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*The* **GEM** *1* <sup>1P</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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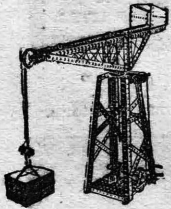
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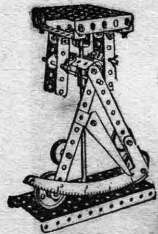
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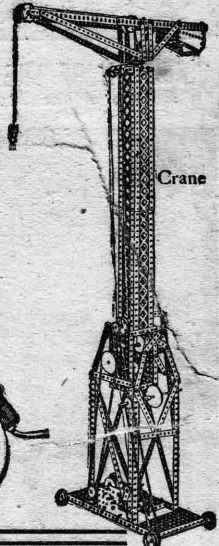
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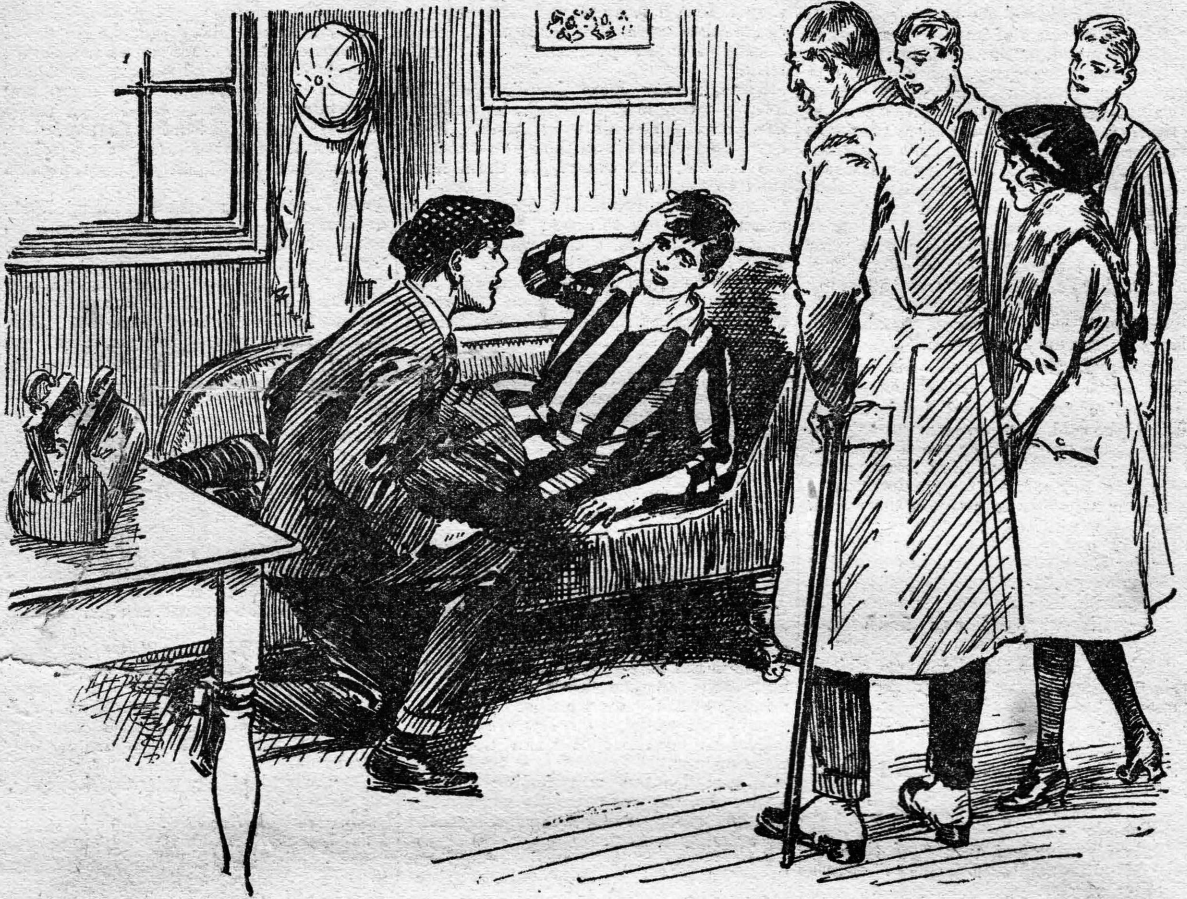
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# RENTON OF THE ROVERS!



## A Magnificent Football Serial. By PAUL MASTERS.

### Farewell to Desmond!

**T**HE banquet at Mr. Trevor's house was a huge success.

Billy Desmond was in his element, and his jests and witticisms set the table in a roar. He was the life and soul of the function, and Jimmy Renton felt very proud indeed of the Irish boy's friend ship, which had endured through storm and shine, through fair weather and through foul. But for Billy Desmond, he reflected, he would now be a wandering vagrant. It was Billy who had come to his side during those dark days when the luck had been dead against him. "A true friend showeth himself in adversity." And Billy had proved a friend indeed.

And yet, in spite of the affection he felt for Billy, Jimmy Renton could not help feeling a twinge of jealousy.

Early in the evening Billy Desmond had laughed and chatted a good deal with Millicent Dodds, the daughter of the mild, inoffensive director. As the evening wore on, however, he seemed to drop Millicent for Madge Trevor, and, what was more, Madge seemed greatly to enjoy his company.

Late though the hour was, the town was still agog with excitement. For the Cup-tie fever was raging all over the country, and Belmont had it as badly as any of the other big towns.

Jimmy Renton and Billy Desmond spent a very enjoyable week-end in the company of their host and hostess.

When Jimmy Renton went up to the room which he shared with his chum, he found Billy seated on the couch, with a writing-pad on his knee, scribbling away industriously.

"Hallo! What's the little game?" asked Jimmy.

Billy Desmond looked up.

"I'm trying to write a poem, dear boy," he explained.

"You—you don't mean to say you're writing a silly love poem?" ventured Jimmy.

"Not a silly one," answered Billy Desmond. "A jolly good one!"

Jimmy glanced at what his chum had written. He saw that the poem was entitled: "To M——" And he had no doubt whatever that it was intended for Madge Trevor.

"Can you suggest a decent rhyme for 'skies'?" inquired Billy.

"No, I can't," replied Jimmy rather gruffly. "I'm going to bed!"

And he did so, leaving his chum to tackle his task single-handed.

Billy Desmond must have been up half the night composing his ditty, for when Jimmy Renton got up next morning his chum was still sleeping soundly.

Jimmy hurriedly performed his ablutions, and went for an early morning stroll. On his return to the house he met Madge.

"You're up with the lark, Jimmy!" she said, with a smile.

"Nothing like early rising to keep one fit!" answered Jimmy.

"Is Billy up yet?"

"No."

"The lazy slacker!"

"Did you want to see him very particularly?"

"I wanted to ask him to take me for a joy-ride. His motor-bike's here, and it's stood idle all the week-end."

He went up to the bed-room, with the object of rousing his chum. But he found that Billy Desmond was already up and dressed. He had put on his best suit, and he was busily engaged in packing a gladstone-bag.

Jimmy halted on the threshold in astonishment.

"What's going on?" he exclaimed.

"I am!" replied Billy Desmond.

"But—but what—"

"Much as I hate the thought of leaving you, brother James, I must be off to London town. I start work to-day."

"Work?"

"With a capital 'W.' I mean to pile in like a galley-slave. As chief reporter  
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on the 'Daily Sportsman,' I shall have heaps to do. After I've reported to headquarters, I shall be dashing about all over the country, attending footermatches, boxing-bouts, and so forth."

"But this is jolly sudden!"

"I'm a creature of impulse," explained Billy Desmond. "After all, my presence is no longer necessary. I promised to accompany you in your quest for a League engagement; I undertook to stand by you until your future prospects were assured. And I've kept my compact. After your display against Gran-chester United in the Cup-tie, you'll never be out of a berth. You've made your reputation, dear boy, and in two or three years' time you'll be playing for England. I prophesied it all along, and my prophecy's well on the way to coming true. And now that you're firmly established as a playing member of Belmont Rovers I must quit."

Jimmy Renton gripped his chum's hand.

"You've been a real brick to me, Billy!" he said. "Goodness knows what would have happened to me if it hadn't been for you! I'm awfully sorry you're going, of course, but I realise that you've got your own way to make in the world. You'll do well on the 'Daily Sportsman.' I'm sure of that. Long before I play for England—if ever I do—you'll be a full-blown editor."

"Perhaps!"

"By the way, did you finish that poem?"

"Yes. I sat up till about two o'clock this morning, trying to get a rhyme for 'angel.'"

"You haven't delivered the verses to their destination yet?"

"No; I shall post 'em when I get to London."

"What train are you catching?"

"The eleven-ten."

"Then you've got plenty of time to take Miss Trevor for a joy-ride. She's awfully keen on your taking her."

"Really?"

"Yes. Buck up!"

Billy Desmond hurried downstairs, and a moment later Jimmy Renton watched his chum from the window. He saw him speeding away on his motor-cycle, with Madge in the side-car.

"I'm dead in this act," he muttered. "It's a case of 'also ran,' so far as I'm concerned."

When Madge and her escort returned from their expedition, their faces were radiant with health and happiness. They seemed excited, too.

"Great news, Jimmy!" said Billy Desmond. "The Rovers are drawn against Loamshire County in the second round; and you've again got the advantage of playing at home. You'll simply pulverise Loamshire! They're anything but a good side, and they only managed to survive the first round by a fluke."

"That's ripping!" said Jimmy. "Shall you be down to report the match?"

"You bet!" replied Billy. "We must certainly have a detailed account of it in the 'Daily Sportsman.'"

But, from his chum's tone, Jimmy Renton concluded that he intended to come down to Belmont more for the sake of seeing Madge Trevor than of reporting the match.

After breakfast, Billy Desmond bade farewell to Jimmy, and to Madge and her father. And then he set out for London, that mighty city where fortunes are made—and lost.

And Billy resolved that he would not be among the losers!

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### How the English Cup came to Belmont!

**B**ELMONT ROVERS had an easy passage into the third round of the English Cup contest.

Playing on their own ground, they defeated Loamshire County by the remarkable score of 7 goals to 1. And Jimmy Renton performed the "hat-trick."

The County were handicapped by having a couple of men injured early in the game. Even allowing for this, however, they were not in the same street as the Rovers, who overplayed them from start to finish.

In the next round the Rovers had a much harder nut to crack. They had to visit Easthampton, a club which boasted a great Cup-fighting reputation.

It was as much as the Rovers could do to hold their own, but a great display of goal-keeping by Richmond enabled them to keep their lines intact.

To cut a long story short, the Rovers, by dint of great determination and whole-hearted effort, reached the Final.

Their unexpected success caused a profound sensation throughout the country.

The other finalists—the Northern Hotspurs—had a forward line that could not have been bought for ten thousand pounds. And no one had been surprised to see them reach the Final.

But Belmont Rovers was a southern club, and southern clubs rarely figure at Stamford Bridge on that momentous day in April.

Of course, London was seething with excitement.

Thousands of people swarmed into the metropolis to see the Final, and a number of enthusiasts waited outside the ground all night, in order that they might be on the spot when the gates were opened.

Jimmy Renton was feeling in fine fettle. But he was naturally awed at the thought of appearing before a hundred thousand spectators.

At Belmont a crowd of fifteen thousand had been regarded as exceptional. But a hundred thousand—The prospect of playing before such a vast multitude was enough to appal anyone but the most seasoned Cup-fighter.

After what seemed an age to Jimmy Renton the fateful moment arrived.

The Hotspurs were the first to take the field, and there could be no question about their popularity. A deafening roar of applause greeted their appearance.

Then, after a brief interval, Kennedy led the Rovers on to the field of play.

"There won't be nearly such a big demonstration now," he observed.

But he was wrong.

The plucky Belmont team had endeared itself to the football-loving public. And although there was scarcely a man present who considered that the Rovers had the ghost of a chance, the applause was just as hearty, just as universal, as that which had greeted the Hotspurs.

Kennedy shook hands with Gibson, the Hotspur skipper, and the referee shook hands with both.

The coin was spun, and Kennedy called correctly.

But there was not much advantage gained by winning the toss, for not a breath of wind was stirring.

As Jimmy Renton lined up with the others he scarcely dared to glance round that human arena.

On every side the spectators were wedged together like sardines, and an incessant murmur arose, like the murmur of the sea.

Jimmy took stock of the Hotspur players, and he could not fail to admire their splendid physique.

The centre-half, in particular, arrested Jimmy's attention. He was a giant of six feet four, and his name was Tre-lawney.

"He'll take some getting past," thought Jimmy.

Then, turning his head, he surveyed his own colleagues. All were keen, eager, and alert. Richmond was pacing to and fro in the goal-mouth; Belton and Burnside, the two backs, looked ready for anything, and so did the halves.

As for the forwards, every man-jack of them seemed bent upon playing the game of his life.

On the extreme right was Carr, almost as fleet a winger as Jimmy Renton himself. Next to him was Drake, who, though a mere stripling, was a footballer every inch of him. In the centre was Welsh, who headed a list of goal-scorers in the south of England. Then came Kennedy, the skipper, while on the extreme left was Jimmy Renton himself.

Presently, Jimmy nerved himself to glance towards the main stand. But, of course, it was impossible for him to identify Madge Trevor and her father.

His gaze shifted to the Press-box, and he had no difficulty in singling out Billy Desmond. He thought of making some sort of a signal to his chum, but at that moment the referee's whistle rang out.

As the centre-forward of the Northern Hotspurs set the ball in motion the murmur of the crowd swelled into a mighty roar.

"Hotspurs! Hotspurs!"

"Play up, the Rovers!"

During the opening stages the crowd must have been vastly disappointed. For the play was of a very scrappy order, and the ball seemed always to be going into touch.

At the end of ten minutes, however, the first sensation arrived.

The outside-right of the Hotspurs gained possession, and raced along the touch-line. He beat the Rovers' defenders for pace, and swung the ball across to the centre-forward, who, without the slightest hesitation, banged the ball towards goal.

"Richmond will never get to it!" thought Jimmy Renton, as he saw the sphere go whizzing in.

But Richmond did. He brought off a remarkable save, which was cheered to the echo.

However, the Hotspurs came again, and Richmond had need of all his skill and resource. Once, when he saw three of the opposing forwards racing towards goal his nerve nearly failed him. But he pulled himself together, and dived forward.

He collided heavily with an opponent, who was in the act of shooting, and for a moment he was dazed.

But the collision had deflected the man's shot, and the ball went yards wide.

As he limped back to his goal Richmond was again loudly cheered.

The resultant goal-kick was taken by Burnside, who punted the ball more than half the length of the field.

Then the Rovers attacked for the first time, Welsh going clean through the Hotspurs' defence. But he over-ran himself, and the goalie was able to clear just in the nick of time.

The Rovers' attack fizzled out after this, and for the remainder of the first half they were penned in their own territory.

