

COMPLETE YARNS OF TOM MERRY & CO. AND JIMMY SILVER & CO WITHIN!

The GEM 2^D



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CHAPTER 1.

The Smart Set.

TOM MERRY sat up on the grassy bank, and stared.

"I say, Manners."

His chum, who was deep in the ferns, lying at full length, and resting on his elbow while he read the latest number of the "Ranger," gave a grunt.

"Manners!"

"What's the row?" said Manners, without looking up. "Why can't you let a fellow alone when he's reading, Tom Merry?"

"There's something on," said Tom impressively. "I don't know what it is, but there's some little game on. Look here!"

Manners sat up, looking resigned.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the chums of the Shell—known in the school since the departure of Lowther as the Terrible Two—had taken a stroll through the Castle Woods, in the direction of the ruined castle on the hill.

On the path up the hill they had taken a little rest. It was a drowsy autumn afternoon, and it was pleasant to sit there in the deep, thick grass among the bushes. Under the old trees, with the hum of insects in their ears, Manners had begun to read, and Tom Merry busied himself in mending a damaged pocket-knife.

It was while he was thus engaged that Tom Merry's attention was attracted by the sight of a junior from St. Jim's coming up the path to the ruined castle.

There was nothing surprising in that in itself, but it was the manner of the youngster that excited Tom Merry's curiosity.

He was looking to right and left in an extremely cautious way as he came up the path, as if in fear of being watched.

The chums were hidden by the grass and bushes, and the newcomer did not see them, in spite of his watchfulness. He passed on and disappeared into the old castle.

Tom Merry had wondered, but he would soon have forgotten the circumstance had not a second junior appeared a few minutes later, coming up the path to the castle in the same cautious manner. He, too, passed on into the castle.

Then Tom Merry wondered more. When two more juniors had passed in the same way, in the same direction, he roused up Manners.

"There's something on," he repeated. "Four kids have just gone into the ruins, old chap, looking as if they were going to plot a plot, or scheme a scheme."

"Let 'em plot plots, and scheme schemes, till they get a crick in the neck," said Manners. "I'm reading."

"No, you're not," said Tom, calmly jerking the book away and stuffing it into his pocket. "You're looking into the affair with me, Manners."

Manners grunted.

"Well, what's it all about?" he asked resignedly. "Why

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GAY DOGS



shouldn't the kids sneak into the ruins if they want to? Hallo, there's Gore!"

Gore of the Shell was coming up the path. He, too, looked round cautiously and hurried into the old castle.

Manners stared at Tom Merry.

"The plot thickens," he murmured.

"Gore is generally up to some mischief, and sometimes of a sort that won't bear

investigation. I expect it's a smoking-bee."

"Well, we had better look into it," said Tom Merry.

"I— Hallo, there's some more!"

Mellish and Jones of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's were coming up the path. They passed on into the ruins.

"More of Gore's set," said Tom Merry. "I've known there's been something going on under the rose for some time."

"Perhaps it's only some scheme of the School House against the New House," suggested Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, it isn't that," he said. "Three of the chaps who went in first belonged to the New House, and the rest to our House. It isn't a House row."

Manners looked interested.

"Perhaps Gore is working up your old idea—an alliance, you know, of School House and New House juniors, to take us down a peg or two," he said. "He would like to bring us down off our perch, you know."

"Well, we're going to look into it," said Tom Merry. "As leaders of the junior portion of the School House at St. Jim's, it's our duty to do so, and nice, dutiful chaps like us never neglect our duties. I wonder if they're all in?"

"No, here comes another."

Another youth was coming up the path.

"My hat!" said Manners. "It's Gussy!"

"D'Arcy! By Jove!"

The youth they had just perceived was by no means a common individual. There was no possibility of mistaking Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of Study No. 6 in the School House, for anybody else at St. Jim's. D'Arcy was the

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OF ST. JIM'S!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**



swell of the School House, and on the present occasion he had "togged himself up" in an extremely nobby manner.

His Eton suit fitted him like a glove, his boots had an aggressive polish, his hat was the tallest and the shiniest ever seen at St. Jim's, his gloves were lavender, and his waistcoat was a coat of many colours. He had an eye-glass screwed into his eye, and he surveyed the path through it as he came along with as much caution as the other juniors had shown.

"D'Arcy!" murmured Tom Merry. "Then I expect that we shall see Blake and Herries! Those three bounders always go together—they stick together like thieves!"

"What an extremely wuff path," they heard Arthur Augustus murmur as he passed them. "My boots are awfully dustay, bai Jove!"

He paused for a moment to flick the dust from his boots with a handkerchief.

"I weally do not see why this meetin' couldn't be held in one of the studies at the coll," murmured D'Arcy. "It is extremely fatiguing to walk to this wotten old wuin."

He passed into the ruined castle.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"He's the last. Blake and Herries aren't in this act, Manners. Come on!"

"Where are you going?"

"Into the ruins, to see what the giddy conspirators are up to."

And Tom Merry led the way.

He did not go through the ancient gateway, as the juniors had done, but selected a spot where the old castle wall had yielded to the ravages of time, and showed a deep gap. The Terrible Two clambered through the gap, and found themselves within what remained of the ancient castle.

"Hallo!" muttered Tom Merry. "Here they are!"

Amid the masses of fallen masonry they could see the mysterious meeting.

Eight juniors were sitting on chunks of stone or brick-work, in a rough circle, all of them looking very solemn and serious.

Gore looked round the circle. It was clear that Gore was leader.

"We're not all here," he said. "But I don't see why

we should wait. Have you all kept it dark, as I told you?"

"Sit down—"

"I stwongly wefuse to sit down until this matter has been settled. Am I to be tweated with pwoper wespect?"

"I'll treat you to a thick ear if you don't shut up!"

"Then I weally think I had better wetire fwom this meetin'," said D'Arcy. "It is imposs for me to submit to such expressions. I must consider my dig."

"You'll get a dig in the eye if you don't stop playing the giddy ox!" said Gore. "I'm getting fed up with your dig, I warn you!"

"Then I will wespectfully wetire fwom this meetin'."

"Sit down," said Gore, in a rather more conciliatory manner. "Don't be an ass! Sit down, and let's get on with the washing."

"I do not wish to be obstinate," said D'Arcy. "I desire to pwomote the harmony of this meetin' in ewevy mannah poss, but before I sit down I must be assured that I am to be tweated with pwoper wespect."

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" said Mellish.

"Oh, sit down, Gussy!" said Gore impatiently. "We'll

treat you with as much respect as you deserve, never fear."

"Thanks!" said Arthur Augustus, with a graceful bow.

"I am satisfied."

And he sat down again upon his chunk of masonry.

"Now, gentlemen," said Gore, looking round, "I have called you together to hold a most important meeting, and it's held in this lonely spot to make sure that we shan't be interrupted, and that those rotters Merry and Manners won't get on the track."

"Hear, hear!" said Jones.

"Some of you," said Gore, "are in the secret already. Others are new recruits to the movement, and will have to have things explained to them. It's a revolt."

The hearers looked duly impressed.

"Things have been getting into a rotten state at St. Jim's," said Gore, "especially since Tom Merry came to the school. People talk about the strenuous life, but it may be made too strenuous. When it comes to compulsory cricket

or football I think it's time to put one's foot down. Why should a chap exert himself if he doesn't want to?"

"Why?" said Mellish cordially.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "I have an extweme objection to exertin' myself at all, at any time. Still, I must say that football is a gwand game!"

"Let those play it who like it, then," said Gore. "I don't! I like to smoke a cigarette in my study. Why shouldn't I if I want to?"

"It's extwemely bad for the wind," said D'Arcy. "You feel the wotten effects of it if you twy to wun afterwards."

"Well, it's my wind that suffers, not anybody else's," said Gore. "I'm going to do as I like. Let's all do as we like. That's the idea."

"Jolly good idea," said Jones.

"Things are too slow at St. Jim's," continued Gore. "The Smart Set have always been sat on and put down. In the Upper Forms Kildare comes down like a hundred of bricks on a chap who tries to go the pace—"

"What do you mean by goin' the pace, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy.

"I mean smoking and putting money on horses and having a drink, too, if you like."

"Kildare says that's wotten blackguardism," said D'Arcy, "and with all wspect to you, Goah, I weally think he's quite wight."

"Are you looking for a black eye, Gussy?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, you're going the right way to find one. Now, you chaps, my idea is this, that the Upper Form fellows can be bullied by the prefects if they like, but we're going to stand up against tyranny. The athletic set can play football all day and night if they like, but the Smart Set are not going to be sat on. We're the Smart Set. We're going to keep our end up, and if we can't do it openly, we'll do it secretly."

"Hear, hear!"

"This rotten rowing between the two Houses," continued Gore, "is silly rot. What do we want to row with one another for? Better have a quiet smoke together."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let the other chaps go on rowing and playing cricket and footer if they like. We're not going to. We're going to gather in all the recruits we can to the cause of independence, and make a stand against tyranny."

"Hear, hear!"

Gore produced a packet from his pocket.

"I've got a lot of cigarettes here," he said. "It's my treat. Light up, all of you."

The cigarettes were handed round.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet.

He screwed his monocle into his eye and stared at Gore.

"I was wequested," said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis, "to attend a meetin' for the purpose of pwomotin' the intewests of the Smart Set. I came with pleasuah, but I didn't think that I was bein' asked to a meetin' of silly wascals."

"What's that?" exclaimed Gore. "Who are you calling rascals?"

"All of you," said Arthur Augustus, with an inclusive sweep of his hand. "All of you are silly wascals. This smokin' business is extwemely silly. As for not playin' football, I'm weally ashamed to hear any chap say such a thing. You are a silly set of wascals, and I tell you so for your own good."

Considering that D'Arcy was telling them for their own good, the Smart Set did not look very grateful. Gore was turning back his cuffs in a very suggestive way.

"My advice to you is," went on D'Arcy, "not to listen to Goah, and not to smoke those beastlay cheap cigawettes. All of you come with me to the tuckshop in the village, and I'll tweek you to a ginger-pop. Chuck those nasty things away, deah boys."

"I'll chuck you away!" howled Gore, who saw that Gussy's eloquence was having its effect, especially the reference to ginger-pop. "You've been asking for it a long time, and now you're going to get it."

"Get what?"

"The licking of your life, my son. I'll teach you to preach to us."

"I weally had no intention of pweaching—"

"Nice sort of chap you are to preach, too. Do you ever think of anything but tall hats and high collars? Gr-r-r!"

Gore rushed at Arthur Augustus.

Fortunately, he caught his foot in a stone, and went headlong before he reached the swell of the School House, and the thump elicited a loud howl from him.

D'Arcy gazed at him calmly through his eyeglass.

"How extwemely clumsey of you, Goah! I should think you would hurt yourself fallin' about in that way. I should, weally!"

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Gore scrambled up, red with rage.

"Get hold of the brute, chaps!"

"I am not a bwute, and I wefuse to be taken hold of!" said D'Arcy indignantly. "You pwomised to tweek me with pwoper wspect—"

"We'll slay you, you preaching tailor's dummy—that's what we'll do."

And it really seemed as if the swell of St. Jim's was booked for a rough experience.

But just at that moment a voice came from the ruins.

"Vat is all tat pefore? Poys, vat are you doing here mit yourself after?"

Gore gave a gasp.

"It's old Schneider!"

He knew the voice of the German master at St. Jim's.

In a moment the Smart Set was scattered far and wide, running in all directions like hares, leaving most of the cigarettes unsmoked on the ground.

Arthur Augustus was saved!

The voice of the German master, without the sight of him, had been quite enough for Gore and the Smart Set. In the words of the poets, they did not stand upon the order of their going, but went at once.

The pattering of active feet died away in the distance; as if by magic the gathering of the Smart Set at St. Jim's had vanished!

But Augustus did not run with the rest; he stood looking round him in a surprised and flustered condition.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

The Terrible Two came out of the ruins as the last of the Smart Set vanished, and Tom Merry gave the surprised D'Arcy a powerful slap on the back.

