Curtis!" said the Kid. "Did I say I was a tamer of kangaroos, Bill? Did you say you would place him on the floor? It was a mistake, Bill! We live and learn. You'll be one of us henceforth and henceforward, O noble Kangaroo! Consider yourself tamed, and don't show me any more j-u-jitsu tricks just yet! I forgive you freely. But we do not forgive Jolly Roger! Let us talk of the animal. Bring out the biscuits, Dobbin, and likewise the squash, and let us make merry together while we tell our young friend about this little misunderstanding."

CHAPTER 2.

Arranged for Roger's Benefit.

UP to a point Dickie Dexter's speculations regarding the taming of the Kangaroo were correct. He said that the job would be all over in less than three hours.

As a matter of fact, Curtis was "one of us" in something under an hour. There might have been trouble, of course, over the first little incident of the j-u-jitsu exhibition; but, fortunately, all the four of them found someone else to blame for the misunderstanding.

Bill Strong, Dobbin, and Dexter put it all down to Jolly Roger. If he'd only told them that a really decent fellow like Curtis was turning up, instead of spouting about reform, and taming, and that sort of rot, all would have been well.

Curtis was even more pained when he heard the full story.

You ought to know something more about the Kangaroo. It is quite correct that he had spent a fair part of his life on an Australian sheep-farm, which happened to be one of the biggest in the continent. Except for a greater freedom line here had been very much the same as it would have been on a big British country estate.

But Curtis had also spent the greater part of the past five years at an important school in New South Wales, where life was, again, not so very different from what it was at St. Katie's. There were differences, of course, and Curtis expected that he would have to go slowly when he landed at Katie's.

He wasn't really over-pleased about coming to Katie's at all, in his last school he had quite a following and naturally, became the leader of the chief crowd in the place. That was only to be expected when you got to know Curtis. He had no side and no swank, but Nature had intended him to be a leader. And that was all there was in it.

Quite by chance he had overheard a discussion between his father and another friend, and Curtis had gathered that his father was convinced that his son was "running wild," and wanted sterner discipline. The name of a certain Mr. Roger Blunt had been mentioned, but it was not until long time afterwards that Curtis was informed that he was being sent to school in England.

But you can understand how Curtis felt when he heard all that Dicky Dexter told him. He realised that he had been sent to Katie's for the purpose of being "tamed," and that doubtless his late Head, and possibly his father, had spoken of him as a "wild" youth.

"I'm not that at all," he protested to the valiant three. "I'm the quietest sort of chap you'd ever meet. I felt jumpy and shy when I came here this afternoon, and if you chaps hadn't been so decent I'd have been as miserable as could be. You don't think I'm rough and wild, do you?"

"Not a bit of it," Bill Strong assured him. "You're like me, Kangaroo. Just because you're big, everybody thinks you're rough, and tries to sit on you. And now you'll have Jolly Roger reforming you."

"It's unfair," said Curtis. "It's not good enough. What's this chap Jolly Roger got against me? It's not playing the game!"

"That's just what we said!" the Kid cried. "They sit on us, overlook us, make all their miserable little rules, and put iron bars up to the windows, just as though we were children. And on top of that they try to set us against each other. They got it wrong to look after me. They've made us responsible for all this."

being good. Think of it! It brings the salt tears to my childish eyes, and makes me sob in my sleep! We'll have to do something."

They talked of it at length. The more they talked the more they realised the wickedness of the situation. They were a down-trodden, ill-treated, over-worked gang of galley-slaves. It was the sort of thing that Parliament ought to know about.

During the next few days Curtis made fuller acquaintance with Katie's. For a new boy he found his feet in an amazingly short space of time; but that, again, was the Kangaroo's way. He was, indeed, thoroughly at home and happy.

One of the reasons for this was that he had met kindred spirits, and another was that there was a lot to be interested in. There was this question of Jolly Roger, for instance, whom he regarded, even before he had seen him, as his natural enemy—the man who was out to tame and reform him.