Try as they would, however, the Hotspurs could not get through the Rovers' impregnable defence.

Richmond, in goal, was a masterpiece of wizardry and cleverness. He dealt with shot after shot, and refused to be beaten.

As for the backs, they were sorely overworked, but they offered a dogged resistance to the repeated rushes of the Hotspur forwards.

And thus it came about that the score-sheet was blank at half-time.

In the second half it looked as if the Hotspurs were going to start bagging goals right away, for they were most aggressive directly the game was resumed.

Richmond was very nearly beaten by a shot which passed through his legs. But he retrieved the ball before it could cross the line.

It was a near thing, and some of the Hotspur players appealed for a goal. But the referee overruled the appeal.

For twenty minutes the Hotspurs pressed unremittingly. But they could not get through.

Then Carr raced away on the Rovers' right wing, and wound up a promising movement by swinging the ball right across to Jimmy Renton.

Jimmy was ready for it. He fired in a beautiful shot from an awkward range, and the Hotspur goalie had to perform an acrobatic feat in order to fist the ball away. He managed it; but Kennedy came dashing up with lowered head, and, almost before the crowd could realise it, he had propelled the ball into the net.

"Goal!"

After the Rovers had opened their account, the game became positively thrilling.

From the main-stand Madge Trevor and her father looked on with kindling eyes; and in the Press-box Billy Desmond, with a seraphic smile on his face, was jotting down notes.

The Rovers were playing great football hereabouts. They were sparing no effort to drive home their advantage, and the Hotspur defence went through a gruelling ordeal.

Jimmy Renton, who had been working like a nigger on the wing, was nearly cracking up under the strain. He wondered how many minutes remained for play, and whether the Rovers would be able to cling to their lead.

He saw the referee consulting his watch.

Ah, it would soon be over now!

The ball came out to him once more, and he promptly centred it. Kennedy and Trelawney dashed for it simultaneously, and the Hotspur got there first. He sent the ball soaring up the field; and then, in the closing stages, the Hotspurs set up a fierce and spirited attack.

Jimmy Renton looked on anxiously. He noticed that Richmond, in the Rovers' goal, was little more than a passenger. Time and again he had rushed out to secure the ball, and there had been many fierce scrambles on the ground, in the course of which he had been injured—and not slightly, either. And he was now being called upon to make further efforts for his side.

The Hotspur centre-forward sent in a rasping shot, which Richmond successfully negotiated.

Then, for some reason unknown to the majority of the players and spectators, the referee awarded the Hotspurs a free-kick, just outside the penalty-area.

Trelawney took the kick, and he sent in a shot which no goalkeeper in the world could have saved.

"Goal!"

In practically the last minute the Hotspurs had equalised.

The demonstration which followed was one of the most remarkable ever witnessed on any football ground.

Jimmy Renton's heart sank. After clinging tenaciously to their lead, the Rovers had been deprived of it

in the last minute. It was cruel luck! Shortly afterwards, the referee's whistle shrilled out above the din.

But the players did not leave the field. It was announced that extra time would be played.

By this time Jimmy had lost his speed and stamina; and he had nearly lost heart. But he kept on keeping on, and midway through the period of extra time a gilt-edged opportunity came to him.

He was standing unmarked only a few yards from goal, when one of the Hotspur half-backs miskicked.

The ball came on to where Jimmy was standing, and he nerved himself for a supreme effort.

One of the Hotspur backs bore down upon him, but Jimmy lobbed the ball over the man's head; then he slipped round him, and sent the ball crashing into the net.

"Goal! Goal! Goal!"

The shout was repeated and re-echoed all round the ground.

The Rovers were on top! And although their opponents fought desperately during the remaining minutes, they could not get through.

When the final whistle rang out there was an unprecedented scene.

But Jimmy Renton neither saw nor heard what was going on. He had collapsed.

When he came round he was in the dressing-room. Billy Desmond knelt beside him, and Madge Trevor and her father were standing near.

## NEXT WEEK

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# "GEM"

OW.

"Better, old man?"

It was Billy who spoke.

Jimmy Renton struggled into a sitting posture.

"I—I'm still a bit dazed," he muttered.

"I don't seem to understand everything clearly. We—we won, of course?"

"Of course!"

**Jimmy Renton's Reward!**

**J**IMMY'S friends missed him shortly after that historic Cup Final.

Nobody seemed to know where he had gone, and although search was made for him, it proved futile.

As a matter of fact, Jimmy had gone to a quiet hotel in one of the suburbs. He felt that he wanted to be alone. He was tired out with his exertions, and he slept for the greater part of the next day.

He intended to travel down to Belmont that day, now that he was sufficiently rested. And while he was waiting for his train at the big London terminus, whom should he meet but Billy Desmond.

"Jimmy, you bounder, I've been hunting for you high and low! Where have you hidden yourself over the week-end?"

"I stayed at a quiet hotel."

"Well, you're a cool card, and no mistake! Still, you can't escape now. You're coming down to Belmont with me, dear boy. There's going to be a

tremendous celebration to-night at Mr. Trevor's house, and the whole thing would fall flat without you."

The two chums travelled down to Belmont together, and as the train drew near its destination Jimmy Renton noticed that his chum became unusually excited. He inquired the cause, and Billy Desmond laughed gaily.

"I'm the happiest merchant in the land!" he said. "You see, I'm going to see 'her'!"

"Her?" echoed Jimmy blankly.

"Yes. My girl, you know. She's promised that as soon as I become editor of the 'Daily Sportsman' she'll consent to become engaged to me. With reasonable luck, and barring accidents, I shall bag the editorship in about two years' time. The present editor's already in his dotage, and he'll have retired by then."

Jimmy Renton congratulated his chum, and wished him the best of luck. And yet he could not help feeling a pang at the thought that his own chances of ever winning Madge Trevor were shattered.

As the train steamed into Belmont Station Billy Desmond leaned out of the carriage-window.

"Why, here she is, waiting on the platform!" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Renton caught his chum by the arm.

"You—you mean to say that Miss Dodds is the girl you're going to be engaged to?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly! Whom did you think I meant?"

"Why, Madge Trevor, of course!"

Billy Desmond laughed outright.

"You silly old duffer! What put such a notion into your head?"

"I was always under the impression that you and Madge were great chums," he said.

"So we are—great chums, but nothing more!"

It was in a very cheerful mood that Jimmy accompanied Millicent and Billy to Mr. Trevor's house. And he felt positively joyous as the evening advanced, for he had a long chat with Madge, and he learned from her own lips that although she had always liked and admired Billy Desmond, she had liked and admired him—Jimmy Renton—still more.

Madge was still very young. There could be no question of an engagement for years. But Jimmy Renton knew that the day would come when he and Madge Trevor would be something more than chums. And that knowledge made him the happiest young fellow in Belmont—ay, and in all the country.

"You've a great future before you, Renton," said Mr. Trevor, when the celebration of the Rovers' victory was over. "I anticipate that many of the biggest clubs in the land will be hankering after your services."

"Then I'm afraid they'll be unlucky, sir," said Jimmy, with a smile. "I mean to be loyal to the Rovers, whatever happens."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Trevor, clasping Jimmy by the hand. "I admire you for those words, and I trust you will be with us for many seasons to come. I must not detain you longer, my boy, for I see that Madge is waiting for you. I should just like to add that the Belmont club owes you a debt of gratitude which it can never hope to repay."

But as Jimmy Renton strolled with Madge under the evening stars, he felt that he was more than repaid for the efforts he had made in assisting Belmont Rovers to carry off that most coveted of all trophies—the English Cup.



"Will you let me have the copy for the 'Weekly'?" asked Lowther. "I've some alterations to make"

#### CHAPTER 1. Rejected!

"BUSY?"

Jack Blake of the Fourth asked that question in an affable tone of voice, looking in at the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, who were busily writing at the study table, did not appear to hear Blake's question. They went on scribbling at top speed.

"Busy?" asked Blake again, this time in a louder tone of voice.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, went the pens as they raced over the sheets of paper.

Blake walked into the editorial sanctum of "Tom Merry's Weekly," followed by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries and Digby. Each wore affable smiles, and, incidentally, each had a roll of foolscap tucked beneath his arm.

"Busy, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his famous monocle, and regarding the Shell fellows through it.

No reply.

"Deaf, idiots?" roared Blake, getting exasperated.

The Terrible Three deigned to look up. They glared at the chums of the Fourth.

"Can't you see we are busy, you fat-head?" snapped Tom Merry, wiping a smear of ink from his nose. "We're busy getting out the copy for the next number of the 'Weekly.' The printers must have it by this evening, otherwise they won't get the next number printed in time. We've no time to jaw to you Fourth-Form kids. Buzz off!"

The Terrible Three certainly did appear to be very busy.

The study carpet, as well as the table, was littered with paper. The wastepaper basket was full to overflowing. Even the fireplace, where a cosy fire was burning, seemed to have been converted into a receptacle for rejected manuscripts and "dud" copy.

Tom Merry & Co. themselves bore many signs of their assiduous labour with

pen and ink. Their hair was dishevelled, and their faces and collars were smeared in numerous places with ink.

The editorial don of the School House amateur magazine was under full pressure of work. It was "press day," and the Terrible Three were devoting all their energies to making copy for the next number.

And, at such a busy time, they did not welcome interruptions, in any shape or form.

"Haven't you fellows shifted yet?" demanded Tom Merry, glaring at the Fourth-Formers. "Can't you buzz off—you worry us! We've got to concentrate, and think out fresh ideas!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "As you are so busy, you should welcome us fellows who wish to relieve you. We have come—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "Look here, Tom Merry, we've come—"

"Yes, we can see that!" said Tom Merry, looking up again, wearily. "Can't you chaps clear off, and bother somebody else?"

"But we've brought you some stuff along!" shrieked Blake.

"Go and bury it!" said Tom Merry, and he went on writing.

"Bai Jove, you wude wottahs!" exclaimed the noble Arthur Augustus, his eyeglass gleaming. "For two pins, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, scat!" grunted Tom Merry, without looking up. "How can a fellow think with you chumps gassing about him? Run away and play!"

"And shut the door behind you!" said Monty Lowther, still scribbling.

"We—we won't!" hooted Blake wrathfully. "You checky Shell fish—"

"What!" roared the Terrible Three, all at once.

"Ahem!" coughed Blake, checking himself. "The fact is, Tom Merry, I've brought along my new detective story. It's just the thing for the next number of the 'Weekly'!"

"Yaas, and I've brougnt a weally wippin' article on 'Wintah Fashions'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, unrolling his manuscript.

# LOWTHER ON THE WAR-PATH

A Splendid Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"My 'Treatise on Pedigree Pups' is sure to go down well," remarked Herries, the amateur dog fancier of St. Jim's. "There are only twelve foolscap pages of—"

"Blow your rotten 'Treatise on Pedigree Pups'!" snapped Digby. "Tom Merry, old chap, I've got here a selection of original poems—"

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

Jack Blake & Co. glared.

"What is there to laugh at, Tom Merry—hey?" demanded Blake wrathfully.

"We Fourth Form chaps want a look-in with the next number of the 'Weekly.' Why should you Shell fellows rule the giddy roost in everything? We can do things just as well as you—and better. My detective yarn, for instance, dealing with the thrilling adventures of Hank Hoggback, the detective—it's a brand new idea—"

"Time you had one!" remarked Tom Merry.

"You—you—you—" stuttered Blake.

"Look here, you chumps, are you going to read my detective yarn, or are you not?"

"Not!" responded three voices, emphatically.

"Pewwaps Tom Mewwy would wathah wead my article on 'Wintah Fashions'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Although I say it myself, I considah my article is—"

"Utter bosh!" said Monty Lowther, finishing that sentence for the noble swell of St. Jim's. "You can hand over the manuscript if you like, though, Gussy!"

"Vewy well, Lowthah," said D'Arcy graciously. "Heah is the manuscript, deah boy. I am afraid it is wathah long—"

"Never mind, Gussy!" said the humorist of the Shell, cheerfully. "The more the merrier, you know!"

"Yaas, wathah!" Gussy's manuscript was handed over, and Monty Lowther serenely placed it in the coal-scuttle.

Arthur Augustus nearly fell down when he saw his cherished article consigned to the coal-scuttle.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Lowthah, you awful boundah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

The noble swell of St. Jim's made a frantic dive towards the coal-scuttle, and retrieved his manuscript from its grimy depths.

He gasped when he beheld how dirty and soiled it was.

"Lowthah, you howwid wottah!" he exclaimed, fixing Lowther with a stern eye. "How dare you place my article in the coal-scuttle! Bai Jove, I have half a mind—"

"Yes, we know that, Gussy!" said Monty Lowther sympathetically. "Cheer up, old chap. It's not your fault!"

"Weally, you seweechin' chump!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, breathing hard through his nose. "What I was about to remark was, that I have half a mind to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Monty Lowther, in accents of horror. "Spare me, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus went red, and turned abruptly to Tom Merry.

"Heah is my manuscript, Tom Mewwy," he said. "I am afwaid it is wathah dirtay, but you will be able to weed it—"

"No fear!" said Tom Merry, shaking his head. "I couldn't think of touching such a dirty manuscript, Gussy. We editors are so particular, you know!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Look here, let's have no more rotting!" interrupted Blake impatiently. "My detective story—"

"Oh, is he going to begin on that subject again?" cried Tom Merry wearily. "Blake, my son, have pity on us. Take your detective story away, and give it a quiet burial!"

"You—you—you—" "What about my article on 'Pedigree Pups'?" demanded Herries truculently. "I want to know whether you are going to use it—"

"Certainly, old scout!" said Tom Merry. "It will come in awfully useful for lighting the fire!"

"Why, you—you cheeky rotter!" spluttered Herries.

"My poems are what you really want, Tom Merry!" said Digby eagerly. "I've spent no end of brain-power on 'em—"

"Ah! That accounts for you not having any left!" said Tom, with great solemnity. "So sorry, you know, Dig old chap, but I've read some of your poems before, and it was only my iron constitution that enabled me to survive!"

"Go for the rotters!" hooted Blake furiously. "They mean to cut us Fourth Form chaps out! They want to run the 'Weekly' all on their own! They think they're the only chaps who can do things! Go for 'em!"

The Terrible Three jumped to their feet as the Fourth-Formers advanced, pushing back their cuffs.

"Here, hold on, Blake!" exclaimed Tom Merry, picking up a bottle of ink, and holding it aloft. "If you start ragging us—"

"I'll knock some sense into you!" spluttered Blake, making a rush at Tom Merry. "I'll— Yarocogh! Ooooooh!"

Blake uttered these fiendish remarks as the contents of the ink-bottle swooshed all over his face and down his neck.

Blake fell over a chair in his confusion, and while he was still gasping and gurgling, Tom Merry grasped him and bundled him through the doorway.

Then he went to the assistance of Monty Lowther and Manners, who were being hard pressed by D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby.