Gussy jumped, and his eyeglass jerked away from his eye and hung down at the end of its silken cord.

"Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes, old son, just in time to save you from being scalped," said Tom. "Bravo, Gussy! I'm proud of you!"

And he was about to give the swell of St. Jim's another forcible demonstration of his admiration when Arthur Augustus skipped out of his way.

"You can be as pwoud as you like, Tom Mewwy, but I weally must insist upon your not bein' so extwemely wuff!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"But you really are a chap to be encouraged," said Tom Merry. "The way you stood out against those silly kids was splendid! I never thought you had it in you!"

D'Arcy purred.

"I am weally extwemely bwave when I get my back up," he said. "And, weally, Goah quite pwovoked me. But where is Herr Schneider?"

"Somewhere at the school, I suppose."

"But I heard his voice," said Arthur Augustus, looking bewildered.

Tom Merry laughed.

"You heard me imitate it, Gussy, old son, to scare those silly bounders away. They were rather too many to tackle on our lonesome, you know, so I borrowed old Schneider's beautiful accent. Manners, vas not dot so after?"

"It was perfect!" said Manners.

"I am extwemely obliged to you," said Arthur Augustus, with a graceful bow. "I think it was the intention of those bounders to be vewy wuff. They wequested me to come to their meetin', and I came, but I did not know what it was all about. I certainly do not intend to give up football in favour of cigawette-smokin'!"

"I should think not," said Tom Merry. "Considering how you play football, that would be too great a loss to St. Jim's."

"I agwee with you, Mewwy."

Manners seemed about to choke. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was impervious to irony. Tom Merry slipped his arm through that of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Come along, Gussy!"

"Where are you goin', Tom Mewwy?"

"Why, to the village, of course, for that ginger-pop."

"What ginger-pop?"

"The ginger-pop you were going to treat those bounders to. Under the circumstances, you can't do better than treat your heroic rescuers to it."

"Rather!" said Manners. "Just what I was thinking. It's a jolly good idea of yours, Adolphus."

"But it's not my—"

"Oh, yes, it is!" said Tom. "Are you coming with us, or shall we tell Mother Murphy to chalk it up to your account?"

"I think I'll come," said Arthur Augustus, after some reflection. "Twot along, deah boys!"

And the dear boys trotted along.

CHAPTER 2.
Who Shall be Leader?

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, put his head into Study No. 10, the apartment which had the honour of sheltering the chums of the Shell. The Terrible Two looked at him. Tom Merry was mending a fishing-rod, and Manners was finishing some prints.

Kildare nodded genially. "Ah, I thought I heard you two kids come in," he remarked.

Tom Merry sniffed. "Who are you calling kids?" he demanded. "My mistake," said Kildare, coming into the study. "I want to speak to you chaps."

"That's better. Take a seat, if you can find one. Manners, you ass, what have you got your silly prints all over the room for? I trod on one only just now—"

Since Monteith and I have been on better terms than we used to be we've managed to keep things pretty straight in the Upper Forms, but, unfortunately, there's something of the kind obtaining in the Lower."

Tom Merry nodded.

With the meeting of Gore and his friends at the ruined castle fresh in his mind, he knew more about that than the captain of the school did.

"Some of the youngsters," went on Kildare, "have taken to smoking in their studies, and I have had information that one or two of them have been seen going to the Golden Pig in the village, a place where a low gambling set hang out. Anything of this sort is much more serious among juniors than seniors, and it's got to be stopped."

"I should say so."

"As I have said, I can keep my eye on the Upper Forms, but in the Lower it is more difficult, and that is where I want your help, Merry."

"My help?" said Tom, in surprise.

"Yes, I want you to look into this. You can look into the matter better than I can, and you may be able to



Before Gore could wriggle through the window Figgins dashed up and seized him by his ankles.

"You trod on one of my prints?" howled Manners.

"Yes. Does it hurt 'em to tread on 'em?" asked Tom innocently.

The amateur photographer looked daggers at his chief.

Kildare laughed.

"I'll sit on the table," he said. "I want to speak to you fellows seriously. You are generally regarded as the head of the juniors in this House, Merry."

Tom Merry rose, bowed, and sat down again.

"Quite right," he remarked. "But Blake and the chaps in Study No. 6 can't see it. They are very obstinate on that point, those kids."

Kildare laughed again.

"Well, I have spoken to Blake as well," he said. "But to come to the point. There are some things going on in the Lower Forms that I don't like."

"What's the row?"

"For one thing, a good many of the youngsters have started copying the bad manners of some of the Sixth," said Kildare. "You know there used to be what they called a Smart Set in the Sixth, and a nice blackguardly set it was.

do a lot of good without my assistance. But if you want me you have only to come and tell me so. You understand? I should be sorry to have any fellow kicked out of school; but that is what that sort of conduct leads to."

"I see."

"If it could be stopped without a row it would be better. Blake has promised to do his best, and so has Figgins of the New House. If you two join in heartily I have no doubt that the matter will end without any unpleasantness."

"Of course," said Tom casually. "You've told Blake and Figgins that I'm the head of the affair?"

"No; I'm afraid I forgot that important point," said Kildare, with a smile. "You can tell them that yourself, Merry."

"Right-ho! I'll see them about it, and explain," said Tom. "Well, I think I can promise you to look into this matter, Kildare, and I'll do my best."

"Thank you, Merry!" said Kildare gravely.

And the captain of St. Jim's left the study.

The Terrible Two looked at one another.

"I don't mind doing old Kildare a good turn," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "He's a good sort. And, as a matter of fact, we were thinking of looking into the affair ourselves."

"That's so. Of course, we know that Gore is at the head of the business."

"Of course he is. Kildare doesn't know that, but we do. I don't know exactly how to handle Gore. Of course, I could give him a hiding."

"That would very likely do him a lot of good."

"Yes; but it mightn't cure him of his naughty ways," said Tom, shaking his head. "A hiding sometimes makes a fellow all the more obstinate, and I don't want to be put to the trouble for nothing."

"If there is any Lower Form chap goes to the Golden Pig, it's Gore," said Manners decidedly. "He must be a rotten cad. If it came out it would be a disgrace for the school."

"We've got to cure him," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry Kildare forgot to mention to Blake that I am to be at the head of the movement. It may lead to misunderstandings. Suppose we go along to Study No. 6 and see them about it?"

"Can't do better."

And, leaving their occupations just where they were, the Terrible Two left the study and made their way to the quarters of Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy.

They found the chums of the Fourth Form at home, having tea.

"Hallo!" said Blake hospitably. "Come in! You're late, but there's still a sardine left, and you can have it between you. Don't spare the grub."

"Thanks; but we haven't come to tea," said Tom Merry; apparently not fascinated by that solitary sardine. "We've come for a little talk."

"All right—I don't mind," said Blake. "Go ahead! You don't mind if I do my preparation while you're talking, do you?"

"Don't rot, Blake! This is a business matter."

"Fire away!" said Blake resignedly. "Don't both speak at once."

"It's about the Smart Set."

"Kildare has just been speaking to us on that subject."

"Yes; he wants us to lock into it—and he thinks you may be able to do some good under my guidance."

"Under what?" asked Blake unpleasantly.

"Under my lead," said Tom Merry. "Of course, as a member of a higher Form, and a fellow a good deal older than you, I take the lead."

"How much older?" asked Blake. "About a fortnight? As for taking the lead, I've been fed-up with your leading. With your tripple alliance and your hobby clubs you're enough to turn a fellow's hair grey!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, somebody must be leader," said Tom Merry. "And as I'm the fittest person—"

"Oh, rats! You are trying to be funny now."

"Yaas, I should say so. The leadah ought to be pprovided by this study. I have been thinkin', deah boys, that I should not make a bad leadah."

That was D'Arcy's contribution to the discussion.

"Oh, you dry up!" said Blake. "You make me tired."

"I wefuse to dwy up, I—"

"Hallo, here's Figgins!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, known throughout St. Jim's as Figgins & Co., presented themselves at the door of the study. The great Figgins gave a condescending grin.

"Hallo!" said Blake politely. "What have you been doing with your face, Figgy?"

Figgins passed his hand over his face.

"What's the matter with it?"

"That's what I want to know. I suppose it is a face?"

Figgins frowned darkly.

"I haven't come here to row," he said. "But—"

"What have you come for, then?"

"I've come for a little talk."

"Oh, great pip!" groaned Blake. "Here's another one come to talk. You and Tom Merry will have to take it in turns, that's all. Do you think you could do it out in the passage there, with the door shut?"

"It's about the Smart Set," said Figgins, ignoring Blake's playful suggestion. "Kildare and Monteith have been talking to us, and we've decided to take a hand in the game. It's a pity to see you School House wasters going on the road to ruin without putting out a helping hand to save you."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

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"There's more of your New House animals in the Smart Set than there are of our fellows."

"Well, anyway, we've got to yank them back and bring them up in the way they should go," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The only point to be settled," said Figgins, looking round, "is who shall be leader? There isn't really much to be said on the point, as a matter of fact. Of course, you chaps are willing to follow my lead?"

Blake and Tom Merry looked at one another. Then they both looked at Figgins.

"Well, what do you say?" asked the latter.

"I can't think of anything suitable," said Blake. "There's no words in the English language to express my feelings."

"Twy Fwench, then," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"I don't know of anything to reply," said Tom Merry, thoughtfully, "except the ancient and classic word 'rats'!"

"Well, if you chaps intend to cavil at everything," said Figgins, "I don't see how we're going to pull together at all. I think at a time like this you might be willing to do the proper thing—I do, really."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Kerr. "There's altogether too much nerve in you School House chaps."

"Shall I make a weally good suggestion that has come into my bwain?" asked D'Arcy.

"Oh, get it out!"

"Well, suppose you leave the question ovah for a time, and let the first chap who does somethin' towards puttin' down the Smart Set take the lead?" suggested Arthur Augustus. "I weally think that would be an awfully good ideah, you know!"

"Well, there's something in that," admitted Figgins. "You School House chaps are so jolly conceited that you can't see things in their true light. I'm willing."

"So am I," said Tom Merry. "And you, Blake?"

"Oh, you can count me in!" said Blake. "I don't suppose either of you chaps will think of anything though, you might as well elect me leader to start with."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "That's settled. And from this moment we're on the warpath. Come on, Manners!"

And the Terrible Two marched off.

"Come on, chaps!" said Figgins. "We're on the warpath, too, and I reckon we shall be the first to do something useful."

"I say, won't you stop to tea?" asked Blake hospitably.

"There's a sardine left, and you can have it between you."

Figgins sniffed.

"Thanks; but we won't take advantage of your generosity, old man!"

"Don't mention it! You're very welcome. It's rather a big sardine, come to look at it, and you can carve it for three."

But Figgins & Co. were gone.

CHAPTER 3.

Quite a Mistake!

BOOM!

The big clock at St. Jim's boomed the hour.

Boom!

Eleven strokes echoed dully through the quiet autumn night. The great school was sleeping. At all events, it ought to have been sleeping, but, as a matter of fact, some of it was very much awake.

"Herries, you're going to sleep!" Jack Blake spoke in a whisper.

The chums of Study No. 6 were not in bed. The prefect who had seen lights out in the Fourth dormitory had seen them tucked up in bed, and had suspected nothing. But the three chums had not undressed, and as soon as the coast was clear they had slipped out of bed.

Blake and Herries and D'Arcy were on the warpath.

They knew that George Gore was the chief of the Smart Set, and they suspected him of being the individual who had forbidden communication with the rogues at the Golden Pig. To ascertain the truth was the first step, and to deal with the young rascal in an adequate manner afterwards was the second.

And so Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were on the watch.

They were on the first landing on the big staircase of the School House, on the alert for Gore, if he should leave the Shell dormitory, and come downstairs to leave the House. It was Blake's idea, and Herries had found objections to it when it was mooted.