Curtis heard all about their previous conflicts with Roger. He observed the head of the *Transitus* for himself, and realised that such a man might easily rule his flock with a rod of iron. And Curtis didn't want to be in any business where the rod of iron was knocking round.

"I'm all out for freedom," he told the Kid on one of their long chats together. "I feel just as you do about this great question, Kid. We get sent to school to learn things, but there's no need to get excited about it, as Jolly Roger seems to do. Lots of things they pump into us won't ever matter when we've left school. You won't go about spouting out yards and yards of Shakespeare when you've left school, will you? So what's it matter if we don't learn that little lot he's set for to-morrow?"

"My noble Kangaroo," said the Kid, "you've got my ideas right to the tip of your little fingers! You've got an understanding mind. The only question is: How are we going to bring these great truths home to Jolly Roger. He's a hard-hearted fellow, and it's no use suggesting a gentle pow-wow with him, because he'd simply tear you up. We must think."

"I've been thinking," said the Kangaroo, "and there's some inkling of a scheme coming into my mind. Wait!"

Of course, if Jolly Roger had heard this he might have explained to them just why it was necessary for them to polish their little teeth, and all about it. But he didn't hear, and the Kid and the Kangaroo went on conversing each other, while Bill Strong and Dobbie applauded all that they said.

From afar Jolly Roger's eagle eye was upon them. Already he had observed the slackening-process setting in, and it puzzled him. The boy from Australia was quiet and attentive in class, and, quite correctly, Roger judged him to be a normal, healthy lad, but above the average in both the playing-field and in his capacity for work, yet he didn't seem to be yielding very swiftly to Roger's treatment.

And Bill Strong, Dobbie, and young Dexter were slipping away, and in turn other members of the *Transitus* were being infected. So Roger grew more careful, more watchful, and began to tighten his grip once again.

"He keeps his eye on me," the Kangaroo remarked one day. "Great snuff! I'll bet he knows every time I buy a currant-bun! What he wants is something to think about, and that's what I'm going to give him. I can't go on like this! You wouldn't expect it, would you, Kid?"

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"Of course not!" the Kid agreed.

"I've been thinking—"

"I have to," said the Kangaroo.

"Let's talk about it!"

An hour later Bill Strong and Dobbie came in, and observed that the Kid's eyes were shining brightly.

"Oh, Bill! My gentle little Bill!" the Kid began, and they knew that there was something gladsome knocking round.

"Come in, my sweet one! Are you a gambler, Bill? You're the bad boy of the family? Don't say you are not, Bill, because the Kangaroo has led you astray. I can see it in your eyes. You're putting your hard-earned pocket-money on horses, you naughty lad! What will Jolly Roger say? And he can't help finding out all about it. His eagle eye will see your guilt. You'll be for the Beak, you wicked youth! Oh, but you will! So shall I! And the noble Kangaroo—"

"But what's the idea?" asked Dobbie. "Tell us about it, Kid!"

"Tell him, Kangy!" urged the Kid. "Listen, my children! The Kangaroo is a noble animal, and wears his head high in the clouds, but he gets many great thoughts and bright schemes. Flourish Australia! It's all for our dear friend, Jolly Roger! Now he really will be busy on the reform business! Won't he ask me questions on Thursday? He will! And I shall answer thereunto; yea, and likewise much-suspicion shall I give unto him! But tell 'em the main scheme, my noble Kangaroo!"

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Blunt Admits Defeat—Cheerfully.

MR. ROGER BLUNT had had a great deal of experience in the teaching of boys between the ages of ten and twenty-two, and he admitted that he was continually learning.

Moreover, he liked his profession. Its problems, puzzles, and perplexities kept his brain bright and trained his eagle eye.

But the problem relating to Study No. 10 had grown considerably of late, and the more carefully Roger watched and pondered the more complex it seemed to grow.