Blake, in the passage outside, was still

gouging ink from his eyes and ears and mouth.

Tom Merry sailed into the midst of the fray, and very soon a wild and whirling conflict was taking place in the editorial sanctum.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Yawwoooogh!" roared D'Arcy, as he fell over the armchair, grasped the book-case for support, and pulled it over.

"You wuffians, I— Yah! Ow!"

Tom Merry and Manners grasped D'Arcy, propelled him towards the door, and hurled him forth, just as Blake was entering, prepared to enter the lists of battle once more.

Crash!

"Yoooooogh!" roared Blake as he fell to the passage again, with Arthur Augustus on top of him.

"Yawwoooogh!" shrieked the swell of the Fourth.

Digby and Herries put up a good fight, and had the study table over in a trice. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther piled upon them, trampling upon the papers that scattered the floor. There was a wild but brief struggle. Then Herries went sailing out of the study, to land on top of D'Arcy, and Digby followed.

The chums of Study No. 6 lay on the floor of the passage, a sorry and dishevelled heap.

"You chumps can go and chop chips!" said Tom Merry, glaring out of his study door. "We've got the poker and a few cricket-stumps ready, so don't come in here again, I warn you!"

"Yooooogh!" moaned Blake. "Gerroff my chest, Gussy!"

"Gwoooogh! Weally, Blake!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Hewwies, youah boot is in my face!"

"Lemmegerrup!" moaned Digby, upon whose chest Herries was reclining.

A heavy tread sounded in the passage, and Kildare of the Sixth appeared. The captain of St. Jim's stared aghast at the chums of the Fourth, grovelling together on the floor.

"You young idiots!" exclaimed Kildare. "Get up this minute! What's all this row about?"

Jack Blake & Co. arose, with many grunts and groans.

"Yow-ow!" moaned Blake, rubbing his head, where a large bump was rising. "We've been chucked out, on our necks!"

"By these Shell asses!" gurgled Herries sulphureously. "If I get in there again—"

"No, you won't go in there again!" said Kildare grimly. "There's been enough row in this passage. Clear off, you Fourth Form kids—"

"But I've left my treatise on pedigree pups in there!" roared Herries.

"My poems—" hooted Digby.

"My detective story—" blurted out Jack Blake.

"Rats!" said Kildare brusquely. "I shall give you all an impot each if you don't run away and leave this passage alone. Now, then!"

Bestowing homicidal glances at the closed door of Study No. 10, the Fourth-Formers crawled away. They were breathing uncharitable remarks concerning the Terrible Three under their breath. Kildare saw them turn the corner, and then walked away.

And the editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were left severely alone.

CHAPTER 2.

Lowther is Too Funny!

"H A, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther uttered that roar of laughter suddenly.

It was half an hour after the unceremonious departure of Jack Blake & Co. from Study No. 10, and the Ter-

rible Three were still hard at it. The "copy" for the "Weekly" was growing under their industrious hands.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther hilariously.

Tom Merry and Manners glared at Lowther.

"Ring off, you cackling ass!" snapped Tom Merry. "You'll get a dictionary buzzed at your napper in a minute!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther, utterly heedless of that dark threat.

"Oh, that's a good one! He, he, he!"

Tom Merry and Manners exchanged grim glances.

"The burbling jabberwock is laughing at his own jokes again!" exclaimed Manners. "Monty, you ass, cheese it!"

Monty Lowther wiped salt tears of merriment from his eyes.

"Listen to this joke, you chaps!" he said, with a chuckle. "I'm writing my Comic Column, you know, and I'm putting some ginger into it this time. What language do the fish use? Answer, Finnish! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners looked at the hilarious Monty in stony silence. They quite failed to appreciate that joke.

Monty Lowther ceased to laugh, and glared rather wrathfully at his chums.

"Why, you—you dummies!" he exclaimed. "Can't you see the joke? Fish speak Finnish—see? That gives the joke a good finish. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass!"

"You idiot!"

These were the disparaging remarks uttered by Tom Merry and Manners.

"Oh, really, you chaps," said the humorist of the Shell peevishly, "I consider that quite a first-rate joke, you know. Don't you like it?"

"No!" said Tom Merry flatly. "It wants chloroforming, Monty, you fat-head! If you can't make better jokes than that you'd better cut out your Comic Column for the 'Weekly' altogether. As a matter of fact, I could do with the space taken up by your rotten column of cheap jokes. Nobody reads 'em, anyway."

"Oh, don't they!" exclaimed Lowther, with warmth. "Why, the 'Weekly' would be very weakly without my jokes. Another good one. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you cackling dummy!" roared Tom Merry and Manners together.

Lowther glared, and subsided.

He bent over his uncompleted Comic Column, and wrinkled his brows in thought. Monty was an incorrigible punster and a monger of jokes—humorous and otherwise.

Tom Merry and Manners proceeded with their writing. Their pens raced over the paper at top speed. Monty Lowther did not write. He was busy thinking out new jokes.

Suddenly he gave a joyous exclamation, and banged the table with his fist. Unfortunately, in the excess of his exuberance Monty banged the table with quite unnecessary violence. The inkpot gave a jump and fell over on its side, and a stream of black ink surged all over Manners' manuscript, upon which he had been busily writing.

Manners jumped to his feet with a roar of wrath.

"You—you shrieking booby!" he roared, bestowing upon Monty a glare like unto that of a basilisk. "Look what you have done! My article on photograph enlarging smothered with ink! My manuscript is done in!"

"Oh crumbs!" said Lowther, blinking at Manners' ink-smothered article.

"Sorry, old chap. You can easily re-write it. Listen to this ripping new joke of mine. It's about 'you, too!'"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 670.

"Old Manners made photos in platinum,  
Sat down on some fresh prints to flatten 'em;  
But a pin on the chair  
Made him jump up and swear.  
Now he wishes he never had sat on 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. Manners roared, too, though not with laughter. He roared with wrath, and made a dash at Lowther round the table.

"Here, wharrer you up to?" gasped Lowther, dodging his infuriated study-mate. "Blessed if I see anything for you to get your rag out over, Manners! Yooop! Leggo!"

"I—I'll spifficate you!" hooted Manners, grabbing the humorous Monty and dragging him down to the carpet. "I'll teach you to spill ink over my manuscript, and then write rotten Limericks about me! Take that—and that—and that!"

At each repetition of the word "that," Manners gave Monty's head a thump. Monty Lowther roared.

"Here, chuck it, you two!" said Tom Merry, interposing. "Manners, old chap, leave the burbling maniac alone. He can't help making cheap jokes and weak Limericks. What he wants is a rest-cure, and he's going to have it!"

"Wharrer you driving at, Tommy?" demanded Monty Lowther, jumping up as Manners released him.

"I'm going to give you a rest-cure, Monty," said Tom Merry, quite cheerfully. "I'm getting fed up with your rotten Comic Column, which generally contains nothing but washy jokes. As a humorist, your star is on the descendant, old chap. Henceforth, your Comic Column is discontinued from the 'Weekly,' until you can prove that you can do something really funny!"

"Wha-a-at!" stuttered Monty Lowther, glaring aghast at Tom Merry. "You—you're going to cut out my Comic Column!"

"That's right, Monty!" said Tom Merry, nodding. "The readers are getting as fed up with your stale jokes as I am. I'm editor, and I say that your Comic Column must stop, until you have proved yourself to be a real, original humorist, instead of a scatter-brained monger of cheap and worn-out jokes!"

Monty Lowther clutched the study-table for support. The horrible news

that his Comic Column was stopped took time to sink into his dazed brain. He uttered a queer, gurgling gasp when the cold, hard truth dawned upon him.

"My—my Comic Column stopped!" he stuttered. "My Comic Column turned out of the 'Weekly'! My hat! I must be dreaming!"

Tom Merry shook his head. "This is harsh reality, Monty, old son!" he said. "A rest will do your brain good—what there is of it! When you can prove that you are a genuine humorist, and not a spurious imitation, I shall be pleased to reinstate the Comic Column in the 'Weekly.' Not before! The great chief has spoken!"

"Why, I—I'll punch your silly head, Tom Merry!" hooted Monty Lowther furiously. "D'you think I'm going to have my Comic Column cut out to make room for your silly tosh? Not much! My Comic Column's going in!"

"Your mistake, Monty!" said Tom Merry firmly. "It's going out!"

"You—you—you—" Monty Lowther, in the excess of his wrath, could find no words to utter. His looks spoke volumes, though.

"Look here, Tom Merry," he said, at length, in measured accents, "are you going to see sense, or aren't you?"

"I'm seeing sense!" responded the editor of the "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"That's why I say your Comic Column must stop!"

"I won't stand it!" hooted the enraged humorist of St. Jim's. "If you don't alter your mind, Tommy, I'm dot you on the boko!"

"Come on, then!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. Monty Lowther needed no second bidding. He made a rush at Tom Merry, pushing back his cuffs in a warlike manner. Tom Merry jumped up from his chair, and faced Monty, also pushing back his cuffs.

Next minute Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were fighting hammer and tongs. They waltzed round the study, locked in each other's embrace.

Tramp! Tramp!  
"Look out, you awful maniacs!" howled Manners, dodging the combatants. "You'll have the table over in a minute!"

"I don't care!" roared Monty Lowther. "My Comic Column's been stopped! It's not fair! Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!"

"Turn him out!" gasped Tom Merry, appealing to Manners. "He'll wreck the giddy study in a minute, and we're busy. Boot him out, and let him simmer down outside! Lend a hand, Manners!"

"What-ho!" said Manners, lending both hands.

Monty Lowther, despite his violent struggles, was whirled towards the door and precipitated through it. He landed with a terrific jolt upon the linoleum in the passage outside. He lay there and roared.

"Yow-ow! Oh, you rotters! Yooooop!"

"Go out in the quad and get some fresh air, Monty!" advised Tom Merry from the study doorway. "We'll let you in again when you promise to be good!"

"Why, you—you—" hooted Monty, struggling to his feet.

Slam!

The door of Study No. 10 closed with a bang, and the key was turned in the lock from the inside.

"Oh, the rotters!" gasped the ejected humorist. "I'll show 'em! My Comic Column stopped! The awful nerve! I'm not going to stand that! Let me

in, you worms, and I'll mop up the study with you!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!  
Monty Lowther beat a tattoo upon the door of his study with his hands and boots.

Thump! Crash! Thud!  
"Let me in!" roared Monty Lowther, in sulphurous accents, through the keyhole. "If you don't—Ooooooch!"

He broke off as a stream of ink came through the keyhole, and struck him full in the mouth. Monty's utterances, as he mopped frantically at his face with a handkerchief, were weird and wonderful.

"Yerrugh! Gug! Gug!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from Study No. 10. "Buzz off, Monty!"

Monty Lowther, gurgling incoherently, bestowed a final kick upon the study door, and went his way to procure a wash.

His feelings were too deep for words. He vowed vengeance upon his unfeeling study-mates for their harsh treatment of him.

What cut him to the heart most grievously was the abrupt suspension of his Comic Column from "Tom Merry's Weekly."

In the bath-room Lowther splashed away, and rubbed his face until it was red.

"Groooogh!" he muttered, during the course of the cleansing operation. "The awful rotter! Wants me to prove I'm a real, original humorist, does he? All right! I'll show him! I'll make the beggar open his eyes! I'll give him humour! He'll be only too glad to reinstate my Comic Column! Br-r-r-r!"

And the ejected humorist of the Shell stamped away, his face quite red.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Few Quick Changes!

JACK BLAKE'S face was grim as he entered Study No. 10 after tea that evening.

"Look here," he said to Tom Merry, who was seated at the table, doing up a parcel. "We chaps want to know whether you're going to put our stuff into the 'Weekly'!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Sorry, Blake," he said. "The copy's complete now, and I'm just making up this parcel to take down to the printer. You Fourth Form kids can't write for toffee. Redfern of the New House is the only Fourth-Former who can write really readable stories and articles. Two of his contributions are included in this number, as well as a story by Talbot, and some verse by Lumley-Lumley. So, you see, we haven't excluded the Fourth altogether."

"That doesn't matter!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "Nothing's been taken from Study No. 6. My detective story—"

"I read the first two pages of your detective yarn, Blake," chuckled Tom Merry. "My candid opinion is that for sheer, unadulterated twaddle, it takes the biscuit! Wild horses wouldn't make me use it for the 'Weekly'!"

Blake glowered, and watched Tom Merry tie the string round the parcel of copy for the printer.

"All right," he said, between his teeth. "We Fourth Form chaps are not going to be put in the shade by you Shell-fish. We'll show you a thing or two, Tom Merry! If I start a rival magazine to yours, you'll only have yourself to blame!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Manners.

With that Parthian shot, Blake strode from the study, and marched away to

To All Lovers of Sport

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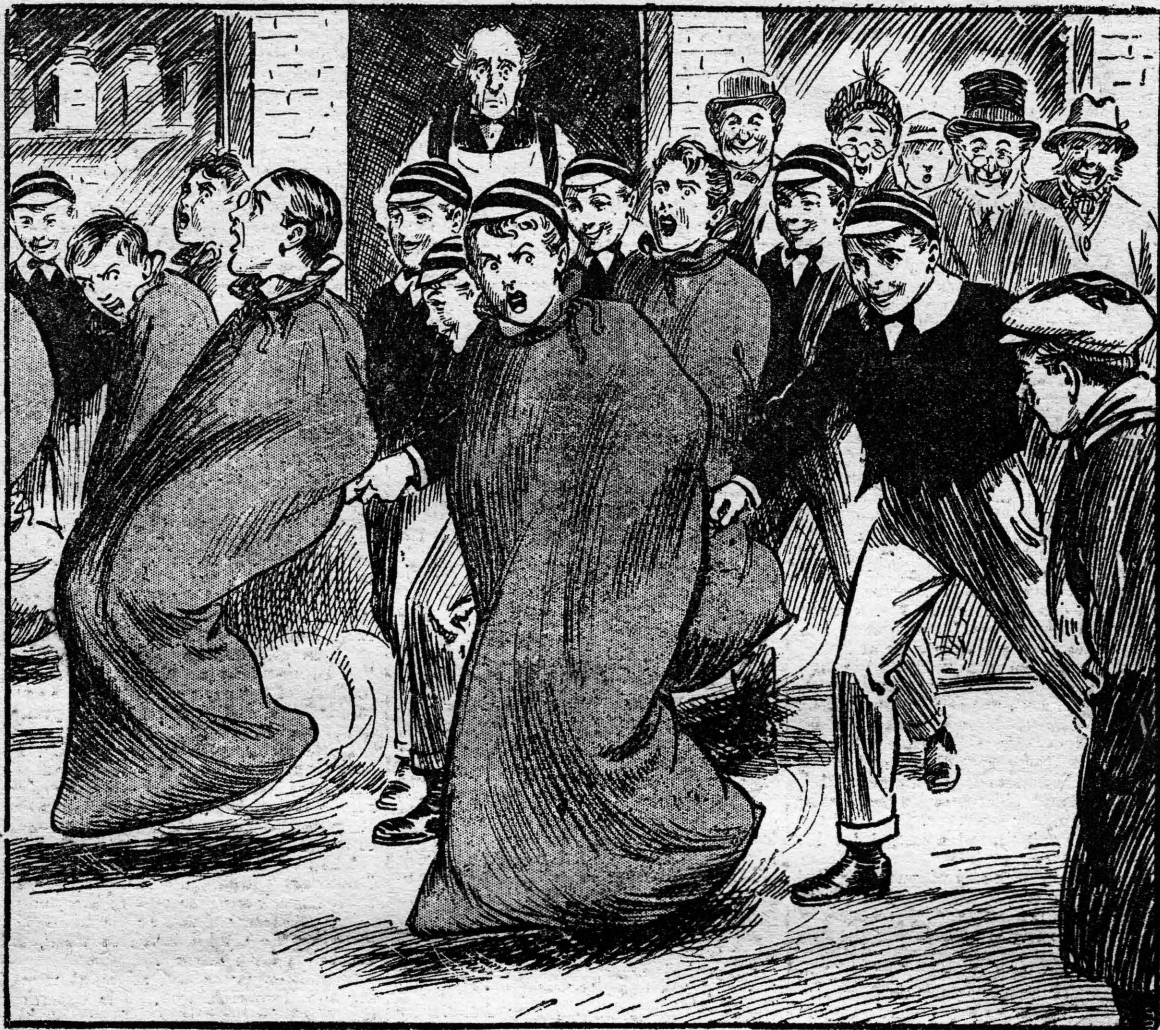
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The helpless Fourth-Formers stumbled forward in their sacks, with Tom Merry & Co. following to urge them forward with pins. Crowds of villagers lined the street to watch the strange spectacle. (See page 13.)

his own quarters in the Fourth Form passage.