"He may not go out to-night," said Herries. "It stands to reason that he only goes sometimes. We don't want to stick on the stairs all night for nothing."

"If you're too lazy to take a hand in the game," said Blake, "you can go and eat coke!"

"But—"

"I'm ashamed of you! Think of the honour of St. Jim's, and Tom Merry trying to get ahead of us, to say nothing of Figgins & Co."

"Yes; but—"

"Not a word! You'll stick it out with us, or we'll disown you, won't we, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear that, Herries? Gussy is ready, and you hang back. You ought to feel small. Gussy is worth forty of you."

Arthur Augustus purred.

As a matter of fact, he had been inclined to raise objections himself to a long and perhaps aimless vigil on the stairs at night; but after receiving so much praise he felt that he must back up his chief.

"Yaas, wathah!" he assented. "I mean to stick it out, Hewwies. Have a little pluck, old man. Don't be downhearted!"

Herries grunted.

"Oh, I'm game if you are!" he said. "But I think it's rot!"

And so it came to pass that Study No. 6 were on the look-out when the school clock chimed out the hour of eleven.

At least, Blake was on the watch, and Herries was sitting and leaning against the banisters, nodding off to sleep, and a snore had come from the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus.

Blake thumped Herries in the ribs.

"You're nodding off, fathead!"

"I—I—where—what—oh, I'm wide awake!" said Herries confusedly.

"Yes, you look it! Now, Gussy!"

Blake pinched Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's gave a little squeal.

"Don't be so howwidly wude and wuff, Blake!"

"Wake up, then!"

"I am afraid I can no longah accord you my fwiership if—"

Arthur Augustus ceased suddenly as a hand was clapped over his mouth.

"Shut up!" said Blake fiercely, in a whisper. "There's somebody coming."

The swell of the School House relapsed into silence. Wide awake enough now, the three juniors listened intently. There was a faint sound from the upper corridor. The unmistakable sound of stealthy footsteps approaching the head of the stairs.

Blake drew a deep breath. His plan was justified. Here was the leader of the Smart Set on his way to the Golden Pig. Here he was caught in the very act—at all events, on the point of being caught in the very act.

Blake nudged his comrades.

"Collar him as he passes!" he said. "I think about the best idea is to rush him into the nearest bath-room and souse him in a bath and turn the water on him."

"Ha, ha, ha! Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Silence now! Here he comes!"

Through the darkness of the stairs a dim form could be faintly seen. Recognition was impossible, but the chums of the Fourth had not the slightest doubt that it was George Gore.

They quivered with eager impatience, ready to spring upon the foe as soon as he could set foot upon the landing where they lay in ambush. Onward came the dim figure, peering before him in the darkness; but he did not see the chums of Study No. 6.

"Now!" whispered Blake suddenly.

In a twinkling the three threw themselves upon the dim form. He was dragged down in a moment, and Blake clapped a hand over his mouth to keep back the startled cry he might have uttered. Blake did not want any masters brought upon the scene.

The captured individual squirmed on the linoleum under the weight of the three chums, in vain fighting for his freedom.

"Hold him!" gasped Blake. "I never thought Gore was so beastly strong. He must have been going in for athletics lately."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't let him make a row, Blake."

"I'm looking after him."

Blake jammed his handkerchief into the captive's mouth. He held it there while Herries grasped the prisoner's wrists and D'Arcy sat upon him.

"Bettah yield yourself our pwisonah, Goah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I considah it extwemely pwob that you will get hurt if you wesist."

The captive was still struggling frantically, and a gurgling sound came from his mouth as if he were trying to speak.

"Bring him along," said Blake.

They clutched up the prisoner and carried him away,

Blake at his head, D'Arcy at his feet, and Herries still holding his hands in a vigorous grasp.

The prisoner wriggled, but he was helpless.

Down the stairs to the next floor, and along the corridor, and into a bath-room the victors carried him, and down into a bath he went with a bump.

"I say," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Befoah you turn the watah on, Blake, just a moment! Aren't you likely to spoil his clothes?"

"Very likely, I think," said Blake cheerfully. "Still, they'll dry again. Anyway, a chap has no right to be dressed at all at this time of the night."

"But, weally—"

"He ought to be in his pyjamas, and if he isn't that's his own look-out," said Blake decidedly. "We can't be expected to look after a chap's clothes for him. Turn the tap on, Herries. It doesn't matter which; they're both cold now. Or, rather, turn 'em both on."

The victim struggled furiously at the bottom of the bath. But Blake and D'Arcy held him grimly down.

Splash! Splosh!

Herries had turned on the taps. The water went down into the bath with a rush. A horrified gasp escaped the gag in the mouth of the prisoner, and he wriggled and struggled more furiously than ever. But three pairs of hands held him in a relentless grip.

"Better keep his head above water, if possible," said Blake, very considerately. "We don't want to drown him."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Gore, my boy, I'm sorry for this. It's strictly necessary to teach you how to live in a decent and respectable manner, and I can't think of anything better than this for the first lesson. If you have any suggestions to make for the next occasion I shall be pleased to hear them later. At present you are going to have a bath. You will be all the better for it, and probably will be glad to get back to bed, instead of going to join your nice friends at the Golden Pig."

Slosh! Swash!

The water was a foot deep now, and the prisoner was almost entirely immersed. His desperate struggles made a loud splashing in the bath, and the chums of the Fourth came in for a good deal of water. But, as Blake said,

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they had to face things like that in the sacred course of duty.

The water deepened. Blake carefully kept the prisoner's head above it. D'Arcy staggered back as the prisoner got one leg free and gave him a drive on the chest with it.

"Oh, my word!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What an extremely wuff bwute!"

"Here, hold on! He's getting loose!" exclaimed Herries. Blake shoved the prisoner deep under water.

"Get in and sit on him, old man."

"Rats! You do it."

"I should make my clothes wet."

"Well, what about mine?" howled Herries. "I'm wet up to the shoulders as it is."

"The chap isn't grateful for the trouble we're taking," said Blake. "I wonder if he's had enough?"

"Better ask him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gore," said Blake, "I'm going to take the handkerchief from your mouth, and if you give a yell I shall shove your head under. Do you understand?"

The prisoner gurgled. Blake jerked the gag from his mouth.

"Now, have you had enough, Gore?" he demanded. "Will you promise amendment—"

"You silly ass!"

The prisoner gasped out the words. But it was not the voice of George Gore; it was the voice of Tom Merry!

Blake let go the prisoner in his amazement, and staggered back.

"Tom Merry!"

The others let go, too. The result was that Tom Merry went right under the water. He came up with a mighty heave that sent water all over the bath-room. The taps were still running at full force. Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"You howling asses! You ought to be jumped on!"

"Tom Merry!" gasped Blake.

"Tom Merry!" echoed Herries.

"Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus. "What a gweat surpris!"

"I'll surprise you!" howled the unfortunate victim of the chums' zeal. "You howling maniacs! What do you mean by ducking me in a beastly bath?"

"We took you for Gore," murmured Blake. "Ha, ha! Sorry! Quite a mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" giggled Herries. "Quite a mistake. Very sorry. But give him one more for luck."

Tom Merry, boiling with wrath, was plunged once more into the bath, which was now running over, but in the darkness and excitement the juniors did not note the fact. Nor did they hear the sound of footsteps in the passage.

The door opened and a candle glimmered in the bath-room. Herr Schneider, the German master of St. Jim's, stood looking into the room with boundless amazement. The juniors paused, still holding Tom Merry.

"Poys! Yat vas te meaning of tat pefore?"

The juniors had nothing to say.

"Turn off tose taps after!"

Blake turned off the taps. It was high time, for the bath-room was flowing with water nearly ankle-deep, and the flood was spreading out into the corridor.

"Mein gootness!" said the German master. "Dere nefer vas such poys pefore after! Dis shall be inquired in to-morrow, ain't it? Go pack to ped!"

The juniors obeyed.

Herr Schneider went back to his room, muttering to himself. The juniors mounted the stairs, and parted at the dormitory door.

"What were you doing on the stairs, Blake? Watching for Gore?" asked Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes! And we took you for him. But what on earth were you doing, wandering about in the middle of the night?"

"Gore had left the dormitory, and I was on his track," said Tom ruefully. "Manners was too sleepy to get up, so I was going out alone."

Blake started.

"Has Gore gone out, then?"

"Yes."

"He never passed us on the stairs."

"I expect he took the back stairs," said Tom. "He guessed something. Anyway, I dare say he's far enough away by this time. It has been a ghastly frost, and no mistake, old kids! Good-night!"

They parted with feelings too deep for words. While Study No. 6 had been ducking Tom Merry, Gore had left the School House by another door. None of the chums felt in a condition to see the matter farther. They dried them-

selves as well as they could, and went back to bed, and the chief of the Smart Set was left to his own devices.

But Figgins & Co. were on the watch that night also.

CHAPTER 4.

A Night Out I

STARLIGHT glimmered upon the old quadrangle at St. Jim's, on the ancient elms, and still more ancient walls clad with clinging ivy. Under one of the elms Figgins & Co. were waiting on the watch.

Unconscious of the watch being kept in the School House, and of the blunder the watchers were making, the New House trio were keeping ward in the open air.

It was Figgins' idea.

"You see, kids," the great Figgins condescended to explain to the dutiful Co., "some of the horrid wasters who call themselves the Smart Set break bounds at night to go down to the Golden Pig, and as we don't know which House they may come out of, it's no good keeping watch indoors. We must have a night out."

"Well, it's a fine night!" Kerr remarked. "It won't hurt us, even if nothing turns up. But suppose we find a fellow breaking bounds? He may be just going down to the village tuckshop, or to the river to set night-lines, in the most innocent way in the world."

"I know that, and I don't say we're to jump on his neck at the start. What's the matter with following him, and tracking him to his giddy lair?"

"Well, that's a good idea, if he doesn't spot us."

"Rats! Tom Merry fancies himself in the detective line, and I don't see why we shouldn't come out strong as shadowers, too. If anybody comes out of either House, he's sure to get over the wall in the same old place, because there's no other easy spot, and we'll be on the spot there, and track him down like blighounds."

"And if nobody comes?"

"We'll watch every night until somebody does," said Figgins determinedly.

"That's a big order, Figgy!"

"You know the agreement. The chap who first distinguishes himself is to be the leader. Well, I suppose we're not going to let the leadership fall to Tom Merry or Blake because we're too lazy to sit up a bit," said Figgins, with withering scorn.

"Rather not!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'm surprised at you, Kerr, for suggesting such a thing! I am, really!"

Kerr grunted.

"I fancy you'll be the first to fall asleep in the quad, all the same, Fatty!" he retorted.

And the canny Kerr was quite right there.

As they kept watch and ward under the elm near the ivy-clad wall, it was only by continual pinches that they succeeded in keeping Fatty Wynn awake.

The School House clock boomed out eleven.

"Hallo!" murmured Figgins. "Here comes somebody!"

The New House trio lay low in the shadow of the elms.

A dim form came silently from the direction of the School House. It passed the elm and halted at the ivy-clad wall, and for a moment a gleam of the stars shone upon the face as it was upturned.

Figgins & Co. nudged one another.

"Gore!"

It was Gore, of Tom Merry's Form, and a School House boy. Figgins & Co. did not like Gore, and they already had a suspicion that he was one of the juniors upon whom a watch might, with advantage, be kept.

Gore clambered up the ivy, and dropped over into Rylcombe Lane.

"He's gone!" muttered Kerr.

Figgins rose to his feet.

"And we're going to follow, kids. Come on!"

The long-legged, nimble Figgins was soon over the wall. The Co. followed fast, and the three of them stood under the stars outside the school walls.

"There he is!" muttered Fatty Wynn, pointing.

The figure of Gore was just disappearing down the lane towards the village.

"He's going to Rylcombe," said Figgins—"the Golden Pig, for a cert! But we must make sure. Marchez-vous, kids, and mind you don't give yourselves away!"