First of all he fancied Dexter was at the back of it. Then he wavered a little, and began to think that Curtis, the boy from Australia, was not quite so shy and innocent as he appeared.

Then, quite accidentally, as he was taking prep one evening, he caught Strong glancing at a paper. Before he commanded it Roger noted the precise spot upon which Bill was concentrating.

That was the first item that led him to suspect that Strong was interested in betting news, and at first Roger was inclined to poo-poo the suspicion.

The following day, however, he happened to be near Strong and Dobbie on the playing-fields. Apparently they did not observe him, or, at all events, imagine that his quick ears would not overhear what they said.

"I don't think Goldhawk is much good," Dobbie was saying. "I'd sooner follow Rankin's stable and go all out for Tom Titt. Barron thinks that, too."

"I'm sticking to Goldhawk, and if it goes down, I guess I'll have to see Uncle again!" Bill Strong answered grimly. "Curtis was saying that he'd heard the Rambles on his present form. Show 'em!" Jolly Roger's in the office. We'll move on!"

Every word of it Jolly Roger heard, and he saw them stroll down the field, apparently still deep in discussions on form.

A few minutes later he saw Dexter and

Curtis seeking a convenient resting-place behind the pavilion. Roger hated the idea of playing eavesdropper, but it was just as well for him to get rid of these suspicious in his mind.

Quietly he passed as near as he could to the spot where the two were resting. He caught a glimpse of a queer-coloured news-sheet held between them, and heard a quick exclamation from Dexter.

"There you are!" he said excitedly.

"This chap says Goldhawk is a sure thing for to-morrow! I'll put my best Sunday boots on that, Curtis! Blow Tom Titt and the Rambler! That's the gee-gee for my money! We'll all go down to Renfrew's to-morrow afternoon and get the results quick! Who's taking the slips to him to-day?"

"I am," said Curtis.

"Then, there's mine!" said Dexter, and handed over a little slip of folded paper. "I'll stroll down with you. Have you got the other chaps' slips?"

"All who are on to-morrow's, futter," Curtis answered, "shall have to raise some more cash, old son. Still, I reckon to-morrow will see everything all right. You did pretty well last term, didn't you? Bunty said you made a giddy pile!"

"Not so badly," said Dexter cheerfully. "I've been pretty low this term, but I'm going to make up for it now! You watch your uncle!"

Roger stopped quickly, and turned away, as Dexter rose. By his attitude he hoped to suggest that he had not even observed their presence.

When he was out of earshot Curtis winked at Dexter.

"He's got something to think about now!" he chortled. "Let's go and find Bill Strong, and see if he's had any luck. Then we'll go down into the town and buy a paper at Renfrew's. We'll have to keep to every detail, you know!"

At four o'clock that afternoon Mr. Samuel Steed sat in the window-seat of Jordan's cafe. The position allowed him a glimpse of the main entrance to Renfrew's shop, a fairly big establishment, where papers, tobacco, fancy goods, and so on were sold. He had come here by the special wish of Mr. Roger Blunt, who wished him to make certain observations.

On several occasions Sammy Steed had marvelled at the way in which Roger could foretell what boys were going to do. To-day he marvelled still more.

Between five minutes past the hour and twenty minutes past, no fewer than eight boys from Katie's entered Renfrew's. Roger had said that there would certainly be two—Dexter and Curtis—and they were the first to enter.

He reported the fact to Mr. Blunt that evening. As it happened, Mr. Steed was taking prep that night, and Roger gave him another of his well-known prophecies.

"Watch certain members of my Forth to-night, Steed," Roger told him. "I fancy that if you keep your eyes open you may catch them reading forbidden papers. Let me know later on."

Mr. Steed felt that he was really on the track of a deep mystery, and he simply glued on to the *Transitus* in prep that night. Once again he marvelled. Five youths went separately, and at different times pounced upon by Sammy and compelled to admit that they were reading an evening paper.