Tom Merry gathered up the parcel of copy, and put his cap on.

"Coming?" he asked. Manners. "We'll run the stuff down to the printer on our bikes. It won't take half a jiffy!"

"All serene, Tommy," said Manners. "I'll come!"

The two chums of Study No. 10 went downstairs, and passed out into the quadrangle, where dusk was falling.

"I wonder where poor old Monty is?" laughed Tom Merry. "He seemed quite cut up about his Comic Column being stopped, didn't he? I expect— Why, talk of angels! Here he is!"

Monty Lowther walked up, and faced his chums with a grim brow.

"Well?" he demanded, looking towards the parcel tucked under Tom Merry's arm. "Is that the parcel of copy for the printer?"

"Yes, old son!" replied Tom Merry cheerfully. "We're just going to run it down to Rylcombe on our bikes."

"Is my Comic Column in there?" asked Monty Lowther, in measured tones.

"No; it's in the waste-paper basket, if you want it, Monty," said Tom Merry. "I've read all the jokes, and most of them are growing whiskers.

So sorry, Monty, but I can't have twaddle in the 'Weekly,' you know. You've got to prove yourself to be really, originally funny before your Comic Column goes back!"

"Oh, you awful rotter!" gasped Monty Lowther lugubriously. "Blessed if I can see anything wrong with my jokes! That one about the kid hiding his father's stud under the soap, for instance—"

"Yes; that was a good one, Monty; but you cribbed it from an old copy of 'Chuckles'!" said Tom Merry. "Why, I remember reading the joke months ago!"

"It wasn't exactly the same joke!" exclaimed Monty Lowther peevishly. "But look here, Tommy, for goodness' sake see reason—"

"Certainly, old son!" replied Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "I see heaps of reasons for cutting out your Comic Column. Cheer up, Monty! When you've satisfied us that you're not played out as a funny merchant, we'll restore you to grace. Good-bye-eeee!"

Tom Merry and Manners walked away. Monty Lowther stood glaring for some moments, then he strode after them.

He clutched Tom Merry by the sleeve. "Look here, Tommy," he exclaimed wrathfully, "you're not going to take that parcel down to the printer's without

my Comic Column. Why should I be left out in the cold? I'm not going to stand it!"

"Then sit down, Monty!" chuckled Tom; and, grabbing his incensed chum by the shoulders, he whirled him round and sat him down suddenly.

"Yarooop!" gasped Lowther, as his form smote the hard, unsympathetic ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Tom Merry and Manners, walking on.

By the time Monty Lowther had regained his feet his two study-mates were well on their way to the bicycle-shed.

Breathing threats of battle, murder, and sudden death, Monty followed.

Tom Merry and Manners looked wearily at each other as Monty Lowther loomed up from the dusk round the bicycle-shed.

"Why, here he is again!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The—the cheeky 'es! He's more giddy nuisance than he's worth! Bump him!"

Tom Merry dropped the parcel of copy, and joined Manners in bumping Lowther.

Monty uttered a shriek as his exasperated chums bowled him over.

"You rotters!" he cried. "Leagol Yow-ooop! Hands off! Yaroooogh!"

Bump, bump, bump! Lowther struck the ground thrice forcibly. He roared.

"Leggo! Stoppit! Yaroooop!"

Bump, bump!

Whilst this operation was in progress four youths crept behind the bicycle-shed, and looked on with subdued chuckles.

They were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

Blake had a bundle beneath his arm identical in bulk and appearance to the one Tom Merry had dropped.

"My word!" breathed the captain of the Fourth. "Here's luck, boys! We sha'n't have to bowl them over on their bikes, and change the parcel while they are getting up. Here's the parcel of copy on the ground. Now for it!"

And with the stealth of a Red Indian, Jack Blake crept forward, picked up the parcel of copy dropped by Tom Merry, and substituted his own parcel.

"Good!" he chuckled, as he rejoined his grinning chums behind the bicycle-shed. "Tom Merry will deliver that parcel to the printer, and when the 'Weekly' comes out he'll have a fit when he sees that it is a Fourth Form edition! Shush-sh! Not a word! They've finished bumping Lowther. This is where we make ourselves scarce!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 made themselves scarce, as Tom Merry and Manners let Monty Lowther go at last.

Lowther sat on the ground, gasping, and calling his study-mates names. Those youths were not at all perturbed by the lurid things Monty called them. They took out their bicycles and rode away, Tom Merry with the parcel under his arm. He had no idea, of course, that while he and Manners were busily engaged bumping Lowther, Blake of the Fourth had substituted a parcel for his own original copy.

When Tom Merry and Manners reached the school gates they discerned the form of Mr. Lathom, the Fourth Form-master, speaking to Taggles outside the porter's lodge.

Mr. Lathom turned, and hailed Tom Merry and Manners as they rode up.

"One moment, my boys. Are you just off to Rylcombe?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry respectfully, dismounting.

"I shall be glad if you will deliver a message at the village carrier's shop for me," said Mr. Lathom. "As you know, my rooms are being repaired and re-decorated, as a result of being damaged by fire. I am temporarily taking quarters in a house at Rylcombe, and I wish the carrier to remove my furniture from St. Jim's to my new address to-morrow afternoon."

Tom Merry and Manners looked rather surprised.

Mr. Lathom had had a fire in his rooms some little time ago, and his quarters had suffered considerably. Tom Merry & Co. had had no idea that Mr. Lathom's rooms had become untenable. They were still more surprised to hear that the Fourth Form-master was to live in "diggings" in Rylcombe during the course of repairs to his own rooms at St. Jim's.

"Will you kindly ask the carrier to call at two-thirty to-morrow afternoon, my lads?" said Mr. Lathom. "I shall be out, but Taggles will give him all instructions."

"Very well, sir," said Tom Merry. "We'll deliver that message at once."

"Thank you, my lads!"

Tom Merry and Manners rode away up Rylcombe Lane, and Mr. Lathom walked back across the Close to the School House.

A few minutes later Monty Lowther rode through the gates on his bicycle,

and followed Tom Merry and Manners down to the village.

There was a grim, determined look on Monty's face. It was apparent that he had evolved some scheme of revenge upon his unfeeling chums.

Tom Merry and Manners pedalled up to the printer's shop in the old High Street of Rylcombe, and leaving their bicycles standing against the kerb, they entered the shop.

Monty Lowther rode up while they were in there, and hid round an adjacent alley.

Tom Merry and Manners emerged within the space of a few minutes, remounted their machines, and rode away, making for the carrier's shop higher up the road.

"Good!" chuckled Monty, emerging from his place of concealment. "Now to work my trick. They'll find out how humorous Monty Lowther really can be when the next number of the 'Weekly' comes out."

Lowther marched into the printer's shop, and hailed the printer's assistant, who was scraping a block behind the counter.

"Hallo, Joe!" said the St. Jim's humorist cheerily. "Tom Merry's just left that parcel of copy for the 'Weekly,' hasn't he?"

"Yes, Master Lowther," replied Joe, indicating with his thumb the parcel on an adjacent shelf.

"Well, I've come to make a few last-minute alterations," said Monty, producing a fountain-pen. "So sorry to bother you, kid, but here's a bob. Hand over that parcel, will you?"

"Certainly, Master Lowther," said Joe, who was on familiar terms with the Terrible Three, and had no idea of the rift in the lute that had occurred.

Monty Lowther dragged the brown-paper covering off the parcel, and eagerly sought the contents.

His eyes opened wide with amazement when the first sheet of copy came to view.

"My giddy aunt!" he exclaimed, reading the title bewilderingly. "Catching the Shell Fish; an Angling Article by Jack Blake." Great Scott!"

Monty turned over the "angling article" by Blake, and gasped when he read the title of the next manuscript, which ran thus:

**"THE LUNACY OF LOWTHER!**  
Comments on the Crazy Compiler of the  
Comic Column.

By Robert Arthur Digby."

Lowther stared at these comments "like one in a dream."

"My only hat!" he ejaculated. "There's something wrong here! Why, this is not Tommy's copy at all!"

Lowther went through the rest of the copy, and saw, to his growing astonishment, that every item was a gross libel upon Tom Merry & Co., and laudatory with regard to the prowess of the Fourth Form.

Monty Lowther drew a deep breath. "Great pip!" he muttered. "Blake's managed to palm this parcel off on Tommy in some mysterious way, and Tommy has unsuspectingly delivered it here, to be printed as the next number of the 'Weekly.' Oh, my hat! How jolly lucky I chipped in time!"

Joe, the printer's boy, was looking curiously at Lowther.

"I say, Joe," said Monty swiftly, "there's some horrible mistake. The wrong parcel of copy has been left here. Is the boss in?"

"No, Master Lowther," said Joe, shaking his tousled head. "The gov'nor won't be back for another half an hour."

"Oh, good egg!" chuckled Monty.

"I'll make some extensive alterations to this little lot, Joe. Let's have a bob's worth of paper!"

The paper was forthcoming, and Monty Lowther proceeded to make fresh copy at express speed.

At the end of twenty minutes his work was completed, and there was a radiant smile upon his face as he left the printer's shop, and rode up the High Street, back towards St. Jim's.

The humorist of the Shell was on his mettle, and was confident that, when the next issue of "Tom Merry's Weekly" did appear, its contents would bear overwhelming testimony to his humorous powers.

#### CHAPTER 4. Monty's Ruse!

**T**HE next day was Wednesday—a half-holiday at St. Jim's.

Rain fell in the morning, and seemed to have set in for the day. The inclement state of the weather was viewed lugubriously by the boys of St. Jim's. Already Little Side was rain-sodden, and it seemed probable that footer would have to be "off" for the half-holiday.

Kildare & Co. of the Sixth had an away match at Abbotsford, and, rain or no rain, they meant to go.

When the juniors were released from the Form-rooms that morning, and assembled at the top of the steps, the quadrangle was wet, and numerous puddles bestrewed it.

Little Side, as Tom Merry & Co. had anticipated, was under water, and the heroes of the Lower School, with philosophic resignation, bethought themselves of pastimes other than footer whereby to spend the half-holiday before them.

The news that Mr. Lathom was taking temporary "diggings" in Rylcombe had caused much surprise among the juniors.

When Monty Lowther heard it that morning, he set his brain to work, and evolved a deep scheme.

Tom Merry was still adamant regarding the Comic Column. The captain of the Shell had no idea, of course, that Blake had substituted his copy, which had, in its turn, been mercilessly "blue-pencilled" by Monty Lowther. Monty Lowther was keeping that a dark secret, in order to spring a gigantic surprise on Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. when the "Weekly" was issued.

Meanwhile, the humorist of the Shell determined to play other jokes, in order to enhance his reputation as a real, live, original fun merchant.

The news that Mr. Lathom had commissioned the carrier to "move" him that afternoon had given Monty an idea.

When Tom Merry and Manners stated their intention of going over to Wayland Cinema that afternoon, with a party comprising Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, Dick Julian, and several other Shell fellows, Lowther begged to be excused. In fact, he flatly refused to accompany his study-mates to the pictures that afternoon.

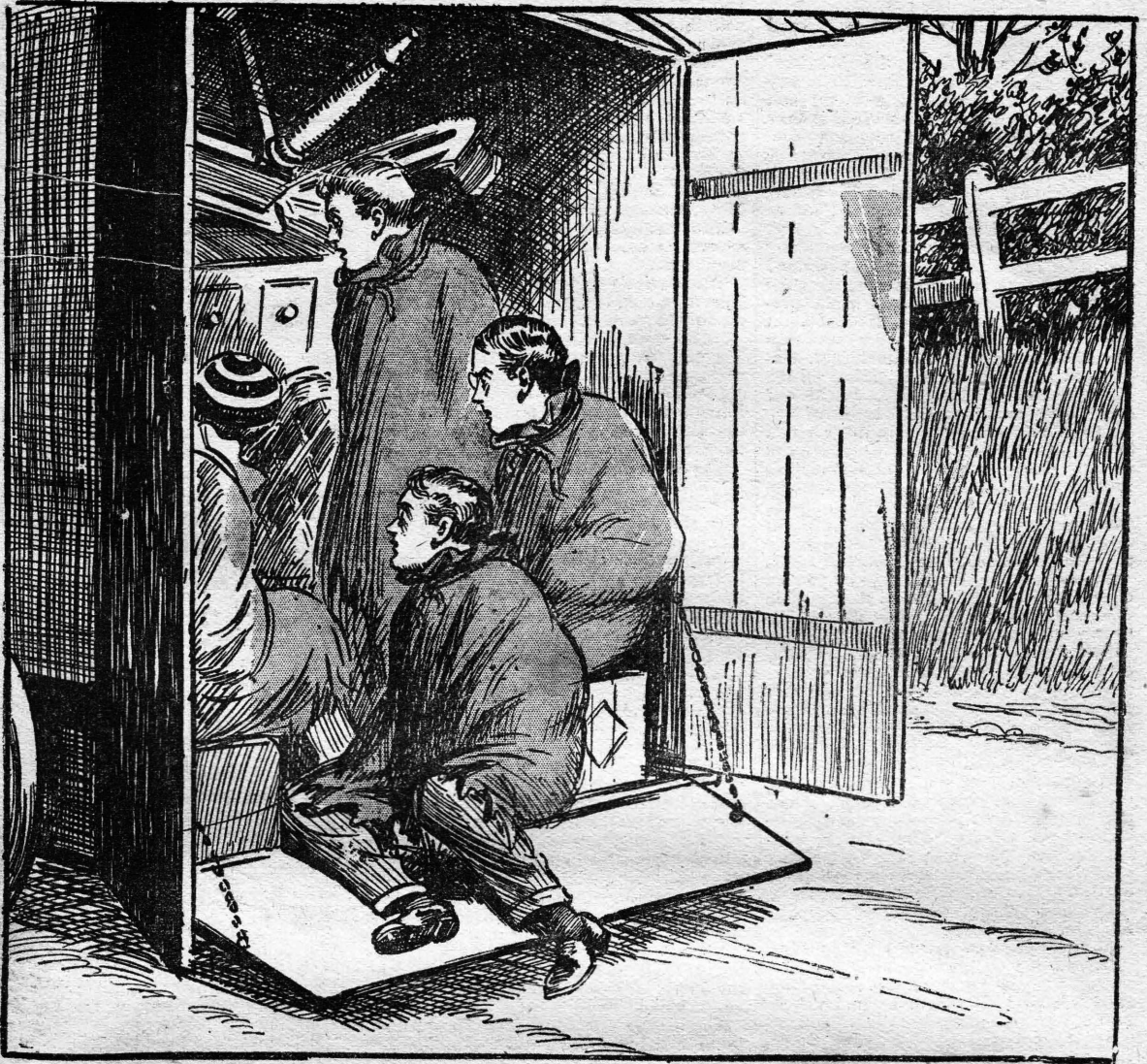
Tom Merry and Manners gave Monty up as a bad job at last, thinking that perhaps he was still feeling sore over the suspension of his Comic Column.