They marched on, on the track of the unsuspecting Gore.

The chief of the Smart Set was indeed bound for the Golden Pig. Late as the hour was, the disreputable inn was lighted up when the juniors came in sight of it. Gore did not go in by the public entrance, but tapped at a window.

Figgins & Co. were watching him from across the street.

"You see," murmured Figgins, "we've tracked him down. He's going in!"

"There he is!"

The window had opened in response to Gore's tap on the pane from outside. A red-faced man, dressed in a loud

check suit, pulled aside the blind and leaned out of the window. He grinned in a friendly way at Gore.

"Hallo, young gentleman! So you've come again?"

In the silence of the night the juniors across the way heard the greeting.

"Yes, here I am, Tadger!" said Gore.

"Come in! Come in, and welcome!"

The man pushed the sash higher, and gave Gore a helping hand. In a few minutes the foolish lad had clambered in at the window, and it was shut again, and the blind fell into its place.

Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"That's positive proof!" said Figgins. "But let's go and have a squint!"

They crossed the road, and drew cautiously near the window.

The blind was down, but it was crooked in one place, and a glimpse could be had of the interior of the room from outside.

The New House juniors looked in.

They looked into a low-ceilinged apartment, round the ceiling of which hung clouds of tobacco smoke. At a

round table five men

were seated and a

boy. The boy was

George Gore.

The men had cards in their hands, and the red-faced gentleman was dealing a hand to Gore. There was whisky on the table and glasses, and all the men were smoking. A more vulgar and disreputable-looking crew Figgins had never seen; but to Gore they probably appeared a jolly set of sporting fellows.

Figgins turned to the Co. with deep disgust in his face.

"The ass!" he muttered. "The silly, fat-headed ass! He can't see that they are making game of him, and only want his money! The silly ass!"

"I say," said Kerr uneasily. "I don't like to go away and leave him among that lot, you know. He's a silly ass, and a cad, but—"

"Well, we can't yank him out by the hair of his head," said Figgins, "and it's no good starting a row at this time of night."

"I suppose not. But we must do something about it."

"I've got an idea in my head. No good sticking here. I'll talk about it as we go back. This place makes me feel ill."

The juniors left the unsavoury spot. In the lane, as they walked back to the school, Figgins unfolded his plot.

"You see," he explained, "Kildare and Monteith have asked us to look into this matter along with Tom Merry and Jack Blake; but we can't possibly give Gore away to them or to the Head, and they don't expect it. It wouldn't be playing the game."

"No, that's right enough."

"We've got to deal with the matter ourselves. Now, if Gore was a kid in our own House, we'd give him a study licking and make him a bit more decent, or kill him in the attempt."

"That would work, I should think," said Fatty Wynn.

"No, it wouldn't in this case, because Gore belongs to the School House and the affair would grow into a House row, and a lot of School House kids would take Gore's part, and might even join his giddy Smart Set for the sake of getting one up against the New House," said Figgins sagely. "We don't want anything of that sort."

"My hat, no! But we could turn him over to Tom

Merry," suggested Kerr. "Merry and Manners and Blake could give him a study licking, and it would be all right coming from School House fellows."

"Yes, so far as that's concerned it would be all right. But then the matter would be out of our hands and in Tom Merry's, and we should be dead in the act," said Figgins. "We don't want that, either."

"Then I don't see—"

"Of course you don't, till I explain. You never do!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, listen to me! I've got a ripping idea of curing Gore of his little ways without making a House row or calling up Tom Merry for assistance."

"Go ahead, then. You're so beastly long-winded, Figgy!"

"If you want a dot on the boko, Kerr—"

"I don't. Get on with the washing!"

"Well, you remember how you did the Head in those impersonations the other night," said Figgins. "Why shouldn't you do it again for Gore's benefit?"

The Co. gave a simultaneous chuckle. Kerr was the champion amateur theatricalist in the New House Dramatic Society, and being the son of an actor, with a keen



Half involuntarily Gore snatched his hand away. The cane came down with a resounding crack upon the Head's leg. "Oh, you rotter!" yelled the Head, dancing about. Gore gasped; had he heard right?

ambition to follow in the paternal footsteps, and a great ability in that line, he frequently delighted the New House juniors with little entertainments in Figgins' study.

His impersonations were very clever, and he had passed himself off as the German master so as to deceive even the keen eyes of Tom Merry on one occasion. In the privacy of the study, before a select audience of juniors, he had even gone to the length of assuming the character of the Head, white hair and pince-nez and all, and had given a lecture on Greek roots in the doctor's manner, amid hilarious applause.

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Kerr will do it to the life!"

"I think I could do it," said Kerr modestly. "It's a ripping idea if it comes off."

"I don't see why it shouldn't come off," said Figgins. "It will be pretty dark in the quadrangle, and you'll pass muster easily enough. We'll get back to St. Jim's as quickly as we can, and help you make up, and then we'll wait for Gore to come in. If it doesn't scare him out of his wits to find himself caught by the Head after his little excursion, I'm a Dutchman. My hat! If the Head lets him off on his promising never to do so no more for ever and ever, I fancy he will be frightened enough to stick to his word."

The Co. grinned gleefully.

"You see," said Figgins, "we want to cure him without showing him up and getting him expelled. I don't think there could be a better way of doing it. I'm pretty certain that Gore is the head cook and bottler of that precious Smart Set, and without him the bottom will fall out of the whole thing. If we reform him, the Smart Set busts and we've done the trick, and Tom Merry and Jack Blake will have to sing smaller than they've ever sung in their lives before. See?"

"Good wheeze!" said Kerr. "It will work."

And Figgins & Co. hurried on to the school to prepare that little surprise for the chief of the Smart Set.

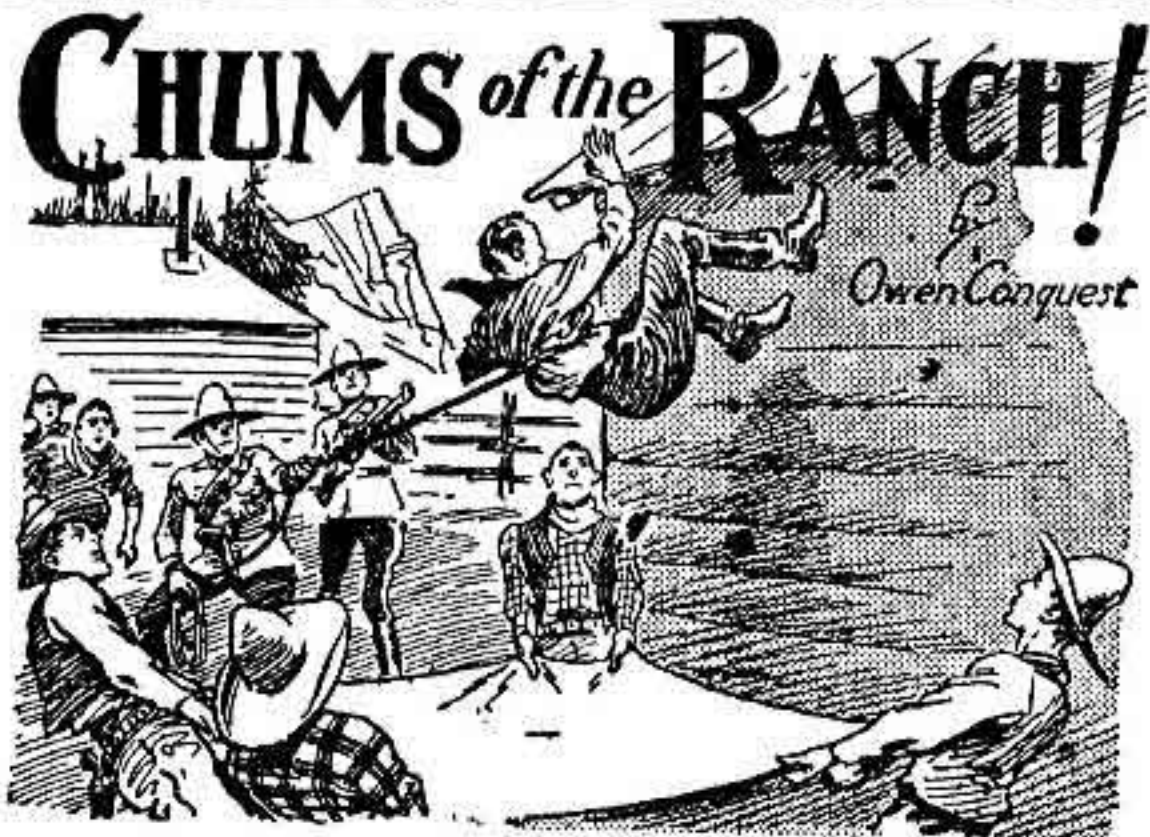
CHAPTER 5.

The Way of the Transgressor.

MIDNIGHT had struck from the clock tower of St. Jim's when George Gore came slowly up the lane towards the school.

Gore was not looking as if he had enjoyed his night out. He had lost ten shillings at nap—a considerable amount to a schoolboy whose pocket-money was limited, and that loss necessitated the giving up the pair of skates he had promised himself for the coming season.

But that was not all. He had smoked a cigar while he was at the Golden Pig, and it left him feeling uncomfortable. Young as he was, he had already accustomed his system to tobacco, and so he was not sick, but he was feeling uneasy. Besides that, the jolly, sporting fellows whose acquaintance he was so proud of had induced him to taste their whisky-and-soda, and he had a dull, fishy look in his eyes and a swimming sensation in his brain, as peculiar as it was unpleasant.



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Altogether, Gore did not seem to have enjoyed that taste of "life." Life, in the estimation of Tadger and his sporting friends, was to be found in keeping late hours, gambling on cards, and betting on horses, smoking bad cigars, and drinking whisky-and-water. That was what the gentlemen of the Golden Pig called "life," and Gore was very proud of being considered a sportsman like the rest.

Tadger had been very sympathetic about his loss.

"It's only want of capital," the sporting gentleman averred, as he shook hands on parting with Gore. "You've plenty of pluck and plenty of nerve, but you haven't enough capital to stick it out. You're the man to win if you had the money; not the slightest doubt about that. Why, some of them were looking nervous at you, as it was!"

"Were they?" said Gore, highly flattered to have made such knowing men of the world at Tadger's friends look nervous.

"They were," assured Mr. Tadger. "And if you had had a couple of pounds you'd have cleared the table and gone home with ten pun in your pocket. I'm certain of that."

"Do you really think so?"

"I does, Master Gore. You've got the pluck, and you only want the capital. It would be worth while trying—"

"I don't see how I could get it."

"Well, you could borrow—"

"Not so much as that, I'm afraid."

"Of course, I don't want to advise you," Mr. Tadger said disinterestedly. "But I know a chap—at your school, too—who wrote home to his people asking for a couple of pounds to repair his bicycle as had had a nasty fall under a wagon."

"But what good was that?" said Gore, bewildered. "If he paid the money for repairing his bicycle—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Tadger. "You see, his bicycle hadn't had any accident at all, and he used the tin to play a big game here, and he went off with seven pun in his pocket."

"Seven pounds!" said Gore, gasping.

"Seven pun, Master Gore, neither more nor less," assured Mr. Tadger. "I ought to know, as I lost two of them myself. And it wasn't mere luck, mind you, but just nerve, and having capital enough to play a good game."

"I'll think about it, Mr. Tadger," said Gore, "and thank you very much."

He went his way, and Tadger returned to his friends.

"Only ten bob," said one of them, with a sniff. "What's the good of wasting time over a silly fool of a kid for ten bob. Tadger?"

"Well, it's a few drinks all round," said Mr. Tadger, apologetically, "and we're all thirsty souls. But there's more coming. He'll soon be along here, I fancy, with a couple of quid in his pocket, and that will be nearly ten shillings each for us. And I fancy that won't be the last, either."