Sammy confiscated them, of course, and undertook to report each boy to his Form-master. He did so, and at the same time handed over the papers, each of which had carefully been kept folded, just as he had taken them from the readers.

Jolly Roger smiled a trifle grimly when he observed that they were all folded on the page where the racing reports were to be found.

"What is it?" Mr. Steed asked, as he saw the smile. "What do you suspect? Nothing serious?"

"If my suspicions are correct," Jolly Roger said slowly, and with a little less than his usual cheerfulness, "I'm afraid it is very serious, my dear Steed. Even now I sorely think it is possible, yet the evidence is overwhelming. At least half my Form—and possibly other Forms—are engaged in making bets on horse-races! Apparently they make them through the agency of Renfrews, the newsagent's!"

"Betting! Horse-racing!" gasped Sammy. "But, I say, Blunt! This is really terrible! The Head will be furious! And Renfrews! It's incredible! Why, old Renfrews—"

He explained at great length the tremendous respectability of Mr. Renfrews, and the years he had been the official newsagent to the school. How did Mr. Blunt propose to act?

"I don't quite know what course to take yet," Roger admitted. "It needs very careful consideration."

On the following day he was free to watch the proceedings himself from Jordan's cafe. The excitement began about 3.30, and from that time on at least twenty boys visited Renfrews' shop. Some were inside for not more than a minute, but two or three were there for fully fifteen minutes. Roger noticed that Curtis stayed longer than anyone else, and eventually came out with Strong.

Both of them were plainly excited about something, but not until they were right by Jordan's window did Curtis stop and take from his pocket four one-pound notes and show them proudly to Strong.

There had been some of the Fifth fellows among them, and even two of the Sixth. Most of them, Roger observed, went in furtively, and usually spent a few minutes at the shop-window before dodging inside.

Mr. Roger Blunt had dealt with a good many difficult propositions in his time, but never one where he felt more awkwardly placed than this. It would obviously be very difficult to get proofs beyond what he already knew, yet he could scarcely take drastic and immediate action on his own account.

On the other hand, it was a very urgent matter, and one that affected the whole school. In the circumstances, he decided to discuss the question with the Head.

In Mr. Bird's study that evening Roger had a long confidential chat with the Head of Katie's. He stated the facts quite carefully and clearly, and did not exaggerate in the tiniest degree.

"As I say, I do not possess any absolute proof," Roger concluded; "but I felt it would be wise—"

"No proof?" snapped the Head. "There is more than sufficient evidence for immediate inquiry and action! We will go into the matter very thoroughly to-morrow morning!"

In Study No. 10 a discussion on the same subject also took place that evening. Curtis was the managing-director of this affair, ably supported by Dickie Dexter.

"He took all the names," the Kangaroo said joyfully. "I saw him when we were outside the cafe."

"His eagle eye was on us," Bill Strong added. "We didn't let him twig that we knew he was there. Wonder what he'll do now? Think he'll wait for more proof!"

"We're leaving him alone for to-morrow," the Kid said calmly. "If

nothing happens we've got something that will draw him right into it—haven't we, Kangaroo? You trust the old firm in this act, children! We're going right through with it!"

"Hope he starts on some of the Fifth fellows," Debbie said hopefully. "My hat's 's'pose he asks Smithy of the Fifth if he's been betting! Smithy won't half make a speech!"

It was nearly the end of the first hour in the morning when Jolly Roger was summoned to the Head's room. Everyone noticed that he was very serious today, and his usual smile was quite a thin affair. It became almost a pathetic twist when he went out.

In the Head's room he found Mr. James Renfrews, newsagent, with Mr. Bird.

"Ah, come in, Mr. Blunt!" the Head said. "I asked Mr. Renfrews to come and see me. He asserts very definitely that there is absolutely no foundation whatever for your—our suspicions."