After dinner, Kildare and most of the Sixth left St. Jim's, bound for Abbotsford.

Knox was the only prefect who did not accompany the First Eleven. He was not an athlete, and footer, on a wet afternoon, did not interest him. Knox much preferred a smoking-party, with Cutts and Gilmore and St. Leger of the Fifth, in the privacy of Cutts' own study.

Tom Merry & Co. departed for Wayland Cinema, leaving Monty Lowther indoors.

Monty, in lighter vein, was enjoying a



Blake & Co. ran after the carter's van and jumped into the back. "So far so good," said Blake, peering into the interior of the cart. "My hat! Why, here's all our study furniture. What the dickens does this mean?" (See page 13.)

slide down the balusters leading to the hall, when Knox and Cutts and St. Leger and Gilmore appeared below.

It so happened that Monty was almost at the bottom, when Knox and his Fifth Form cronies approached.

Monty was whizzing down at a good speed, and, unable to save himself, crashed right into Knox & Co.

Monty's legs struck Knox in the waistcoat, and the prefect was bowled over backwards, like a ninepin. Lowther's right fist thudded on the point of Gilmore's jaw, and that youth went staggering backwards, to fall over Knox, who lay grovelling on the floor. Then Monty fell down, and, grabbing Cutts for support, pulled the dandy of the Fifth over on top of him.

St. Leger was the only one left standing. He chuckled when he saw that mass of struggling arms and legs at the bottom of the stairs.

"Yerrrugh!" gurgled Knox. "Gerroff!"

"Lemme get up!" moaned Cutts, giving a mighty heave, and projecting Gilmore on top of Knox.

Monty Lowther wriggled from underneath Cutts, and struggled to his feet. Simultaneously, Gilmore and Knox and Cutts arose.

"You—you young monkey!" roared

Knox, dashing after Lowther, who essayed to escape. "I'll teach you to slide down the balusters and knock us over! After him, you fellows!"

"Scrag the little rotter!" panted Cutts.

Monty dashed up the stairs at full speed, but Knox grabbed one of his ankles, and pulled him down.

"Yaroooogh!" roared Lowther, as the seniors grasped him.

"Throw him down the stairs!" grated Gilmore. "That will bump all the breath out of the young scoundrel's body!"

"Leggo!" roared Monty, as Knox and Cutts and Gilmore raised him on high. "You dare chuck me down! I—Yaroooogh!"

Bump, bump, bump!  
Knox & Co. let go, and the luckless Shell fellow sailed down the staircase, bumping against each stair as he went.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the seniors, at the top of the stairs.

Monty struck the bottom landing at last, and lay there, gasping.

Knox & Co. roared with laughter, and then proceeded on their way to Cutts' study, in the Fifth Form passage, there to spend the afternoon smoking and playing nap.

A party of six Fourth Formers ambled

along as Monty Lowther was picking himself up.

Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, Digby, Keruish, and Reilly stared in considerable astonishment at the dusty and dishevelled Shell fellow.

"Hallo, Lowther!" said Blake. "Who's been using you as a doormat?"

"Yow-ow!" moaned Monty Lowther, rubbing his head, where a bump was rising. "Those rotters, Knox and Cutts and Gilmore chucked me down the stairs. I was sliding down the balusters, and barged into them, that's all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnay, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Youah clobber is distinctly wumped and eweased, Lowthah. You wequiah a wash, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther rubbed his head, and glared.

"Bedad, we'll be late for the pictures entoirly!" said Reilly. "Come on, Blake!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the noble Arthur Augustus. "We've got to get to Wayland, deah boys!"

The Fourth Formers then walked off.

grinning, and Monty Lowther limped upstairs.

"So they are off to the Wayland Cinema as well!" he said, with a wry smile, after he had had a wash, and dusted his clothes down. "Well, if they meet Tommy's lot in there, I reckon there'll be a rough house. Lemme see, it's nearly half-past two. Time to work my trick. I'll have a lark with Blake, and get even with old Knox, too!"

Monty looked in at Knox's study, and saw that it was empty. He crept along the Fifth Form passage, and ascertained that Knox was in Cutts' room, with the black sheep of the Fifth, and would probably remain there all the afternoon.

He returned to Knox's study, and proceeded to disarrange the furniture, and stripped the prefect's bed. He piled the study chairs on the table, rolled the carpet up, and made a bundle of the bedding. That done, Monty retired, chucking. He locked the door, slipped the key into his pocket, and made his way along to the Fourth Form passage.

He walked straight into Study No. 6, that famous apartment inhabited by Jack Blake & Co., and proceeded to do the same as he had done in Knox's room.

There was no bed in the study, of course, as the juniors slept together in the dormitory. Monty piled up the furniture, took down the curtains, rolled up the carpet, locked the door, and walked away with the key in his pocket.

The House was deserted, for the rain had ceased, and most of the St. Jim's boys were out of doors.

Lowther made his way down to Taggles' lodge by the school gates.

He walked in at the front door, and discovered the old and ancient school porter in his little parlour, sleeping comfortably in an armchair, with a table before him, on which was standing a bottle containing a colourless liquid, and a glass.

Evidently, Taggles had been sampling some of the contents of the bottle.

Monty Lowther emitted a soft chuckle. "Good job Taggy's asleep!" he murmured. "Now to work the rest of my little wheeze! I'm sure to find an old uniform of his somewhere!"

Monty Lowther was successful in his search for one of Taggles' old uniforms. He tried it on, and found it necessary to pad himself rather a great deal. Then, standing in front of Taggles' little mirror, the humorist of the Shell proceeded to disguise his face to resemble that of Taggles.

Lowther was an adept at the art of "make-up," and soon a startling change became visible in his facial appearance. He studied the features of the slumbering porter, and designed his disguise to correspond.

At last, with a shaggy wig upon his head, eyebrows and whiskers to match, Monty Lowther was the complete counterpart of Taggles, the school porter.

He chuckled, as, placing Taggles' topper upon his head, he stepped back to view the effect.

"Ripping!" was Lowther's enthusiastic comment upon himself. "The old carrier will swallow me whole when he arrives. Hallo! Here comes the cart!"

The village carrier's cart had appeared at the gates of St. Jim's. Monty Lowther, thus effectively disguised as Taggles, rolled out of the lodge, and shut the door behind him.

Inside, the real Taggles was slumbering, in blissful ignorance of the perpetration enacted by Monty Lowther of the Shell.

"Ho!" said Lowther, in a faithful imitation of Taggles' rumbling accents. "Ere you are, my man! Which you've

got to remove some furniture to the village!"

"Sure!" chuckled the carrier. "Tell me wot to do, raspberry-tip, and I'll do it!"

"None o' your cheek!" grunted the pseudo-porter, at this humorous reference to his nasal organ. "This way, hif you please!"

And Lowther led the way across the Close, towards the School House.

The quadrangle was almost deserted, except for a few fags, who were playing rounders.

The carrier's cart rumbled over to the School House steps, and the carman descended from the cart.

"This way!" grunted the bogus Taggles, walking laboriously up the steps, and indoors.

Lowther piloted the carrier up to the Fourth Form passage and, withdrawing the key to Study No. 6, unlocked the door, and entered.

The carrier followed.

"This 'ere's the fust room!" grunted Lowther. "Which you'll kindly buck up over the job, 'cos Dr. Olmes don't like furniture shiftn' about the 'ouse!"

"Right-ho!" said the carrier cheerfully, and he set about removing the contents of Study No. 6.

Lowther willingly lent a hand, and, between the two, the furniture and effects of Jack Blake & Co. were rapidly consigned to the carrier's cart, waiting below.

When Study No. 6 was devoid of all furniture, Lowther replaced the key and left the door unlocked.

"This way!" he grunted, walking towards the corridor.

He led the carrier along to Knox's study, and unlocked the door.

"Ere you are!" he said. "The bed's taken down, and everything is ready to be taken away. I'll lend a 'and!"

Unsuspectingly the carrier commenced removing operations upon Knox's furniture.

"Don't make a noise!" warned the bogus Taggles, assisting the carrier with the work. "Don't want to disturb the 'ouse, you know!"

The carrier was not a clumsy man, and performed his duties with a minimum of noise.

Lowther, too, worked as noiselessly as possible.

He trembled to think of what Knox would do if he happened to come out of Cutt's study and see his study being emptied of all its furniture!

Fortunately for the practical japer of St. Jim's, Knox & Co. heard nothing, and consequently had no suspicion of what was taking place in the Sixth Form passage.

Within the space of half an hour Knox's study was made as bare of furniture as the famous Mother Hubbard's cupboard was bare of food.

The van was well loaded with furniture by the time the last article was consigned within it. It was a large van, however, and there was plenty of room on the tailboard.

"Well, that's the lot!" said Lowther. "You know where to take it?"

"Yes, that's all right," said the carrier. "The old gent wot the furniture belongs to is in Rylcombe now. A master 'ere, ain't 'e?"

"Yes," said the pseudo-porter. "Now, my man, 'urry hoff! This job's got to be done as quick as possible!"

The carrier climbed into his seat on the cart, whipped up his horse, and drove away.

Lowther stood by the School House steps, and watched the cart laden with furniture as it rumbled through the gates and disappeared from view.

Then he burst into a loud roar of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" gurgled the bogus St. Jim's porter, holding his sides.

"The giddy wheeze has worked like a charm! Won't old Blake and Knox have a few blue fits when they discover their studies have been emptied! Ha, ha, ha! What a game! Old Tommy will chortle when he hears it! This'll prove to him what a really first-rate humorist I am. Why, it's the jape of the term! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther, still chucking, made his way to Taggles' lodge.

He discovered the porter still slumbering heavily in the armchair. Lowther proceeded to divest himself of his disguise. He replaced the borrowed uniform and the stuffing, placed the remainder of his disguise in his pocket, washed his face, and made off, leaving Taggles still deep in the arms of Morpheus.

The humorist of the Shell chuckled delightedly as he made his way out of gates.

"My word, it's a prime lark!" he gurgled. "Nobody will tumble to my little ruse! They'll think Taggy made a mistake, and he'll get a wigging from Mr. Lathom. Serves the boozey old beggar right! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Monty Lowther, feeling perfectly satisfied with the result of his little jape, proceeded on his way to the village, to partake of a "high tea" at the bunshop, in solitary state.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Blake & Co. Get "Sacked"!

"HEAH we are, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as he and his chums stopped outside the Wayland Cinema.

"Get the tickets, Gussy!" said Blake. "You're standing treat!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The noble Arthur Augustus stepped into the vestibule of the cinema.

He fell back with a gasp of surprise when he saw Tom-Merry & Co. standing outside the pay-box.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, here's Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "There's nothing doing, Gussy. Not a seat left anywhere. Afternoon closing day for the local shops, you know; and, besides, it's wet. The cinema's full!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Got those tickets, Gussy?" asked Blake, looking round the doorway of the cinema. "We— Why, my hat! Those Shell bounders!"

"Fourth Form kids!" exclaimed Tom Merry, turning swiftly to his chums. "Let's rag them, chaps! There's nothing better to do, as we can't get into the pictures."

"Good egg!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy beat a strategic retreat out of the cinema vestibule as Tom Merry & Co. advanced.

He and Blake and the others formed in a little party on the corner of Wayland High Street.

"They're spoiling for a rag!" said Blake, frowning. "There are nine of them and six of us. We'd better hook it!"

And, as Tom Merry & Co. advanced in formidable array, Jack Blake & Co. "hooked" it.

They ran down the High Street towards the station at a hurried rate. After them came Tom Merry & Co., like hounds upon the scent.

"Run for it, chaps!" gasped Blake, looking back. "We don't want to be chucked into muddy puddles. Let's get

into the station. We may be able to dodge 'em there!"

So Jack Blake & Co. made a bee-line for the railway-station.

They dashed into the booking-office, and Blake took tickets for Rylcombe. Then, as Tom Merry & Co. pounded into the station, they rushed on to the platform.

It did not take Tom Merry long to purchase tickets for his party, and, eager for a chance to "rag" their rivals of the Fourth, the Shell fellows dashed through the barrier and on to the platform.

Blake & Co. were nowhere to be seen. "They—they've disappeared!" exclaimed Harry Noble, looking up and down each platform for a sign of the Fourth Formers. "Perhaps they're in the waiting-room. Let's have a look."

A hurried search was made in the waiting-room, but Jack Blake & Co. were not discovered.

Tom Merry & Co. stood on the station platform, flabbergasted.

Suddenly, Manners gripped his leader's arm, and pointed to a number of sacks, standing with a heap of boxes, by the signal-cabin at the end of the station.

"I wonder if they're in those sacks?" he said swiftly. "See, there are only six full, and a lot more sacks are lying on top of the boxes empty. Perhaps Blake & Co. are hiding in those sacks!"

"My word!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with gleaming eyes. "Now I come to think of it, those sacks do look a trifle suspicious. I say, chaps, let's walk up there, as if to look behind the signal-box for them. Then, when I whistle, grab those sacks, and see what's in 'em. If they are full of Jack Blake & Co., then woe betide 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry & Co. ambled up the platform, conversing in loud and anxious tones.