Quite unconscious of the estimation in which he was really held by the sporting gentlemen of the Golden Pig, Gore made his way back to the school. To his mind, excited by the gambling fever as it was, Tadger's scoundrelly suggestion that he should deceive and practically rob his parents had come as something like a shock at first. But as he became accustomed to the idea he rather liked it.

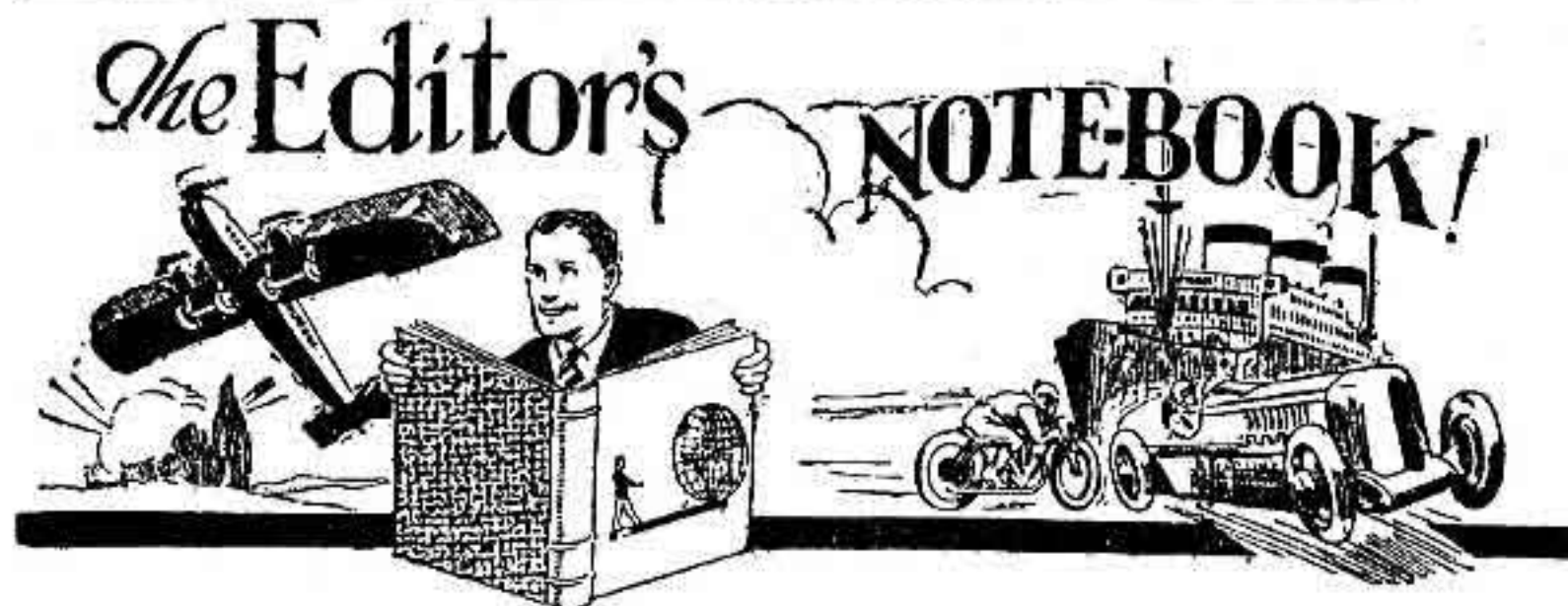
Besides, after having won seven pounds from the sporting fraternity at the Golden Pig, like the former lucky lad—whose name Mr. Tadger had forgotten to mention—he could return the two pounds to his father, saying that he could do without it, after all, and then he would be able to feel quite honest again.

This was rather a bright prospect, and it comforted him. At the same time, it was uncomfortable to think that he had lost the ten shillings he had saved up towards the purchase of the skates, and still more uncomfortable to find that the trees in Rylecombe Lane were not at all stationary, as usual, but persisted in moving about, sometimes in circles and sometimes nodding to him as he passed. He would have been greatly alarmed at this peculiar phenomenon had he not guessed that it was due to the liquor he had swallowed at the Golden Pig.

The long walk through the cool night air refreshed him somewhat after the sickening atmosphere of whisky and tobacco at the inn. He reached St. Jim's at last, and climbed the wall. From outside, the wall was far more difficult than from inside, it being necessary to find foothold in a worn buttress; and Gore, in his present state, was not exactly in the condition for a difficult climb.

The result was that he fell with a thump upon his back on the hard ground, the concussion knocking all the breath out of his body. He lay there for what seemed to him a few minutes, but what was in reality a quarter of an hour. The quarter was chiming from the clock tower as he rose to his feet.

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you will find the perfect story. "Martin Clifford gets better every week" is a phrase that many a loyal reader includes in his letter to me, and it's a phrase that is justifiable. This popular author was never in better form. Tell all your pals who are keen on really good school yarns to sample one of Martin Clifford's. They won't look for anything better after that. For live thrills you can look forward to another sensational encounter with

"THE WINGER."

This master criminal is finding young Snap Fane a bit of a handful to shake off, for Snap is always where the Winger doesn't want him to be, namely, "on his tail." You'll enjoy next week's yarn about these two characters no end, chums.

"THE PLOTTER OF THE FOURTH"

is the title of the next Rookwood yarn by Owen Conquest, and with the inclusion of the inimitable Potts, the Office-boy, it rounds off a programme that is the best of value. You're going to order next week's copy now? Good, that's the best way! Now let's pull out the notebook and see what's been happening in the world lately of interest to you boys and girls.

WONDERFUL "FEET"!

Fifteen thousand, seven hundred and eighty feet above sea level looms the snowy peak of Mont Blanc, and two years ago a young London girl staying in Switzerland suddenly made up her mind to climb to the top of that famous mountain. It certainly was a tall ambition, so tall, in fact, that strong men have felt tremors at the knees when contemplating it. But Pamela Wilkinson had made up her mind. She was going to get to the top or bust. Training became the order of the day, for to accomplish a climb like that physical fitness is an essential. This year her parents consented to let her make the attempt. With a guide and another companion Pamela Wilkinson set out in the chill hours of morn, and climbed and climbed and climbed. By the time her wrist watch showed 9.45 a.m. she was standing on the top of Mont Blanc after a non-stop climb of six and a

quarter hours. That's something of which to be proud, for Miss Wilkinson has established a world's record; she is the youngest person ever to have performed the feat. And young she is, for at the time this record was made, she was eleven years and four months old. Now you boys—what about it?

TAKING WAYS!

Some dogs have a natural bent for picking up tricks, much to the delight of their owners, but a certain owner in Warsaw is very much perturbed by some of the tricks his dog has developed without any training. Quantities of jewellery began to be missed in the house, ditto from the houses of some of the friends this dog's owner visited. Then the mystery was solved by the dog scratching a certain section of the floorboards in one of the rooms of his home. Upon inspection the amazed owner discovered a hoard of treasure in the form of jewellery carefully secreted in a crevice between the floorboards. What he said to his pet when he had recovered from the shock is not recorded, but it's quite likely that the canine burglar said "Bow-wow!"

FLIRTING WITH DEATH!

Playing "shove-halfpenny" as a pastime seems a long way from high speed flying, yet that's what Flight-Lieut. Stainforth was doing when the official news was brought to him that he had set up a new world's air speed record of 408.8 miles an hour. Only a few hours previously he had been risking his neck in a super-speed plane in order to beat a world record air speed of 379 m.p.h., which, incidentally, he had set up himself in September. A special filming apparatus was installed at Calshot, where the attempt was made, and the developing of the film took some time; all the same for that, when Flight-Lieut. Stainforth had brought his seaplane to a standstill after his thrilling flirtation with death, there was a look in his eye which said plainly enough: "I know I've done it." And done it he had. Just think of it, to obtain an average of 408.8 m.p.h., this daring birdman actually flew one of the laps of the course at the dizzy speed of 415.2 m.p.h., whilst his lowest lap speed was 404.5 m.p.h. Thus, at one time the "fastest man in the world" was careering through the air at the almost incredible speed of nearly seven miles a minute! Hats off to Flight-Lieut. Stainforth, boys, for he's brought Britain a record that gives every promise of holding good for many a day to come.

HUMANITY UP TO DATE!

It seems absurd to offer a swallow a free ride in an aeroplane, yet it is recorded

that forty thousand swallows were taken by aeroplane recently from Vienna to Venice. There was good reason for it, however. The bitterness of the weather that had swept over central Europe had been so severe that these swallows who were making their autumn journey to the sunny south were threatened with complete annihilation. They were frozen, starved, and so tame that they dropped down anywhere to escape the sleet and the rain. Villagers took them in, warmed them, and fed them, and finally took them to the headquarters of the Austrian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Here they were rounded up and put aboard aeroplanes which sped them across the Alps and so on to Venice and sunshine. At Venice the swallows found an abundance of their natural food of flies and midges, and doubtless, with a "cheerio, and thanks for the buggy ride" type of chirrup, they continued on their way south.

BOYS, BUY THE BEST ANNUAL!

That's easy if you know what's what. And "what's what" in this case is the Greyfriars Holiday Annual. It's a bumper book containing many stories of Tom Merry & Co. and all your favourite characters at St. Jim's, as well as exciting stories of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood. That's not all, for lovers of thrills will find plenty to interest them, too, in the wonderful tales of sport and adventure on land, sea, and in the air. For six shillings the HOLIDAY ANNUAL is absolutely the best all-round book for the all-round boy. Any newsagent will be pleased to show you a copy. After that one "sample" glance you will want to buy it.

LIGHTING UP A FOG!

"Blow the fog! Bless the fog! Brrrrr!" How many times have we been caught stranded somewhere from home with a thick November fog hanging over our shoulders like an unwelcome overcoat. Yet mastery over the world's worst fog is not unlikely in the days to come. Already science has evolved a special light that will pierce the deadliest of fogs. As a start this lighting is to be used on the railway signals, so those startling bangs from the fog detonators, which make you jump out of your skin when you are near a railway, will soon be things of the past. Added to which traffic will be able to speed along on very nearly normal lines instead of the slow, present-day "special fog service" which makes folk bad-tempered and say things much worse than "Brrrrr!"

WOLF, WOLF!

Not many youngsters have "enjoyed" the thrilling experience of fighting a real live, savage wolf and getting away with it, so the two youngsters from Bosnia, aged respectively ten and seven years old, who were tending their father's flocks when a wolf popped up and snatched a goat, have every reason to feel proud of themselves. Instead of bolting away from the wolf they bolted after it, catching up stones and pelting it as they ran. So furious was their onslaught and so accurate their aim that the wolf was badly injured—so injured, in fact, that he was "easy meat" for the father of the two children, who came hastening to the spot, to finish it off.

THE EDITOR.

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GAY DOGS OF ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 10.)

The effect of the whisky was passing off, and his second essay at climbing the wall was successful. He gripped hold of the ivy and lowered himself down on the inside.

He drew a breath of relief as he found himself within the walls of St. Jim's once more.

"I shall have to leave the whisky alone, in the future," he murmured. "I should have been in a ghastly fix if I hadn't been able to get over the wall. Tadger is very kind, but I shall have to draw the line somewhere."

He turned towards the School House. The next moment he shrank back again into the shadow of the wall, his face white and his heart palpitating with terror. A dim figure had loomed up in the starlight—an awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown!

Gore did not need telling whom it was. The cap and gown, the white hair, and the gold-rimmed pince-nez were enough for him.

"The Head!"

He groaned the word under his breath as he crouched desperately in the shadow of the dense mass of ivy. Had he been seen? What was the Head doing in the quadrangle at that time of night? What could possibly have brought Dr. Holmes out of doors at a quarter-past twelve?

He was inclined to groan aloud as he answered his own question. Dr. Holmes could only be there because he suspected someone of breaking bounds, and was on the watch for him.