"It's most unfair!" Mr. Renfrews gasped. "I never heard of such a thing! There is only myself and two daughters in the shop, and we serve everybody. Why—"

The Head raised his hand gently, but he had such a little way with him that Mr. Renfrews stopped abruptly.

"We are going into the whole matter, Mr. Renfrews," the Beak said. "Rest assured that neither Mr. Blunt nor I would harbour such suspicions without excellent reason. Ah!"

He was looking at the list before him, and Dexter's name naturally attracted him first. A bell was pressed, an order given, and within three minutes Richard Dexter of the Transitus was on the carpet before the Beak.

"What bets did you make yesterday, Dexter?" the Head began.

"Bats, sir!" said the Kid, and looked first at the Head and then at Mr. Blunt. "I—I can't make bats, sir!"

"I said bats—B—E—T—S!" insisted the Head. "You went to Mr. Renfrews' shop yesterday. I gather that you went for the purpose of making bets upon the results of certain horse-races. I want the full truth, please!"

The Beak had a way of saying things like that, and making cold shivers run down your spine so quickly that you got hot again before you really knew it—and then you told him everything.

But to-day—

Mr. Renfrews, Mr. Blunt, and the Head, were watching Dexter closely and intently. His big eyes opened wider and wider, his lower lip quivered, and he seemed utterly amazed.

"I—I don't understand, sir!" he said slowly. "I went to Mr. Renfrews' shop yesterday afternoon—Mr. Renfrews served me himself. I don't know anything about betting, sir. I—I didn't bet, did I, Mr. Renfrews?"

He turned appealingly to Renfrews, into whose eyes came a little hint of triumph.

"You did not, Master Dexter!" he stated, and put his fist heavily on the table. "No boy from this school has ever made an bet there!"

The Head's face showed not the faintest sign of any emotion. He bent over the list again, pressed the bell, gave an order, and presently the tall, graceful form of Curtis appeared. There was a certain air of calmness about the Kangaroo, tinged with just the right amount of respect.

"Ah, Curtis!" the Beak began. "I understand you went into Dulchester yesterday for the purpose of making certain bets, and that you actually won a certain amount of money. Will you be good enough to tell me how you

made these bets, and who paid you the money?"

The Kangaroo blinked in wonder. He pulled himself together, as it were, and concentrated his gaze on the Head.

"I, sir?" he asked. "No one paid me any money, sir. I don't quite know what you mean, sir. Bets? That's gambling, isn't it, sir?"

"What did you do in Mr. Renfrews' shop yesterday afternoon?" asked the Head, quite calmly.

"I bought—" Curtis hesitated, as though trying to recollect just what had happened. "I bought two papers, sir, and—yes, I asked them to get me a copy of 'King Solomon's Mines,' and I changed a five-pound note, sir. It was the only money I had left after my journey here, sir!"

"Ah!" said the Head. "Have you ever discussed horse-racing with Strong?"

Curtis looked puzzled. "I might have done, sir—just once or twice," he admitted. "I think they were explaining to me about the different sports in England, and how things were done. We might have talked about it, sir—but only in fun. We talk about a lot of things—airships and submarines, and—oh, silly things, sir! You know what schoolboys are?"

"Yes," said the Head. "Stand over there by Dexter, please."

Again the bell was pressed, and presently into the room came Smith of the Fifth. Smithy was one of the real "pots" of the school, and even the Beak failed to make a great impression on him, for Smithy believed in himself.

"Ah, Smith!" the Head began.

"Sir?" said Smithy, in his well-known aristocratic manner.

"What bets did you make yesterday when you went into Dulchester? What bets have you made during the past week? I want a full account from every boy!"

"Sir!"

For once even Smithy was knocked off his balance.

"I am talking about horse-racing, Smith!" the Head said. "I gather that you have some knowledge of it, and are in the habit of making bets. What was the last bet you made, and where did you make it?"

Smith looked at the Beak, and the Beak looked at Smith. Then Smithy seemed to throw his chest out and put his head a little higher.