"They've disappeared into thin air!" said Tom Merry loudly, as they approached the sacks, by the signal-cabin. "I wonder if they're hiding behind the signal-box? If we don't find 'em there, then I'm afraid we're done!"

"Perhaps they've scouted across the line, and bunked over the fields," suggested Manners, also in tones sufficiently loud for Jack Blake & Co. to hear if they were inside the sacks.

The Shell fellows crowded round the sacks.

Tom Merry extracted a pin from the bottom fold of his waistcoat, and inserted the business end into the sack.

The sack gave a convulsive jump, and a muffled voice came from within.

"Yawwooooh! Bai Jove!" "Something in that sack!" chuckled Tom Merry, gripping the top. "It sounds like Gussy. Get hold of those others, my sons!"

Each sack commenced to writhe and wriggle as the tops were grasped by the heroes of the Shell.

Muffled gurgles issued from the interior of the sacks.

"Oh, you awful rotters!" "Grooooh! Let us out!"

"Leggo that sack, you beasts!" "Oh deah! Pway, wesease me, deah boys! Yewwugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

They did not allow the mouths of the sacks to open. Each sack was raised and carried along the platform, the hapless schoolboy inside kicking and yelling.

"Here comes the train!" sang out Kangaroo.

The slow local rumbled into the platform, and rattled to a halt.

Tom Merry & Co. opened the door of an empty third-class compartment, and,

before the guard had time to ascertain what was happening, the six sacks were bundled within, and the Shell fellows themselves followed.

The compartment was rather crowded, but Tom Merry & Co. did not mind that at all.

Not until the train had started on its journey to Rylcombe were the sacks opened. Then only the heads of the occupants were allowed to protrude into the fresh air.

"Hallo, dear boys!" chuckled Tom Merry, as the heads of Jack Blake & Co. were revealed. "You've let yourselves in for something now, haven't you? Fancy thinking you could delude us by disguising yourselves as sacks of potatoes! We're not so green, you see!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake & Co. wriggled and struggled manfully to get out of the sacks, but of no avail.

"Oh, you—you horrid rotters!" gurgled Blake sulphurously, bestowing upon his tormentors a homicidal glare. "What're you going to do with us now—eh?"

"Wait till we reach Rylcombe, old son!" responded Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "We're going to make you do a sack-race back to St. Jim's!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake, in horror.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry & Co. roared with laughter.

At length the train clattered into Rylcombe Station, and Jack Blake & Co., still prisoners inside the sacks, with only their heads revealed, were hoisted out upon the platform.

Tom Merry & Co. carried them through the barrier, and into the station-yard.

Kangaroo went for some rope, and returned with an ample supply.

By means of this rope the mouths of the sacks were tied round their occupants' necks, and again the sacks were roped round underneath Jack Blake & Co.'s armpits.

In this manner Jack Blake & Co. were utterly helpless, and unable to get out of the sacks, although their heads were quite free.

They stood up, and the manner in which they hopped and floundered about was truly remarkable to behold.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed upon them, and shrieked with mirth.

"Oh, you—you rotters!" moaned Blake, jumping about in the sack that imprisoned his body and his legs. "We—we'll annihilate you when we get back to St. Jim's!"

"Oh, we'll wait, old sport!" said Tom Merry, chuckling. "Now, boys, shove them in a line, and give them a start on their sack-race back to the school!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crowds of villagers collected in Rylcombe High Street to watch the strange spectacle of six St. Jim's schoolboys imprisoned within sacks, ranged in a line outside the station.

"Ready?" said Tom Merry. "Steady, my bonny boys! Go!"

Jack Blake & Co. wriggled, but they did not go.

Thereupon, Tom Merry & Co. inserted pins in the rear of the sacks where they shrewdly judged the most tender portion of Jack Blake & Co.'s anatomies would be.

The helpless denizens of the sacks stumbled forward, and floundered up the High Street, amidst peals of laughter.

Jack Blake & Co., with feelings that were unutterable, stumbled and staggered up the High Street, followed by a dense crowd.

Tom Merry & Co. followed them closely, urging them on by means of pins when they showed signs of slacking.

In this manner did that strange sack-race proceed up the Rylcombe Lane towards St. Jim's.

At last, the bottoms of the sacks, unable to stand the strain any longer, became worn through. Jack Blake & Co. gasped with relief when they were able to wrench their feet and legs through the bottoms of the sacks.

Tom Merry & Co. sent up a shout of alarm as they saw that their victims had managed to get their legs free.

Jack Blake & Co. did not wait to hear what Tom Merry & Co. had to say.

They bolted down the lane, and, rounding the next corner, dived into the thickets of Rylcombe Wood.

### CHAPTER 6. More Moving Jobs!

"PUT the speed on!" panted Blake, as they crashed through the thickets.

"Wun like anythin', deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The Fourth Form fugitives simply tore their way through the wood.

They could hear Tom Merry & Co. pursuing them, and the fear of being caught again by their deadly rivals urged them on.

They did not know which way they were going, in their eagerness to get as far away from the clutches of Tom Merry & Co. as possible.

At length the sounds of the pursuers were heard no more, and Jack Blake & Co. realised joyously that they had, so far, succeeded in eluding capture.

They bounded up a narrow path, and at length emerged into the Rylcombe Lane again.

A cart was rumbling towards them, proceeding from the direction of St. Jim's.

Jack Blake turned swiftly to his chums. "There's the carrier's cart!" he said.

"It's going down to the village. Let's hop on the tailboard as it passes. That will dish those Shell rotters properly. We dare not return to St. Jim's until we get these rotten sacks off. Come on!"

The carrier's cart passed, and Jack Blake & Co. noted vaguely that it was loaded with furniture.

They ran after the cart, and, one by one, jumped up on the tailboard. The cart, by that time, was rather crowded!

"So far, so good!" said Blake, peering into the interior of the cart. "I expect this is Lathom's furniture being shifted to the village. I— Why, my only sainted Aunt Maria! It's our furniture!"

"Wha-a-at!" "Our furniture is in this van!" shrieked Blake. "Look—behind this other lot!"

They looked, and the eyes of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby opened wide with amazement when they recognised their own study furniture.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "What the dickens—" gurgled Herries.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Digby. Blake looked wildly round him.

"There's some horrible mistake somewhere!" he gasped. "Our furniture has been shifted instead of Lathom's! Oh crumbs!"

Blake leaped off the tailboard of the van, and rushed to the front, hailing the driver excitedly.

"Hi! Stop! You've taken the wrong furniture!"

The village carrier gazed down at the St. Jim's junior, garbed in a sack, from the bottom of which his legs protruded.

"Wot's that?" he demanded.

"You've shifted the wrong furniture!" shrieked Blake, almost distractedly. "That doesn't belong to Mr. Lathom at all—it belongs to us! You've been tricked! We've been tricked!"

By this time, the carrier had stopped his horse, and the other Fourth-Formers had crowded round.

The carrier burst into a roar of laughter when he saw them all weirdly bedecked in sacks.

"Haw, haw, haw! You do look a pretty crew, an' no mistake!"

"We've been spoofed!" howled Blake.

"Haw, haw! I can see that!" chuckled the carrier. "Do you mean to say as 'ow I've been and shifted the wrong furniture?"

"Yes; it's our furniture, and—and Knox's by the look of it!" cried Blake wildly. "Come back at once! There's been a ghastly mistake!"

The carrier hesitated at first, but when he saw how horror-stricken the school-boys were, he realised that they spoke the truth.

So he turned his horse round and returned to St. Jim's, Jack Blake & Co., having been released from the sacks, following.

Fortunately for them, Tom Merry & Co. were still scouring the woods, and did not emerge upon Rycombe Lane.

When St. Jim's was reached, Blake burst into Taggles' lodge. The school porter was still blissfully slumbering.

"Wake up, you idiot!" shrieked Blake, shaking Taggles furiously. "What the dickens do you mean by having our furniture shifted—hey?"

"Wot!" gasped Taggles, rising unsteadily to his feet, and rubbing his eyes. "Which I don't see as 'ow—"

"You told the carrier to shift our furniture!" hooted Blake. "What the dickens do you mean by it, Taggles?"

"Which I've been asleep!" grunted Taggles, clutching the doorpost for support. "Gerrugh! Wot's the matter with this 'ere door?—Yoogh!"

"You—you—yow—" stuttered Blake. He could not find a word bad enough to call Taggles. He left the porter still hugging the door-post, and gazing bewilderedly at the ceiling. Blake dashed out into the drive, and rejoined his chums round the carrier's cart.

"Taggles is potty!" he said. "He says he's been asleep all the afternoon. I say, carrier, for goodness' sake come and put our furniture back. We'll lend you a hand, and give you a good tip besides!"

"Right-ho, young gents!" said the carrier willingly.

The cart was driven over to the School House steps, and the furniture unloaded.

It was yet early in the afternoon, and nobody was about, except some fags and New House fellows, who gathered round and viewed the proceedings with considerable interest.

Jack Blake & Co. accompanied the carrier indoors, and directed him to Mr. Lathom's study.

While the carrier was shifting the contents of the master's study to the van, Jack Blake & Co. carried their own furniture back to Study No. 6. Reilly and Kerruish willingly assisting them.

When it was all back, Knox's furniture remained.

"I'm blessed if I know how Knox's furniture happened to be shifted with ours!" said Blake, scratching his head.

"My hat! I wonder if Lowther worked it on us? You remember, he stayed in this afternoon. We found him at the bottom of the stairs, after Knox had chucked him down. Perhaps he dressed up as Taggles, and spoofed the carrier

into shifting our furniture, and Knox's, while that boozey porter was asleep!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"It's quite likely, Blake!" said Herries, nodding.

Jack Blake smote his fists together, and there was a gleam in his eye that betokened sudden inspiration.

"We owe Tom Merry & Co. for that ragging they've just given us, anyway!" he said. "Let's shift the contents of Study No. 10 into Knox's room, and shove Knox's belongings into Study No. 10. They can settle things with Knox afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wippin' ideah, Blake, deah boy!"

The heroes of the Fourth set about executing Blake's idea with relish.

The carrier had loaded his van with Mr. Lathom's furniture, and, after having received a handsome tip from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he drove away, leaving Jack Blake & Co. with Knox's furniture in the quadrangle.

First of all, Tom Merry's study was visited, and its contents taken, article by article, along to Knox's room, which Jack Blake & Co. found empty.

They worked with as much silence as possible, and soon had the furniture and effects of Study No. 10 transferred to Knox's room.

Then all that remained for them to do was to convey Knox's furniture up to Study No. 10.

This work occupied but a quarter of an hour, and then Jack Blake & Co. were satisfied.

"Whew!" said Blake, as he and his chums congregated in Study No. 6 afterwards, in order to partake of tea together.

"How jolly lucky we discovered the giddy plot in time! Won't Tom Merry & Co. open their eyes when they find Knox's furniture in their den!"

"Faith, an' phwat will Knox say, bejabbers!" exclaimed Reilly.

"That," said Blake, "remains to be seen. Gussy, old man, get any tin? We'll lay in supplies for tea, if you have."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Digby was despatched to the tuckshop for supplies, and the chums of the Fourth comforted themselves with thoughts of a good tea.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Startling Discoveries.

"WHAT the merry dickens—"

"Great Scott!"

"Well, I'm blithered!"

These were the expressions

uttered by the Terrible Three as they

opened the door of Study No. 10, and

entered.

Monty Lowther had met Tom Merry

and the others on their way back to St.

Jim's.

He had not told them of his little jape.

He had meant it to come as a huge,

delightful surprise to them.

And now, as they gazed into their

famous apartment, they did have a huge

surprise, though not a delightful one!

Monty was more amazed, even, than

Tom Merry or Manners.

Their study was filled with strange

furniture. Where the bookcase used to

be, a bed now stood. Their own

"props" had disappeared.

"Mum-my giddy aunt!" gasped Tom

Merry. "Where's our furniture?"

"This isn't ours!" shrieked Manners.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Monty Low-

ther.

He was floored.

Tom Merry and Manners bewilderedly

examined the furniture in their room.

They at once recognised it as belonging

to Gerald Knox of the Sixth.

"How on earth did Knox's furniture

come in here?" gurgled the captain of

the Shell, like one in a dream. "We— we've been japed, somehow!"

"Gug-good heavens!" gasped Lowther, passing a hand bewilderedly across his forehead. "I—I didn't—"

"You didn't what?" demanded Tom Merry. "Is this one of your funny japes, Monty? What have you been up to this afternoon?"

"Nun-nothing!" stuttered Lowther. "I—I shifted Blake's furniture, and—and Knox's in the carrier's cart! I had it all taken away from the school!"

"What!" shouted Tom Merry and Manners.

Lowther groaned, in complete anguish of spirit, and then proceeded to relate, without any semblance of a smile, how he had disguised himself as Taggles, and had the contents of Blake's and Knox's study removed.

Tom Merry and Manners did not smile, either.

"You—you shrieker!" gasped Tom Merry, at length. "Somebody's turned the tables, somehow! Where, for goodness' sake, is our furniture?"

"I expect it's down in the village by now!" hooted Manners.

"Oh, lor'!"

Monty Lowther backed hastily towards the door as his infuriated chums bore down upon him.

The looks Tom Merry and Manners gave Lowther were calculated to stretch him lifeless on the spot, if such looks had the power to kill.

"You—you scatter-brained chump!" gasped Tom Merry. "Is this your idea of a jape?"

"It's not my fault!" howled Lowther furiously. "You wanted me to do something funny, and prove that I'm a humorist!"

"D'you call this funny—hey?" roared Tom Merry, indicating Knox's furniture with a wave of his hand. "Is this a joke? Our furniture has been carted down to Rycombe by now, I expect. Anything funny in that?"

"I—I—I—"

"Oh, scrag him!"

Monty Lowther made a hurried rush for the door, but his chums were too quick for him.

He was whirled over, and fell on the carpet with a thud that fairly made the windows rattle.

"Bump the funny ass!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Poor Monty rose and fell, and roared

as his exasperated study-mates proceeded

to wreak summary vengeance. Since the

suspension of his Comic Column he

seemed to have been doomed to trouble

as the sparks fly upward.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yah! Ow-wow-ow! Stoppit!"

howled the luckless humorist of the Shell.

"Give him another!" gasped Tom

Merry. "We'll teach the funny idiot!"

Bump!

Lowther lay on the carpet when his

chums had finished bumping him, and

moaned.

Manners raked down some soot from

the chimney, and plastered it all over

Monty's head and face.

Lowther's appearance was startling

and vivid. He resembled a Christy

Minstrel.

"Yoogh! Oh crumbs! You rotters!

Yah!"

Crash!

The study door was flung open, and

Gerald Knox of the Sixth looked in.

Knox's eyes glinted when he recog-

nised his study furniture in the Terrible

Three's room.

"You—you little rascals!" he grated

viciously. "Mum-my furniture! Who's

been playing larks with it?"