Gore quivered under the ivy like a hunted hare with the hounds close at hand. Had the Head seen him? The figure was advancing with a slow and solemn face, suited to the dignity and the years of the Head of St. Jim's.

"Boy!"

The deep voice broke the silence of the starlit night. If the Head's tones were not exactly the same as usual, George Gore was not in a condition to notice any difference.

"Boy!"

There was a chance yet. The Head knew that he was there, but could not have seen him clearly, as he did not address him by name. If he could escape unrecognised—

He made a sudden dash. But the Head seemed prepared for it, and with an agility marvellous in a reverend and respected schoolmaster, he skipped in Gore's way and collared him. As soon as he felt a grip on his collar the delinquent collapsed. The game was up now with a vengeance!

"Gore!"

He was recognised. The Head let him go, and he stood palpitating. The shock of discovery had completely sobered him, and the effect of the whisky was gone, save for a faint, sickening odour that still hung about him.

"Gore!" The Head's voice was absolutely terrifying. "So it is you—er—Gore, who have dared to break bounds at night, and to return to the school smelling of spirits!"

"I—I—I—"

"Wretched youth! Where do you expect to die when you

go to—I mean, how dare you break the rules of the college in this shocking manner?"

Gore was too confused to take much notice of the doctor's temporary lapse.

"I—I—I—"

"Are you still intoxicated, sir?"

"No—nunno—I—"

"Then what do you mean by that senseless repetition of an alphabetical letter?"

"I—I—I—"

"Where have you been?"

"Only—only for a walk, sir."

"And you found whisky somewhere in your walk?" exclaimed the doctor.

"I—I—I—"

"Tell me the truth. You have been to the Golden Pig?"

"I—no—yes—yes, sir."

"You have played cards with Tadger and his set."

Gore was amazed at the knowledge of the doctor.

"No—yes—yes, sir. I didn't mean—"

"Then you know your sentence, Gore."

"I—I—I—"

"You are expelled from St. Jim's, sir!"

"Oh, sir! Please, sir—"

The Head waved his hand.

"Not a word, Gore. You are a disgrace to the college. You have led younger and more innocent lads astray. You are a scoundrel, Gore."

"I—I— Oh, please, sir!"

"You are a thorough rascal!"

"Yes, sir. Only, please—"

"There is no alternative. You will pack your box to-morrow morning and leave the school by the first train. I will wire to your father explaining the circumstances—er—of the case, and he will understand why you cannot remain at the school."

"Oh, sir! Please, doctor—"

"Silence, Gore! Shall I have innocent lads contaminated by your contact? The School House isn't much of a place already, without you to make it worse."

Gore stared. That was certainly a very strange remark for the Head to make. Perhaps the Head thought so, too, for he went on very quickly.

"You must go! You are expelled! To-morrow you leave St. Jim's."

Gore fell upon his knees.

"Oh, sir! Think of my father. He'll be as wild as anything—he'll lick me, sir! Oh, don't send me home!"

"If he licks you, that's just what you deserve, Gore! I cannot have the school contaminated by your presence. It is impossible."

"Oh, sir! Please, sir!"

The Head appeared to relent.

"Can I believe that your sorrow is sincere, Gore, and not dictated merely by fear of being expelled from the school?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes, sir! I'm awfully sorry! I will never do anything like it again! I've been a fool, sir! I'll promise not to do anything of the sort any more!"

"Can I trust you, Gore?"

Gore could have wept for joy at the signs of relenting.

"Oh, yes, sir! I swear—"

"You must not swear. How dare you suggest swearing in my presence!"

Potts, the Office Boy!



"I mean, sir—"

"Never mind what you mean? Gore, I am inclined to look over this rascally action on your part; but, remember, I shall have an eye on your conduct in the future. Outwardly, I shall not take any more notice of you than of the other boys, but remember that if my vigilance—er—seems to sleep, I shall be keenly on the watch all the time. And the first time you are caught in the act, Gore, you are expelled."

"Yes, sir. Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Therefore, I shall let you off with a caning. You will come to my study after prayers in the morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Er—no, upon second thoughts, I will inflict your punishment now. Fortunately, I have a cane with me," said the Head. "Hold out your hand!"

Gore held out his hand. He didn't like being caned, but anything was better than being expelled, and a caning was not so bad as a flogging, either. He considered himself lucky to get off so cheaply.

But the Head showed that he meant that caning to be remembered. He brought down the cane upon Gore's palm with a cut that made the rascal wriggle.

"Now the other hand."

Gore shuddered and obeyed.

Another cut, and another gasp and wriggle. So on for four cuts alternately on either hand. Gore was wriggling with pain, but the inexorable Head was not finished yet.

"The other hand, Gore!"

"Oh, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Gore obeyed. Down came the cane with a whiz. But Gore simply had not the nerve to stand it again. Half involuntarily he drew his hand away. The cane, meeting with no resistance, swept downwards, and came against the Head's leg with a resounding thwack.

The Head gave a yell.

"Oh, you rotter! I'll pay you out for that!"

Which was certainly an astounding remark for the Head of St. Jim's to make!

CHAPTER 6.

Gore Has a Narrow Escape.

GORE stood in absolute stupefaction for a moment. He did not know whether the Head had suddenly gone insane, whether he himself was under a delusion, or whether the world was coming to an end.

But after that one bewildered moment the truth dawned upon him, for a faint, but quite audible, chuckle floated to his ears from under the elms, and for the first time he knew that the scene had not been without witnesses. And the Head was hopping on one leg, and claspings the other, and gasping in an undignified manner that Dr. Holmes would certainly never have been guilty of. His pince-nez had fallen off, and he had dropped his cane.

Gore clicked his teeth together. He knew he had been made a fool of, and that someone made up as the Head of St. Jim's had put him through the most terrifying experience of his life. And with that thought he went for the sham Head like a wild bull.

"Oh, you rotter! I'll show you!" he roared. "I'll teach you to play your giddy tricks on me!"

The sham Head was not prepared for this attack.

He was devoting his attention solely to claspings one leg and dancing on the other, and Gore's furious rush bowled him right over. He went down sprawling, and his cap came off and the white hair with it, and save for an artificial complexion and some skilfully-done wrinkles, Kerr was revealed.

"Oh, you rotter!" howled Gore.

He sprawled over the sham Head, punching wildly. The fright he had had, to say nothing of the caning, made him simply wild.

"Help!" gasped Kerr. "Rescue!"

Two boyish figures came bolting from the shadowy elms. Two strong pairs of hands laid hold of Gore and dragged him off his victim. He wriggled and struggled furiously in their grasp.

Kerr staggered to his feet. One of his eyes was closed up, and his nose emitted a thin crimson stream, which was trickling down to his collar. He was gasping for breath, and he looked very dusty and rumped.

"Hold that beast!" he gasped. "He's like a mad bull. It doesn't matter if you hurt him."

"Let me go!" yelled Gore.

"Shut up, you ass!" said Figgins. "Do you want to wake up the whole school?"

"I don't care! Leggo!"

"All right, if you want to explain to the masters where you've been, you're welcome," said Figgins. "Keep it up."

But Gore did not keep it up. Figgy's words had scared him, recalling him to a sense of his position, and he gave in quietly.

"Confound you!" he growled. "What do you mean by meddling with me? What business is it of yours where I go?"

"Lots," said Figgins. "We're going to make you behave decently, or die in the attempt. It's all for your good, and you mustn't mind being hurt."

"I—I thought it was the Head," said Gore. He was immensely relieved to discover that it was not. "You rotten bounders! What do you mean by it?"

"It was my idea," explained Figgins. "We're going to cure you, you know."

"Better tell tales to the masters," said Gore, with a sneer.

"That's not in our line," said Figgins. "We're going to cure you off our own bat. I say, Kerr, old chap, I hope he hasn't hurt you much."

"Not much!" gasped Kerr. "I'm all right!"

"I say, you were an ass to give the game away."

"Was I?" said Kerr wrathfully. "What would you have done if you had got a fearful stinger on the shin, eh?"

"Well, it can't be helped," said Figgins. "It was a good idea, and you've muffed it. I'm not blaming you, though. It was Gore's fault for dodging the cane. He ought to be ashamed of himself—he never could bear a little pain!"

"Ha ha, ha! I'm jolly glad!" said Gore.

"We'll give you something else to be glad for," said Figgins. "Have you any suggestions about curing him, chaps, as this has turned out a frost?"

"Duck him in the doctor's pond," suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Right-ho! Come along! Why, he's gone!"

Gore had suddenly torn himself away and bolted.

FAMOUS!



"After him!" muttered Figgins.

Gore was bolting for his life across the quadrangle towards the School House. Figgins and Fatty Wynn dashed after him as fast as they could go. They really had no intention of ducking him, but Figgins wanted to make his scare complete. Kerr did not join in the pursuit. He did not feel quite fit just then.

Gore had reached the little window he had left open at the side of the School House. He had left it open about an inch so that it would not show, and yet could be easily opened from the outside. He had not expected seconds to be so very precious at the time of his return, of course.

He reached the window and pushed it open. That occupied only a moment. But a moment meant much to him then. He hurled himself head first in at the window, and at the same moment Figgins and Fatty Wynn overtook him.

"Catch hold of his legs!" gasped Figgins.

Gore kicked out violently.

Fatty Wynn gasped and sat down as a boot came heavily upon his chest. But before Gore could wriggle in at the window Figgins had a grip on each of his ankles, and held him fast.

"Got him!" said Figgins.

Gore wriggled spasmodically. He was too far in at the window to get out again, and he could not get completely in while Figgins held his ankles.

"Lemme go!" came a muffled voice from within the window. "Leggo, you beast!"

"Not this evening," said Figgins. "Some other evening."

"You beast! I'll yell and wake the House!"

"Right-ho! Then you can explain to your Housemaster what you were doing out of the House at half-past twelve."

Gore ground his teeth with helpless rage. He dared not rouse the House, and he was absolutely at Figgins' mercy. He began to plead, changing his tone as he found that bullying would not serve.

"I say, Figgy, let me go! You're a decent chap!"

"Yes, that's so; and it's rather a come-down to touch a chap like you," said Figgins cheerfully.

"Don't rot, old chap! Lemme go!"

"Shan't!"

"You beast! I'll break your neck for this to-morrow!"

"You contradict yourself, Gore. I can't be a decent chap and a beast, too. As for breaking necks, you look a good deal more like breaking your own at present, and I know you'll hurt yourself if you wriggle about like that."

"Let me go!"

"Don't let him go till I've stuck this pin in him!" gasped Fatty Wynn, getting up. "The brute has knocked all the breath out of me!"

Gore writhed with horrid anticipation.

"Don't! Don't let him, Figgy! Oh, scissors, don't let him!"

"Well," said Figgins gravely, "you admit, Gore, that you ought to be severely punished for being such a rotter!"

"No, I don't! Hang you!"

"H'm! Have you got that pin handy, Fatty?"

"Yes, here it is."

"Keep him off!" gurgled Gore, in an agony. "I admit it, Figgins. I admit anything you like."

"H'm! Will you promise, honour bright, to turn over a new leaf?"

"Yes, yes."

"You'll keep your word?"

"Yes, yes."

"You will never go to the Golden Pig and meet those other pigs again?"

"Never!"

"Shall we trust him, Fatty?"

"Better stick the pin in, in case of accidents!" said Fatty Wynn solemnly.

"I promise!" howled Gore. "Let me go!"

"Well, perhaps—"

Figgins relaxed his hold, and Gore finished going through the window—suddenly. He came down on his hands and turned a complete somersault, and there was a fearful crash of broken crockery. Then a yell from Gore.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "Surprising how accidents will happen! Are you all right, Gore?"

"Hang you!"

"You've broken something. I think! I hope you haven't shed any of your gore, Gore!"

"I'll get even with you for this, Figgins!" hissed Gore.

"Just you wait, you beast!"

He slammed down the window. The next moment he was crouching in a corner, shivering. A footstep had sounded in the gloom, and a glimmer of light came through the darkness.