"Am I to understand that I am accused of betting, sir?" he demanded. "Is it suggested that I have been in the habit of throwing my money away by what I believe is known as backing horses? If that is so, sir, may I say who made that accusation? It is most serious—"

"It is very serious, Smith," said the Head, quite calmly. "Have you, or have you not, made any bets of any kind within the past week?"

"I have not, sir!" Smithy simply flung it out. "I give you my word, sir, that I know nothing whatever about horse-racing. I am entirely ignorant upon the whole question. Who has made this accusation against me? Surely I have a right to know that, sir?"

"There is no accusation, Smith," said the Head, a little wearily. "I am making an inquiry, and I merely desired answers to certain questions. You have no knowledge of any betting being carried on in this school?"

"I have never heard the question mentioned or discussed in any shape or form, sir," said Smithy, and cleared his throat.

"There is no accusation, Smith," said the Head, a little wearily. "I am making an inquiry, and I merely desired answers to certain questions. You have no knowledge of any betting being carried on in this school?"

"I have never heard the question mentioned or discussed in any shape or form, sir," said Smithy, and cleared his throat.

"There is no accusation, Smith," said the Head, a little wearily. "I am making an inquiry, and I merely desired answers to certain questions. You have no knowledge of any betting being carried on in this school?"

"I have never heard the question mentioned or discussed in any shape or form, sir," said Smithy, and cleared his throat.

throat in order to make a speech. "I am quite sure, sir, that if such an accusation has been made, it has been done out of sheer spite and malevolence." Smithy allowed his gaze to rest upon Mr. Renfrews for a moment. "And I feel quite sure, sir, that if a proper inquiry is made you will find that it is—"

"Thank you, Smith!" said the Head. "I am very pleased to hear your views. They confirm my own. You may go, Smith."

"Yes!" said Smithy, and walked out with the air of a conqueror.

The Head looked at Mr. Blunt.

"Do you think we should see any of the others?" he asked quietly.

"I think not, sir!" said Roger.

"Do you wish to question either of these two boys further?" The Head indicated Curtis and Dexter.

Roger turned to them, and they noted that he was once again smiling very cheerfully, and had the old fighting-glint in his eye.

"What about the Rambler, Curtis?" he asked abruptly. "Did it win?"

"The Rambler, sir?" Curtis looked at him in perplexity. "Is there a horse called the Rambler, sir? Is that what you mean, sir?"

"Ah!" said Roger, and turned to the Head. "I think that is all, sir!"

"You may go!" said the Head. "Your answers were quite satisfactory!"

Both the Head and Mr. Blunt talked kindly and tactfully to Mr. Renfrews, and when presently the newspaper left, he was more than satisfied. A boyish prank was at the back of it, but of course, not for one single moment had they thought Mr. Renfrews involved.

After he had gone the Head and Jolly Roger still discussed the matter, and finally the Head rang up someone on the telephone.

"I think he knows everything about racing," the Head explained. "What were the names? Goldhawk, Rambler, and Tom Titt? Very good! I'll ask him!"

For some minutes he was engaged on the telephone, but put it down at last, and appeared more perplexed than ever. "I don't understand it, Blunt!" the Head said, a little testily. "You say they named these three horses? But Grainger says that he doesn't know of any horses of that name, and they certainly have not been racing this week, or last! What does it mean?"

Jolly Roger was standing very stiffly erect, and his smile was like the light in his eyes—charged with the joy of battle.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said. "I'm afraid I have dragged you in to discover a mare's nest. What it means really is that I have been sold—outwitted—led into a trap, by two or three schoolboys. With your permission, sir, I will withdraw the case from your hands and make further inquiries myself. I am exceedingly sorry that I have troubled you so much."

The Head looked up at Roger and smiled.

"That's all right, Blunt!" he said slowly. "You have a very difficult form."