"Goodness knows, Knox!" groaned

Tom Merry. "We came in, and found your furniture planted on us. And we don't know where on earth our own props are!"

"You little sweeps!" hooted the enraged prefect. "My study is lumbered up with your rubbish!"

The faces of Tom Merry & Co. cleared. "Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, heaving a sigh of deep relief.

Knox almost tore his hair. "Is it good?" he roared. "I'll teach you kids to play such pranks on me! Come and empty my room at once, and replace my furniture! Do you hear?"

Tom Merry and Manners heard, and they realised that, under the circumstances, to hear was to obey.

They walked meekly from the room, followed by Monty Lowther, who was frantically engaged wiping soot from his face.

A crowd of fellows had collected at the end of the passage. Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth were conspicuous.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, as the Terrible Three made their appearance, following Knox. "Hard lines, Tommy! We wish you joy with your moving job!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Tom Merry & Co. darted furious looks at the scoffers. They had more than a vague suspicion that Jack Blake was at the bottom of this frightful affair.

Lowther procured a wash before he commenced operations. Then he lent Tom Merry and Manners a hand in clearing their study furniture out of Knox's room.

That having been done, they had to convey Knox's furniture from their own study back to where it belonged.

By the time they had finished that task they were dusty, dishevelled, and tired.

Knox was furious at the inconvenience the affair caused him, and, when the study was set to rights at last, he dismissed the Terrible Three with five hundred lines apiece.

In the Sixth Form passage, outside, Tom Merry and Manners, surrounded by their study furniture, looked savagely at Lowther.

"For two pins," said Tom Merry, in measured accents, "I—'d pulverise you, Monty!"

"I'd boil him in oil, if this was Russia!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther groaned.

"Oh, don't pile on the agony!" he said wearily. "Can't you chaps see that the trick's been turned on me? Don't jaw so much, but shift this lot back to our study!"

"Groooogh!"

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Harry Noble humanely lent the Terrible Three a hand, and at last Study No. 10 was set to rights again.

By that time Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were utterly spent and weary.

They sat down, and gazed at each other speechlessly.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy looked in, smiling.

"Tired, old tops?" inquired Blake. "Poor chaps! Never mind! A little hard work won't do you any harm!"

"Did—did you do this, Blake?" gurgled Lowther.

Blake chuckled.

"I cannot tell a lie!" he said. "Guilty, my lord!"

The Terrible Three gasped. They felt like hurling themselves upon Blake & Co., but they could not summon sufficient energy.

Jack Blake & Co. departed, chortling with glee, and left the Terrible Three alone with their own brooding thoughts.

Monty Lowther was the one most stricken. The jape he had intended should make his chums chortle, and re-

store him to grace as a humorist, had transpired to be an utter, hopeless failure.

Instead of chortling, Tom Merry and Manners were greatly aggrieved. They blamed it all upon Monty Lowther. They quite failed to appreciate the possibilities of that jape, had not Blake & Co. turned the tables so unexpectedly. They were loud in their condemnation of Monty Lowther.

And relations were considerably strained in the end study for the rest of that evening.

CHAPTER 8.  
Monty Wins!

SATURDAY dawned, and Jack Blake & Co. were still rejoicing in the manner in which they had scored over Tom Merry & Co.

Monty Lowther was still out of favour. Tom Merry had warned him, under pain of the direst penalties, not to attempt any more jokes.

And, of course, the Comic Column was still taboo.

On Saturday evening the Terrible Three were standing on the School House steps, chatting, when the printer's-boy approached them and handed Tom Merry a large bundle.

"Oh, good!" said Tom. "It's the copies of the next number of the 'Weekly.' We'll spend the evening distributing them."

Monty Lowther grinned slyly. New-born hope had entered his breast. He anticipated that when the new number of "Tom Merry's Weekly" was read, a great sensation would be caused in the Lower School.

Tom Merry & Co. went indoors, and up to the Common-room, which was crowded with juniors.

"The 'Weekly's' arrived, chaps!" cried Tom Merry. "This way for the latest edition!"

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry dumped the parcel down on the table, and the juniors gathered round.

Jack Blake & Co. were grinning. They were eager to see the "Weekly" when it was produced.

"Better get ready to bunk!" whispered Blake to his henchmen. "There'll be ructions when these Shell fish see what we've done to their rotten rag!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry undid the parcel, and a huge pile of newly-printed copies of the "Weekly" was displayed.

"Here we are, chaps!" cried Tom. "A bumper number this week!"

Two-pences were produced, and the copies of the "Weekly" eagerly bought up.

"Now we'll see things!" said Blake, opening the first page of his copy. "Look here, I— Well, my hat! Gug-good heavens!"

Blake almost fell down when these words, in large, glaring type, met his eyes:

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY,  
SPECIAL EDITION, EDITED BY  
MONTAGUE LOWTHER, ESQ., TO  
COMMEMORATE THE DOWNFALL  
OF THE FOURTH."

A roar of amazement arose in the Common-room when the contents of "Tom Merry's Weekly" became known.

The juniors read each column in bewilderment. Each page furnished some new sensation.

On page two was a glaring announcement, in newspaper fashion, which ran thus:

"JACK BLAKE & CO. RETIRE INTO  
THE BACKGROUND.

Hopeless Defeat of Fourth Form Freaks,  
After Many Attempts to Kybosh the  
Shell!

TOM MERRY & CO. NOT HAVING  
ANY! BLAKE TAKES A BACK  
SEAT!

"The boys of St. Jim's will be interested to know that Messrs. Jack Blake & Co., of Study No. 6, Fourth Form passage, are retiring into the background, after having become bankrupt of ideas. They find the Shell rather hard to crack. In their efforts to make Tom Merry & Co. sing small, they find themselves sadly up against it. They realise at last that they get dished, diddled, and done brown every time. Their defeat is thorough and lasting. They are reckoned among the Small Fry of St. Jim's. The Fourth Form is still in a state of infancy. It has been suggested that they take up dominoes and hopscotch as pastimes, in which they only hope to become proficient. Offers of feeding-bottles, dummies, marbles, and cigarette-pictures will be gladly welcomed by Jack Blake, President of the Federation of Fourth Form Freaks, at Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. LET US MOURN FOR THE VANQUISHED FOURTH. LET THEM R.I.P.

"It is further of interest to note that Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell are willing to let Jack Blake & Co. alone, if they promise to be good little boys in the future!"

This announcement was read in horror by the Fourth-Formers in the Common-room.

As for Tom Merry & Co., they gasped, and wondered mightily. Monty Lowther was the only fellow who did not evince surprise. He chortled with glee.

"Mum-my hat!" gurgled Blake, quite faintly. "Wh-what the— Oh, look at this!"

He pointed to a little rhyme at the head of the next column:

"What mean those piteous sounds of  
woe,  
Uttered by Jack Blake & Co?

Blake's been on the river wet,  
Couldn't row—was so upset!

Gussy, crossed in love again,  
Langushes in grief and pain.

Herries cannot blow his cornet,  
Thinks he'd better run and pawn it.

(Continued on page 18.)

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## Help Arrives!

THE captain waited until he could make himself heard, then he jerked:

"Arena, Sambo! What the thunder do you mean?"

"De place where dat cuss, Meppel, hab slaves killed when dey make him angry, massa," the negro answered, with a half-frightened glance over his shoulder, as though he still possessed an instinctive terror for the terrible Dutchman, and thought he might be near to overhear.

"Not a place where he kills people by lettin' wild animals loose on 'em?" the Britisher gasped incredulously. Then, as the negro nodded: "By James, the inhuman fiend! Well, he looks like paying for his villainy now. Look here, Sambo," he went on. "It sounds as though it might be the boy I came here to find. Where is he now? Do you know?"

"Up at de prison, sah," the black answered, pointing in the direction of the town. "Him try to escape wid de gal, an' got brought back. Dey might hab killed him afterwards if dey had killed de young missy, an' you hadn't come."

The skipper hesitated for a moment, caressing the monkey, which had now climbed to his shoulder and, in the way its kind sometimes have, was affectionately sucking at the lobe of his ear.

"Me not Sambo—me Joe," the negro volunteered suddenly, breaking in upon his thoughts.

"Right—ho, Sambo—I mean, Joe!" the skipper returned, clapping him on the shoulder. "You stick to me, shipmate! I was wondering whether I'd go along to that prison right away; but I don't reckon I will until I've seen what's happening yonder. It would be better, and we'd get what we wanted quicker if we could go with a bunch of bluejackets—British sailors, if you don't know what bluejackets are," he added, as he saw an expression of doubt in the negro's eyes.

All his old swagger had returned to Captain Kentish as he swung round, in spite of the ordeal through which he had passed. With the monkey still perched upon his shoulder, he set off towards the rocks that had once hemmed Slave Island in from the sea.

Slaves still passed them, rushing away from the plantations near the vicinity of the bombardment. Ever and again a menacing boom sounded from the

sea, and always it was followed by the sounds of crashing rocks.

Joe, the negro, showed signs of hanging back as they neared the last stretch of banana-trees between them and the rocks, but the skipper assured him that it was fairly certain that those responsible for the firing of the shells were merely anxious to hew a way into the once-imprisoned island. They would not be seeking to take the lives of all and sundry beyond the rocks, as it would mean killing friends as well as foes, and that was not a sailor's way.

Reassured, the black followed him, and now it seemed that the bombardment was suspended. The last twenty or thirty yards of the plantation they found quite deserted, and as they passed through it, and emerged into the open by the waterway, the skipper and the negro both uttered sharp exclamations at the sight which lay before them.

For a space of fully fifty feet the giant rocks had been brought down, and lay choking the waterway and the banks.

Through the gap the shells had left could be seen the open sea, and steaming towards the island was the formidable grey-black shape of a cruiser, which looked to the captain like a British vessel.

His own ship lay not far away to port, and was also making for the island. But there was yet a third vessel in view—a magnificent steam-yacht.

And now for a moment it is necessary to pause, and explain how the naval vessel and the pleasure boat had arrived at Slave Island.

It will be remembered that Jasper Standish, anxious and longing to rescue his daughter at the earliest possible moment from slavery, journeyed to the spot where he would eventually be likely to meet Hans Meppel—Thursday Island.

The millionaire had expected a long and tedious stay on the island; but Fate was playing a curious juggling game with the lives of several persons when it sent Jasper Standish thither.

As the reader will know, Standish did not fall in with Hans Meppel; but, as luck would have it, almost the first man he met on Thursday Island was Peter Van Lardent.

Van Lardent had felt, after his narrow escape from losing his money down east, that he would be safer away from London and on the sea, and he signed on as a deck-hand on a steamer bound for Thursday Island within a few hours of having left the home of O'Hara, Captain Kentish's mate, under the impression that he was still in the hands of thieves.

He was not a little surprised to see Jasper Standish, whilst the latter was equally as amazed at so unexpectedly falling in again with him.

A conversation in the millionaire's private cabin ended in Van Lardent agreeing to desert his ship, which was at the moment lying off the island.

The Dutch sailor had a vague idea, after his last trip to Slave Island, as to where it lay in the South Pacific, and, as long as Jasper Standish paid him well, was only too ready to pass his time as a passenger aboard the millionaire's yacht, and do his best to guide the vessel to it.

Before setting sail, Jasper Standish thought long and earnestly over the position, and finally he decided that, even though it meant the spoiling of much of his vengeance, he would leave no stone unturned to rescue his child from the clutches of Hans Meppel.

He would seek the aid of the Australian Government, and, if possible, proceed on the search for the elusive island with some description of war vessel. It would mean, perhaps, that the part he had played in sending Dick Harmer there would come out, and certainly the boy would be rescued and restored to his father.

But it was better, Standish reasoned, to see his schemes for vengeance crumble, and end in a fiasco, than his daughter should continue to run the risk of falling a victim to Hans Meppel's capricious and inhuman villainy.

Jasper Standish feared the very thing that had actually happened—that Elaine, whom he had had good reason to realise was full of a spirit even slavery could not crush, might make another attempt to escape, and be caught, and condemned to meet some dreadful end.

The more he allowed his mind to dwell on this possibility, the more racked with doubt, anxiety, and suspense did he become, until he almost forgot Dick Harmer and Dick Harmer's father, at whom he had struck so bitter a blow. It was Elaine who mattered. He had got to take whatever action was possible to rescue her, with no thought for himself. Was not her life and happiness more precious than a thousand wild plans for revenge?

The upshot of these decisions was that Jasper Standish told much of his story to a high official of the Australian Government, though he left out all mention of Dick Harmer, and invented an excuse for himself having visited the island.



Had he been just an ordinary man, it would have been ten chances to one that his tale would have been "pooh-pooched," and he would have been got rid of with the assurance that "the matter should receive attention in due course." But Jasper Standish was a millionaire, and even governments have a way of listening and taking heed when such powerful and influential people express a want.

In the end the Australian cruiser Kangaroo was virtually placed at his disposal, receiving orders to set off with the yacht in search of Slave Island.

It was doubtful, however, whether the two ships would ever have reached their goal without Captain Kentish's tramp steamer had arrived there first.

Peter Van Lardent led his employer and the cruiser in the right direction; but after he had gone a certain distance past the last land he remembered Meppel's vessel sighting, he was hopelessly fogged.

For many days the yacht and the naval vessel cruised the seas at random, hoping to sight the rocks marking the island, but meeting with no success. Then, as a last resource, the commander of the Kangaroo had suggested keeping up a series of wireless messages.

"Who knows?" said he. "We might chance to get into communication with some ship that has sighted the island's rocks in its cruising, and thus gain information as to their whereabouts."

Knowing how Meppel had boasted that Slave Island was far out of the usual course of vessels, neither Jasper Standish nor Van Lardent had felt very hopeful. But almost at once, when the cruiser's wireless was brought into play, the object desired was attained.

For, tramp though she was, Captain Kentish's vessel was fitted with many up-to-date devices, and among them was a very efficient wireless installation.

The vessels were speedily holding what was as good as a conversation, though there was some twenty miles of space dividing them. And, on hearing that a naval ship was seeking Slave Island, with a view to investigating it and putting a stop to the slavery in existence upon it, O'Hara readily gave his boat's exact position.

By the time the cruiser and Standish's yacht were in sight, O'Hara was beginning to grow feverishly anxious for the welfare of his beloved skipper, especially as he had heard Captain Kentish's gun and he had afterwards failed to put in an appearance and return to the ship.

After a few minutes' signalling, in which the Irishman made those on the cruiser acquainted with the position of affairs, he was invited to come aboard. He did so, and he and the commander held what was almost a council of war, and ended in the war vessel beginning to pound at the rocks with her guns, to ascertain what was going on behind them.

Captain Kentish and Joe, the negro, let out a cheer as they advanced nearer the great gap yawning in the rocks, for from the cruiser had put off a dozen boats crammed with armed bluejackets. Hans Meppel's hour had struck!