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"Mein gootness! Is tat some of dose poys pefore?"

If Kerr had been in the School House, Gore might have suspected another impersonation, but he knew that this must be Herr Schneider.

Although Gore did not know it, Herr Schneider had, of course, been disturbed once before that eventful night. The German master had not been able to get to sleep again, and he had heard the noise below and come down to investigate. He had no doubt that it was caused by some more of the juniors being out of their beds.

Gore was crouching in a little room attached to the kitchen where Mrs. Mimms, the House Dame, kept a great deal of crockery. Gore had settled a good deal of that for her. The glimmer of a candle appeared in the doorway.

"Vat vas tat noise after?" demanded Herr Schneider, standing there in his dressing-gown and slippers, and surveying the room. "Ach! Dere is mooch grockery proken mit itself pefore. Vas it te cat, or vas it vun of dem poys after?"

Whiz!

Gore, in desperation, hurled his cap at the candle with deadly aim. The candlestick went to the floor with a crash, and, being a china one, smashed to pieces. The candle, of course, went out.

Herr Schneider staggered back in alarm, and as he did so Gore bolted past him and sped upstairs like lightning.



Amid a mass of broken crockery, Gore crouched in the doorway, and

"Ach! Mein gootness! Vat vas tat after pefore?"

Before the startled German master could strike a match, Gore was out of sight. Herr Schneider, grumbling to himself in German, took his way slowly upstairs. He looked into the Shell dormitory, and cast a light of the candle on Tom Merry's face. Herr Schneider was always suspicious of Tom. When in doubt, go for Tom Merry, was his motto. But Tom was indubitably asleep, with his curly head resting on the pillow, and his eyes closed fast in repose, and Herr Schneider retired baffled, very much to the relief of Gore, who was palpitating in his bed, and did not breathe freely until the German master was gone. It had been a very eventful night for the chief of the Smart Set at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins Takes the Lead.

TOM MERRY expected trouble the next morning as a result of the night's adventure, and he was right.

The swamp of water from the overflowed bathroom had done considerable damage to the ceilings below, and there would certainly have been an inquiry had not Herr Schneider already known the delinquents.

CS BACK—WITH A BANG! READ "THE JAPER OF ST. JIM'S!" NEXT WEEK.

The German master, having made his report to the master of the School House, the delinquents were called over the carpet in Mr. Railton's study.

They could not very well explain what their object had been in leaving their sleeping quarters at that time of night, nor is it probable that the Housemaster would have approved of Blake's method of curing the transgressor by ducking him in a bath of water.

There was nothing to do but to face the music and grin and bear it, and that the juniors did. They came out of the Housemaster's study with their hands tucked away



er's pantry. The glimmer of a candle appeared in the
der entered!

under their arms, each of them looking as if he were trying to fold himself up into a kind of pocket-knife.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry, "we've done our duty, and that's a comfort! But I'd like to know what Gore was up to last night."

He soon knew. After morning school Figgins & Co. came over to the School House on a visit to Tom Merry's study, to relate the startling happenings of the night.

Study No. 6 were called in to hear the tale. They heard it with mingled feelings. While Study No. 6 had been ducking Tom Merry by mistake, Figgins & Co. had been on the track of the offender, had bowled him completely out, and had given him a warm time.

Study No. 6 and the Terrible Two exchanged glances. The School House had certainly not had the best of it that time.

Figgins looked round, with a pardonable air of pride.

"Well, what's the verdict?" he demanded. "You remember our agreement?"

Blake looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.

"Do you remember any agreement with Figgins, Merry?"

Tom looked at Manners.

"Do you, Manners?"

Manners looked reflective.

Figgins appeared about to explode with wrath.

"You know what that agreement was!" he bellowed. "The chap among us who first distinguished himself in tracking down the Smart Set was to be the leader."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus innocently. "I wemembah that perfectly, Blake! I do, weally, Tom Mewwy! I wemembah— Oh!"

He turned upon Blake.

"What did you pinch me for, Blake? You know perfectly well how stwongly I object to such pwactical jokes."

"You want pinching sometimes," said Blake, "and at times you want killing. Then at times you require boiling in oil!"

"I weally do not see—"

"No, you never see anything, fathead!"

"I pwotest—"

"Oh, dry up! Figgins, old man, I have a faint recollection that there was some sort of a kind of an agreement, something like the ono you mentioned."

"Have you?" said Figgins sarcastically. "Try again, and perhaps you'll remember all about it, Blake, and won't try to wriggle out of it."

"I don't want to wriggle out of it," said Blake warmly. "That's mean, Figgy! And I don't see how we can have a mean man for leader."

"Look here—"

"Still, an agreement's an agreement!"

"Pity you couldn't think of that a little earlier."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So it's agreed?" said Figgins, looking round. "Mind, I don't want to insist on my rights. It's not much catch leading you silly School House kids, anyhow, and I dare say we could do the trick better alone, all off our own bat."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

"Oh, come, let there be peace!" said Tom Merry, waving his hand. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite, it is their nature to—"

And Blake chimed in.

"Let New House wasters growl and fight, it is their nature to."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Herries.

"What are you cackling about?" demanded Figgins. "Have you broken anything inside, or do you always go off like that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Arthur Augustus, who was always a few moments later than anybody else to see a joke, or anything whatever. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Now Adolphus has started going off like a cracker!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That is weally extwemely funnay, Blake!"

"There you are, Blake," said Figgins. "You can set up as a mirth-merchant, now, with that recommendation from Gussy. If he says it's funny, it must be. You ought to know, as he's the funniest animal that ever funned."

"Figgins, do you intend that wemark to be taken in a dispawagin' sence? I shall be sowwy to speak wudely or wuffly to any gentleman pwesent, but I must say that unless I am tweated with pwopah wespect, I shall feel compelled to punch the nose of any diswespectful boundah!" Arthur Augustus was looking warlike.

Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder and shoved him back.

"Hold on, Aubrey!"

"You have wuffed my jacket," said D'Arcy. "I wish you would not be so wuff. And I think I have wemarked before that my name is not Aubwey, but Arthur Augustus!"

"Peace!" said Blake. "Let us have peace before we have pieces. The question is: Is Figgins entitled to the rank, style, and title of Leader of the Reform Movement?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good old Gussy!" said Figgins. "I withdraw my remark about your being a funny animal. You are, of course, but I won't say so."

"I am weady to overlook any hasty wemark."

"Well, we'll put it to the vote," said Tom Merry. "Is Figgins sufficiently extinguished—I mean, distinguished—to be considered leader of the Reform Movement?"

"Yes," said the Co. simultancously.

"Yo-e-es," said Study No. 6 more slowly.

"Yes," said Manners.

"There you are, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "You're elected leader unanimously, and I must say I think you'll make a jolly good one. Fair's fair."

"Right you are," said Figgins. "Now I'm leader, I've got a suggestion to make."

"Fire away!"

"We've been discussing the matter," said Figgins, with a nod towards the Co., "and we work it out like this. Gore and his giddy Smart Set have got to be cured of

their little ways without a row about it if it can be helped; but, anyway, they've got to be cured."

"That's so."

"If our little game last night had worked out better, I think Gore's fright would have lasted him a long time," said Figgins; "but it was a frost. I've thought of a new plan, and one that will cover the whole of the Smart Set as well as Gore."

"Expound, my son!"

"One of you kids does photography. I've heard about photography in your hobby club."

"Yaas, wathah! It's Mannahs."

"Please, I'm the photographer," said Manners, bowing.

"I thought so. Well, you've got a camera that will take really clear snapshots, I suppose?"

"I can take any photo you like, either with a snap or a time exposure," said Manners. "I can—"

"Right you are," interrupted Figgins. "A snap will be what we want, I expect. But you might get one of the other sort as well."

"But what am I to photograph?"

"The Smart Set."

"Eh?"

"I believe they've got a habit of holding meetings in the ruined castle," said Figgins, "and smoking there, and very likely guzzling filthy beer, too. A photograph of a meeting of the Smart Set, each with a cigarette in his mouth, and perhaps a glass in his hand. That's my idea."

"My only pyjama hat!" ejaculated Blake. "And a ripping good idea, too!"

"If we only showed that photo to the Head," said Figgins, "it would be enough to get the leaders of the silly set of rascals expelled, and the rest flogged in a way they would remember. Of course, we don't want to do anything of the kind; but with that photo to hold over their heads, we should have the Smart Set in the hollow of our hands."

"We should, by Jove!"

"Then we should give them the alternative," said Figgins, "of breaking up and dropping their beastly smart ways or being shown up. Mind you, although I don't like anything in the nature of sneaking, I'd rather show them up to the Head than have them go on with their silly, disreputable rot."

"You're right, Figgy. They're bringing disgrace on the school, and if they won't turn over a new leaf, they ought to be kicked out," agreed Tom Merry. "I think the idea is simply splendid!"

Blake thumped Figgins on the back.

"All hail, noble captain!" he exclaimed. "We are thy humble servants and followers, and we'll follow thee to death or to the tuckshop, or whithersoever thou leadest."

"Oh, don't rot!" said Figgins.

"I'm in deadly earnest," assured Blake. "Especially about the tuckshop."

"It's a jolly good idea!" said Manners, who was an enthusiastic amateur photographer, and glad to see his hobby thus called in. "I'll do my best, and I might get half a dozen negatives to make sure. I'll take a roll of six films. Nothing like making sure."

"Then that's settled," said Figgins. "Next half-holiday the Smart Set are pretty sure to meet in the ruins again, and we'll track them down. So-long!"

And Figgins & Co. quitted the study. Blake and his chums followed. Left alone in their quarters, the Terrible Two looked at one another.

"Rotten!" said Manners. "Of course Figgy has earned the post, and it's only fair to make him leader. But I don't like coming out second best, Tom."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Neither do I, Manners," he assented. "But, you see, there's three of them and only two of us, and three heads are better than two. I wish old Monty Lowther was back again with us. He had some good ideas sometimes."

"Yes, we were a stronger team when we were the Terrible Three," said Manners. "I wish old Monty would come. Still, this is a ripping idea of Figgins', and we'll back him up for all we're worth."

Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. strolled out of the School House, Kerr and Wynn went off to speak to someone, and Figgins walked towards the New House alone. He grinned as he saw Gore coming towards him.

"Hallo, Gore!" he remarked. "Been smashing any more crockery lately?"

Gore scowled darkly.

"You beast! I'll pay you out for the trick you served me last night!"

"Rats! You ought to be shown up!" said Figgins. "I consider that we've let you off lightly."

"Show me up, then," sneered Gore. "Where's your proof? You haven't any."

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"So your lesson hasn't done you any good, eh?" said Figgins. "We'll give you another some time, Gore."

And he walked on and entered the New House.

Gore reflected for a moment, and then followed him. He signed to Mellish, his chief backer in the Smart Set, to join him.

"What's the game?" asked Mellish.

"I told you what Figgins did to me last night," growled Gore. "I'm going to pay him out. I saw the Co. go off on their own, and he's gone to his study alone."

"I say, it's risky going into the New House."

"Not if two of us go."

"I don't want—"

"You'll come with me, or I'll lick you instead of Figgins," said the bully of the Shell.

And Mellish thought he had better obey.

They went on quickly to the New House. Figgins glanced out of his window and spotted them, and grinned a grin to himself.

Gore and Mellish entered the House boldly enough, and ascended the stairs. They trod lightly as they came close to the door of Figgins' study. The door was half open. It opened inwards towards the side wall of the room. Gore gripped Mellish's arm and pointed.

"Look there!"

"I see!"

"He's behind the door," said Gore, with a silent chuckle. "The silly cuckoo doesn't know he's showing his cap and his big boots! Ha, ha, ha!"

It certainly seemed to be as Gore stated. Beyond the half-open door could be seen the toe of a boot projecting into full view, as if someone were standing behind the door in hiding, and quite unconscious that he was showing any part of himself. And at a distance of five feet odd inches from the floor the peak of a cap showed round the door.