When Jolly Roger returned to the Form-room he went quietly. There was something of a row on in the Trans-room, and for a moment or two Roger stood in the doorway without being noticed. Everyone was laughing and cheering.

"Good old Kangaroo!" Dickie Dexter said for the twentieth time. "I'll bet old Roger won't—'Sh!'"

A moment later Jolly Roger stalked in, and perfect silence reigned. But not a word did Roger say about the episode in the Head's room. Full of energy, vim, and smiles, he plunged into the morning work.

Not until he was alone with Sammy Steed did Roger hint at what was in his mind. Mr. Steed was anxious to know if he had been successful in tracing the scandal he was on.

"No," said Roger cheerfully. "I am pleased to say I was quite unsuccessful in every possible way. In fact, my dear Steed, I had my leg pulled most thoroughly. I shall have to brighten myself up a little and keep more alert in future."

"But how did they do it?" demanded Sammy. "Who arranged it?"

"Dexter, of course, was in the thing and played a part," Roger assured him. "But I am inclined to think that the genius of it all lay with another fellow I am keeping my eye upon him. In fact, I am going to devote special attention to him, just as I do to Dexter."

"Who is it?" begged Sammy. "Not Strong. It's bound to be someone in Study No. 10."

"It is," said Roger. "But it is the new comer on this occasion. He is an ingenious youth, I fancy; a bright, clever lad who will prevent me from getting bored, or my mind from growing rusty. I shall devote a considerable amount of thought and care to him in the near future—young Curtis, you know, the boy from Australia. The Kangaroo, I believe they call him. I'll kangaroo him!"

And upstairs, in Study No. 10, at that very moment, a special feast was in progress—to celebrate the victory of the same Kangaroo who had come all the way from Australia to be tamed and reformed by Jolly Roger. Only one swallow doesn't make a summer, nor one brief success an everlasting victory.

And Jolly Roger was still smiling.

THE END.

(Another of these grand school stories next week.)

The Editor's Chat.

Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES.

In our long, complete story of the Chums of St. Jim's for next Wednesday, Talbot of the Shell Form finds a stone which turns out to be a ruby of great value. The events that centre round the stone, and the trouble it causes, form the theme of a really fine story. You will enjoy

"TALBOT'S FIND!"
By Martin Clifford.

In the next of the now-famous series of St. Katie's stories, Curtis, the Australian boy, who is the latest recruit to Dickie Dexter's famous Co., plays a prominent part. As soon as Mr. Roger Blunt's eye is off his unruly flock, the fun begins.

"THE GAMBOLLING LAMBS!"
By Michael Poole.

throws further light upon "Jolly Roger's" unique methods of dealing with the modern schoolboy.

There will also be another chatty little talk, by "Cooee" about Australia and Jack Thornton's experiences there, presented in the author's usual bright manner, under the title of

"A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA."
By "Cooee."

OUR NEWEST FEATURE.

The inauguration of "My Readers' Own Corner," coupled with the distribution of half-crowns in connection therewith, seems to have met with my chums' hearty approval. It is going with a swing. Send along your contributions.

FAME.

When folks get very famous, they almost necessarily, and certainly, naturally, have things named after them. I am expecting to hear of the D'Arcy cravat, and the Courcy collar, to say nothing of the Trimble tie. The Duke of Wellington said to Lord Brougham, "My lord, I used to think you would go down to posterity as a statesman; but now I know your name will only be associated with a carriage." "Your Grace," said Lord Brougham, "there have been times when I linked your name with a hundred fights; but now I think of you in connection with a cumbersome kind of boot."

Actually it is a sign of fame when some article, much in use, is named after a man. Look at a Gladstone bag. Perhaps you would rather not. It is not the most convenient type of bag. It is generally too big to shunt into the rack of a railway carriage. If you place it above the head of the chap opposite, he hates you; but, of course, it stands to reason that you do not want the awkward mass tumbling down on your head when the train does a sea-saw at a junction. It might hurt you!

Your Editor

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