#### The Meeting of Father and Daughter!

FOR the next ten minutes to a quarter of an hour a scene of well-ordered but rapid activity was enacted on the seashore.

A couple of hundred bluejackets landed, scrambling over the masses of splintered rock, hurled upon the beach by the cruiser's shells.

Each man had a rifle and ammunition, and, in addition, a couple of machine-

guns were brought ashore in parts and speedily put together ready for action.

The crew of the Albatross, Captain Kentish's "tramp," also landed.

They, like the bluejackets, were armed, and when, with O'Hara at their head, they joined their skipper and heard of his treatment at the hands of Meppel and his overseers, a red fiend of anger took possession of them, and they simply "spoiled" for a fight.

The officers commanding the naval forces marshalled their men into formation for marching, and at the word of command, they set out on their tramp to Slave Island's town, the machine-gun crews going first with their deadly weapons.

Jasper Standish came ashore, in company with the first-officer of his yacht and a dozen of the crew. Much of the millionaire ex-convict's characteristic coolness had deserted him, for he was filled with the keenest anxiety for Elaine.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Across the sandy beach and through the first of the plantations went the bluejackets, Captain Kentish, O'Hara, and the sailors from the Albatross following.

Captain Dirk Kentish's monkey still squatted upon the skipper's broad shoulder, and, as he swaggered along, with an aggressive look about his bearded chin, the gallant son of the sea smoked a long, strong, and black cigar.

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The negro, Joe, had been claimed by one of the naval officers to conduct the attacking party to the town. Vastly proud of finding himself in such distinguished company, he showed all his perfect white teeth in an expansive grin.

Standish, immaculate in a white drill suit, brought up the rear with his companions.

Just as the naval men reached the towering rocks shaped so like a sphinx, on the summit of which Elaine Standish had been subjected to her terrible ordeal, the slaves were descending the path with the girl.

Whilst the firing from the sea had been going on they had crouched on the rocks and watched the mighty boulders, which formed for Slave Island a natural fortress wall, being hurled down. It had been an impressive and awe-inspiring sight, and, even though the bombardment had ceased for some time and all grown quiet, they had not plucked up courage to come down until now.

Two of the foremost of them were assisting Elaine to descend the steep and uneven path, for she had been badly bruised and shaken.

One of the officers from the cruiser questioned the poor creatures, and learned what had happened.

The face of the naval officer grew very stern and hard as he listened to the slaves' story. He was about to give the word to move forward again, when there was a cry from behind him, and, turning, he found Jasper Standish making his way through the ranks of the bluejackets.

"Elaine—my child!"

To the surprise of the girl, she found herself caught hungrily in the arms of the debonair man in white ducks, whom she recognised as the companion she had seen several times with Hans Meppel a few months ago.

"Oh, my dear—my dear," Standish breathed huskily, his eyes suspiciously bright, and his voice shaking. "Thank Heaven you are still living! I had thought that perhaps—"

He could not go on. His emotion was too great to allow of further words just yet, and all he could do was to hold her close.

"But, I—I don't understand," the girl faltered, her eyes looking up wonderingly into his sun-tanned face.

"I am your father, dear," he answered gently, choking back the sob of joy that was in his throat.

"You! You are my father!" Elaine whispered, almost incredulously.

"Yes," Jasper Standish assured her. "I did not know when—when I was here before. It was only when I got back to England that I realised that you, dear, were the child I had lost, and had at times believed dead. You know what happened—that I had to go"—he hesitated, and the girl understood—"away. When I was free to seek you once again, all trace of you was lost."

Elaine continued to regard him askance for a further long moment, then trustingly she raised her lips to his. A second later found her sobbing with relief and joy, her face hidden upon his shoulder.

At that moment Captain Kentish pushed his way forward to ascertain what the halt was for. Some of the slaves recognised him as Elaine's rescuer, and pointed him out to Jasper Standish.

The latter approached the skipper, explained that he was the girl's father, and that it was she he had come in search of, backed up by the ship of the Australian Navy.

The millionaire gripped the captain's hand and wrung it warmly.

"And what brought you here with your ship, Captain Kentish?" he asked, after the skipper had told him his name, and Standish had thanked him for his prompt action on behalf of Elaine.

"I was commissioned to find and rescue a lad who was kidnapped, and whom, it is thought, was brought here—a lad named Dick Harmer," Captain Dirk Kentish replied.

It was only with difficulty that the millionaire suppressed a start.

"Ah, indeed," he said, quickly recovering himself. "I trust, captain, that you will find him."

"I believe I have already located him," answered the skipper. "He is, I fancy, at the prison, which, I hear, is situated in the town, where we are marching now."

Elaine was sent back to her father's yacht, in the care of the first-officer. There was a stewardess aboard who would take charge of her, and, after her grim experience on the hill-top, and her fall with the horse, she stood in sore need of rest.

The attacking party once again shouldered arms, and, marched onwards; but it was little or no fighting there was.

left to do when the bluejackets reached the town.

The officers in charge of the sailors had expected to find the streets barricaded against their advance, and to be met with the desperate resistance men in a tight corner and making a hopeless stand will often offer.

There were no signs that any attempt whatever was to be made to check them, however; and soon they were to understand.

As they marched into the town an indescribable scene of horror met their eyes. Overseers and slaves lay dead on every side, some locked together in fierce embraces that had ended in death for both.

The slaves had turned at last! With the knowledge that the supreme power of Hans Meppel and his hired tyrants was no more, and that armed forces would soon be pouring in from the sea, the slaves had combined together and rebelled.

A glance round the streets on the fringe of the town showed that they must have used the first weapons upon which they could lay their hands. On the pavements and in the roads lay heavy stones, stout, gnarled branches, that had been hastily hacked from trees and employed as clubs; here and there a knife, with which the slaves had necessarily to be supplied to cut the fruit in the banana plantations, and even the overseers' own whips.

Amongst the fallen were a considerable number of slaves who were merely wounded and crippled. They lay waiting patiently until their hurts could receive attention. But in no cases had the overseers been left living.

## "LOWTHER ON THE WAR-PATH!"

(Continued from page 15.)

While Digby, writing rotten rhymes, Has been rejected scores of times.

But do not chuckle or deride, 'Tis truth that cannot be denied; They're always in some horrid fix, Those chunks of Study No. 6!"

Tom Merry & Co. shouted with merriment when they read that little absurdity. As for the Fourth Formers, they went quite pink.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Blake. "This isn't what I put!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy suddenly. "Look at this, deah boys!"

He pointed to one of Lowther's Limericks, which ran:

"Old Gussy, the knuttiest junior, We've never known anyone spoonier; For each pretty girl Sends his head in a whirl, Each day he gets loony and loonier!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

There were many other disparaging references—to Jack Blake & Co. in particular, and the Fourth Form in general.

Tom Merry & Co. shrieked. Jack Blake & Co. also shrieked, though not with laughter. They almost tore their hair.

"Oh, you—you rotters!" moaned THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 670.

The slaves had suffered too long and too terribly to show mercy now that the day had come at last on which they had found the courage to strike back and avenge their wrongs.

The sailors found the main body of the rebels engaged in a determined attack upon Hans Meppel's palace-like abode, where the last few overseers who had not been either killed, or driven right through the town and put to flight in the jungle, were making a desperate fight for their lives.

Even as the bluejackets came in sight of the some two hundred attackers who swarmed about the palace, its main doors were battered down, and into its spacious halls the slaves went like a pack of bloodthirsty demons.

The overseers who had not had time to retreat to the inner apartments were ruthlessly fallen upon and slain. And then, before the sailors could quell the disturbance, there came the culmination of the revolt.

The palace was a comparatively high structure as buildings went in Slave Island, for whilst most of the other abodes and places of business throughout the town were constructed in bungalow fashion, it was domed and possessed three storeys.

Before each of the respective windows of the latter ran spacious balconies, and on to the topmost of these suddenly reeled two figures, locked together in a life-and-death struggle.

A hoarse cry broke from Jasper Standish as he saw that the taller and more broadly built combatant of the two was none other than Hans Meppel.

It was plain what had happened.

The Herculean Dutchman had taken refuge in his palace when the rebellion amongst the slaves had commenced, and, knowing this, the avengers had lost no time in searching for the arch-tyrant the moment an entry had been forced.

The man with whom the Dutchman had staggered through one of the windows leading on to the balcony, and with whom he now battled for his life, was a negro, and many slaves could remember the day, some years ago, when Hans Meppel had had this particular black flogged to within an ace of death for some petty offence.

For the few moments that it lasted it was a terrible fight. The black stood well nigh as tall as Meppel, and was nearly as broad of shoulder and deep of chest.

Even the sailors and their officers stood momentarily inactive, watching in fascination, as the two great bodies swayed this way and that upon the flimsy structure high above.

Their bones cracked under the strain of the grappling arms each had wound about the other, and their feet beat a grim tattoo upon the balcony as they stumbled to and fro. Then the end came with appalling suddenness.

With a cross-buttock the negro flung Hans Meppel from him, and he went down awkwardly on his hands and knees. Before he could scramble up, the arms of the negro were about his middle, he was whirled aloft by sheer strength, and hurled headlong over the balcony rails.

(To be concluded next week.)

Blake, glaring homicidally at the chortling Shell fellows. "How—how did you get wind of what we did?"

"What do you mean, Blake?" gasped Tom Merry.

Blake waved his copy of the "Weekly" aloft.

"We boned your make-up, and altered it!" he shrieked. "How on earth did you tumble?"

"Tumble?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment. "We didn't tumble—"

"Blake's had the tumble!" cried Monty Lowther. "Come on, boys, there are plenty of copies, and they are worth five bob each. Our price is tuppence! Roll up!"

"You cads!" roared Blake. "Don't you sell those copies! D'you think we're going to be made a laughing-stock?"

"Keep your wool on, Blake!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We are certainly going to sell this edition of the 'Weekly.' It's the best we've had for a long time. And we look like selling out, too!"

Blake & Co. made a frantic rush for the table, intending to destroy the edition of "Tom Merry's Weekly." But the Shell fellows in the room grasped the excited Fourth Formers, and ejected them, one by one, from the Common-room.

Blake & Co. collapsed in the passage, and made an assault upon the Common-room door. They created a frightful din, and Kildare, North, and Darrell, of the Sixth, arrived, with stout ashplants in their hands.

The Sixth Form prefects quickly dispersed Jack Blake & Co. and restored order in the Common-room.

Thus left in peace, Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to dispose of their copies of Monty Lowther's edition of the "Weekly."

In the privacy of Study No. 10, the

Terrible Three read that amazing issue of their magazine, and chortled over it.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry at last. "You—you boulder, Monty! How did you work it?"

Monty Lowther, amid many chuckles, proceeded to explain how he had discovered Blake's substitution of the copy, and altered it in his turn.

"Well, that takes the biscuit!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "So Blake had the nerve to pinch our copy! If you hadn't gone down to the printer, Monty—"

"To reinstate my Comic Column?" grinned Lowther.

"Ahem! Ye-es to reinstate your Comic Column," said Tom Merry, "this edition of the 'Weekly' would have been very different. We should have been hiding our diminished heads by now!"

"Instead of which," said Manners enthusiastically, "Blake & Co. are hiding their diminished heads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Tommy, haven't I proved to you that I can be really funny?" demanded Lowther warmly. "What about my Comic Column now?"

"It can go in next time!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Monty, old son, you've turned up trumps, and no mistake! You can carry on with your Comic Column in future!"

And the Terrible Three settled down to make up the accounts of "Tom Merry's Weekly," smiling hugely over the manner in which their Fourth Form rivals had been completely vanquished by Lowther on the warpath!

(Another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co., next week, entitled: "A CHRISTMAS BOMBSHELL," by Martin Clifford. Avoid disappointment by ordering your copy EARLY.)

## YOUR EDITOR'S CHAT.

Address: Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Next Wednesday's issue of the GEM Library is the one which is looked forward to all the year round—the grand Christmas number. I have received from Mr. Martin Clifford a magnificent, extra-long story of the chums of St. Jim's, entitled:

### "A CHRISTMAS BOMBSHELL!"

which I have no hesitation in describing as the most wonderful tale that has ever come from the pen of our famous friend and author.

I know it has been my custom to give my chums some idea as to the plot of the story, but for once I am not going to write anything at all about plots. This story is one which my chums will thoroughly enjoy from Chapter I. to the end, and I am not going to spoil it by telling you what it is all about.

But I can honestly say that, without a shadow of doubt,

### "A CHRISTMAS BOMBSHELL!"

will take my chums straight into a Christmassy atmosphere, and cause them to reason sympathetically as to whether the chums of St. Jim's are to have an enjoyable holiday, or if it is to be marred by a "bombshell" which falls unexpectedly into their midst.

Knowing full well that there is going to be an unprecedented rush for the

Christmas number of the GEM Library, I sincerely trust all my regular readers will place an order for their copy with their newsagent at once. Not for worlds would I have you miss this wonderful story!

This Christmas will also signalise the commencement of a new serial story, entitled,

### "THE FEUD AT ST. KATIES!"

By Michael Poole.

My chums will, of course, remember Mr. Poole's previous stories of Dicky Dexter and Jolly Roger, his Form-master. Mr. Blunt—Jolly Roger's surname—arrived at St. Katherine's just in time to take in hand Dicky Dexter's Form, the Transitus, which was undoubtedly the most unruly Form at the famous school. His methods were as wonderful as they were unexpected, and in the story which starts next week Jolly Roger finds himself really "up against it!"

Apart from the Christmas story of Tom Merry & Co., this serial alone is worth the trouble of going to the newsagent to order your copy now!

### ANOTHER BOMBSHELL!

Bombshells seem to be plentiful just now! I think I am not far wrong when I say that the magnificent photograph of "The Smiling Prince," presented to my readers on the back page of this issue, came as a bombshell to them. I never even thought of letting you know last week that it was my intention to give you this photograph, and, as our American friends would say, "I guess you've had some surprise!"

The Prince of Wales is a popular hero

—he is admired as a man, and not because he occupies an exalted position in the Empire. But there are other popular heroes, and next week I am going to present my chums with a photograph of a man who is admired and respected by hundreds and thousands of boys and girls!

The name of this hero is— You'll see it on the back page of next Wednesday's issue of the GEM Library!

Just a little hint. My chums will discover that these photographs, neatly cut out, will have a very brightening effect if hung on the walls of their own dens. Start right now with the photo of our Smiling Prince!

### RUMOUR!

Rumour, you know, spreads over a village, town, or city far quicker than bubbles on top of a kettle of boiling water burst. Facts, however, spread even quicker for people speak them with more confidence, and, therefore, find more willing ears.

So I ask my boy and girl chums throughout the globe not to say, "I think next week's issue of the GEM is to be the Christmas number!" but that it is to be the finest Christmas number ever published at the popular price of three-halfpence! The news will spread like lightning, and bands of happy boys and girls will be looking keenly forward to next Wednesday—and the GEM Library Christmas number!

Your Editor

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