"We've got him!" muttered Gore. "The silly ass is hiding there; he knows we're coming, and he's ready to jump out on us. Doesn't think we've spotted him. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish grinned.

"What are you going to do?" he asked in a whisper.

"We won't go in," Gore whispered back. "We'll just rush at the door and slam it as hard as we can back against the wall."

"My hat! That will hurt him."

"That's what I want to do."

"Ha, ha, ha! Go ahead!"

"Mind, shove your hardest on the door and jam it right back against the wall," said Gore. "He'll feel like a pancake when we've done with him."

"Come on, then."

They gathered all their strength and rushed at the half-open door. To hurl their weight upon it and jam it back on the wall was the work of a second.

Crash!

The door met with no resistance, but went right back to the wall, taking the two entirely by surprise, and the next moment they were tumbling over each other into the study.

"Why—what—"

"How—"

Gore sat up, rubbing his head, which had come into violent contact with the floor. He was sitting on Mellish's legs and Mellish was squirming; but Gore did not seem to notice it. He looked at the door. It had swung back from the wall, and Gore saw a boot lying on the floor, and a cap pinned to the door, so that the peak showed past the edge of the wood. Then he knew how he had been fooled.

Mellish saw it, too. He wriggled from under Gore and scrambled to his feet.

"Nice sort of an ass you are!" he sneered. "Fancy being taken in by a trick like that! You ought to have more sense, Gore!"

"Hallo!" said a familiar voice, and Figgins looked cheerfully into the study from the passage. "What are you fellows doing in my quarters, eh?"

Gore looked daggers at him as he rose, slowly and painfully.

"You beast! You did that on purpose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins stepped back into the passage and shouted:

"Rescue! School House cads in our study! Buck up, New House!"

There were answering shouts, and a pattering of feet in the corridor. There was no time to be lost. Gore and Mellish made a wild rush to escape. They had to run the gauntlet, and they were looking very rumpled by the time they emerged into the quadrangle, and the derisive shouts of the New House juniors followed them. They looked daggers at each other and separated.

CHAPTER 8.
The Snapshots.

SATURDAY afternoon!

It was a fine autumn afternoon, and most of the boys of St. Jim's were turning out for early footer practice. There were some, however, who were employed in a less manly and honourable way.

The Smart Set were holding another meeting in the ruined castle. In that lonely spot they felt pretty safe from interruption, and they did not know that the reformers were on the track. The meeting was more numerous than the one Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had attended, and which had been surprised by the Terrible Two.

Gore's followers were on the increase. Ten juniors of both Houses had come into the fold of the Smart Set, and they were gathered in the ruins for the purpose of smoking cigarettes with a solemn pretence of enjoyment.

Gore looked round upon the meeting with an eye of pride. His influence was mounting, and ere long he hoped to number such a following that the Smart Set would be able to hold its own in the school, and put Tom Merry and his friends in the shade.

"I say, it's jolly here," remarked Gore. "Of course, it's rotten that we should have to do our smoking in secret, but we must put up with that. The great thing is to do it and show that we're not going to be put upon."

"How can we show that by doing it in secret?" Mellish wanted to know.

"Now we're all here," said Gore hastily, without replying to Mellish's question, "I want to put a resolution to the meeting. We're going to stick out of the sports as much as we like, Kildare or no Kildare, Tom Merry or no Tom Merry! Who's game to back me up through thick and thin?"

"I second the motion," said Mellish. "I don't like footer. Too much like hard work."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hands up for the motion."

Every hand went up.

"Good!" said Gore. "We'll show them! Now, I've laid out the money we subscribed for the purpose, and I've got a jolly lot of smokes here. Cigarettes galore, and cigars for those who like 'em. Which will you have, Mellish?"

"A—a cigarette, I think," said Mellish dubiously.

The others said the same. Gore was the only one who put on a cigar, and he did it with an air of relish that was far from being genuine.

"I've got something here to wet your whistles," he went on. "We're not the kind of chaps to drink ginger-pop. I should think. Look here."

From a parcel he produced a bottle of whisky and a siphon of soda-water.

"What do you think of that?"

"I think we'd better draw the line somewhere for once," said Mellish. "A smoke is all very well, but you don't get me drinking any of that horrid stuff, Gore."

"It's jolly good whisky."

"So it may be, but it's not good for us."

"You're a nice chap to start preaching."

"I'm not preaching. But I'm not going to roll home drunk to St. Jim's and get expelled," said Mellish. "I'm not quite such a fool as that."

"Bah! A little won't hurt you," said Gore, feeling extremely grown up as he uncorked the bottle and poured some of the fiery liquid into a tin mug and squirted some of the soda into it. "It's all right, I tell you."

"I don't believe you like it," said Mellish incredulously. "Let's see you drink it."

Gore sipped at the mug.

"It's jolly good."

"Is it? Then you're not so greedy as you usually are," said Mellish. "You're mighty sparing at it. Give me another cigarette. Thanks. I'll have a light at yours, Jones."

Snap!

The sudden sound came to the ears of all the boys present. Snap! Snap!

Only a few seconds apart came the snaps. The Smart Set started up in amazement.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Gore.

Mellish turned pale.

"It sounded like a camera."

"A camera! My only aunt!"

Snap!

Mellish threw away his cigarette. The rest of the Smart Set followed his example. They were looking surprised and alarmed. The idea of being snapshotted at that moment was enough to alarm them.

"Hang it all!" said Gore. "Let's go and see what it means!"

He dashed towards a thicket-clad mass of ruins, whence the snapping had proceeded.

"Hallo!" said a cool voice.

Tom Merry rose into view. With him were Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. Manners was stowing his camera away in an inside pocket. Gore glared at the reformers.

"What have you been doing?"

"I?" said Tom Merry. "Oh, I've been watching Manners."

"Oh! What have you been doing, Manners?"

"Oh, snapping some silly asses who call themselves a Smart Set!" said Manners.

"You're not going to take those negatives away from here," Gore exclaimed savagely. "Hand over that camera. Hand over that camera to me!"

"Well, it's a hand camera, certainly," said Manners.

"But I'm not going to hand it to you, Gore. Go home!"

"Give it to me, or we'll take it by force."

"Don't do anything ferocious, dear boy."

"Come on!" shouted Gore. "Let's take it away from him!"

The Smart Set looked at one another dubiously.

They were eleven in all, counting Gore, and the reformers numbered eight. But Tom Merry and his comrades were champion athletes of the Lower Forms, and could certainly have licked the Smart Set or twice as many of the same kidney. Weedy youths addicted to secret smoking were not likely to stand up long against the fittest juniors in the school.

Upon the whole the Smart Set decided to leave that camera in Manners' possession.

"Come on," said Tom Merry invitingly. "We're waiting for you."

But the Smart Set declined to come on.

"Let's get home," said Manners. "I want to develop those films. I believe the negatives will come out first rate. I shall be able to take the prints this afternoon, and if you smart fellows want to see them and to know what we're going to do with them, you can drop into our study about tea-time."

And Tom Merry and his friends marched off, leaving the Smart Set looking considerably troubled in their minds.

"My hat!" said Tom. "It has been a howling success all along the line. Figgy, old chap, you deserve to be leader. The knell of the Smart Set has struck."

"Yaas, wathah!"

They returned to the school. Manners turned everybody out of his study while he was developing the films. The negatives were dried in ample time to take some prints before tea.

Meanwhile, Gore and his friends were in a state of extreme nervousness. The Smart Set, disquieted as to what use the reformers intended to make of the photographs, rounded on Gore and reviled him heartily for getting them into such a scrape. Gore, who knew that if one of the prints came to the notice of the Head he would be expelled from the school, was too uneasy and dispirited to reply to the insults and taunts hurled upon him by his ungrateful followers. He had shown them "life" as he had learned it from Mr. Tadger, and now they were ready to jump on him. Such was the gratitude of the Smart Set!

Before tea-time most of the smart ones had wandered to Tom Merry's study, unusually civil in their manner to the hero of the Shell.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Can we come in, Merry?"

Tom looked at Manners.

"All ready, old son?"

"All ready," said Manners.

"You can come in, asses," said Tom Merry politely.

They came in, looking dubious and sheepish. All the reformers were in the study, and the athletic eight were prepared for hostilities. But the Smart Set were not in a hostile mood. They were in a humble and chastened spirit. Never had a set of smart sporting gents looked more willing to eat dirt.

Manners had four prints arranged on the table. Tom took them up one by one with the air of a showman.

"Here," said Tom Merry, holding up the first—"here we have a snapshot of the Smart Set of St. Jim's, showing them all smoking cigarettes, excepting Gore, who is smoking a cigar. Gore has also a bottle of whisky and a mug in his hand. The label on the whisky bottle comes out very distinctly. Anyone who likes to examine this print may do so. I need not say that it is useless to damage it, as any number can be taken afresh from the negative."

The photograph passed from hand to hand. It was really a fine one, the picture showing up with clear-cut lines, and most of the Smart Set being recognisable feature for feature.

"Here," said Tom Merry, taking up the second print, "we have the same set of silly asses, but some of them have taken the cigarettes out of their mouths and are holding them in their fingers. They look startled, doubtless, because they heard the snap of a camera. Here, gentlemen, is the third print. It shows some of the Smart Set throwing away their cigarettes, and some of them are on their feet, looking round. Here is the fourth; really a fine photograph of Mellish, looking as if he was frightened out of his wits."

There was a chuckle audible in the study. But the Smart Set were in no mood for chuckling. They looked at the prints, and read there enough to ruin them if Tom Merry chose to make use of the photographs.

"What are you going to do with these things, hang you?" demanded Gore desperately.

Tom Merry looked him straight in the face.

"We're going to make conditions."

"Oh, go on!"

"The prefects have left it in our hands to put down the rotten, blackguardly business that you silly asses call being smart. We're going to do it. No more smoking, no more visits to the Golden Pig, no more guzzling that filthy stuff in the ruins, no more Smart Set!"

"That's it," said Figgins. "No more Smart Set!"

And the reformers ejaculated simultaneously and solemnly:

"No more Smart Set!"

"And what if we won't agree?" said Gore half defiantly.

"I shall be sorry if you don't," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Sorry for you and for having to take a serious step. If

you refuse to behave like decent chaps, instead of pothouse loafers, I shall place these photographs in the hands of Dr. Holmes, to do as he thinks best."

"Sneak!"

The word brought a flush to Tom Merry's handsome face, but he replied calmly:

"The prefects have put the business into our hands, and we are responsible. It is not sneaking to prevent a set of foolish rascals from ruining themselves and bringing the name of the school into disgrace. You were at the Golden Pig the other night, Gore. I've heard that the police are looking for a chance to raid that place. Suppose it were raided and a St. Jim's fellow found there? Nice for the old school!"

"Blow the old school!" growled Gore.

"I dare say those are your sentiments, but they are not mine," said Tom Merry. "I mean what I say. The Smart Set is to vanish—vanish utterly, or else these photographs will be handed to the Head. You can take your choice."

"We agree, we agree!" howled the Smart Set as one man.

"I suppose we must," said Gore. "Of course, you'll destroy the photographs if we agree to your terms, Tom Merry?"

"Yes; but we will keep the negatives. They will be safely locked up and ready for production at any time the Smart Set feels inclined to revive itself and start in business again," said Tom Merry significantly. "You can't fool me, Gore, and I don't trust you half an inch. I think I've made myself clear."

"I should say so," said Figgins. "You talk like a Dutch uncle! They agree."

"Do you all agree?"

"Yes."

"Then you can clear out, and I hope you will have sense enough to go straight in the future," said Tom Merry.

And the Smart Set, looking exceedingly crestfallen, filed out of the study.

"Well, that job's jobbed," said Figgins, "and a jolly good job too!"

"I think," said Tom Merry, looking round, "that we can report success to Kildare."

"We can, we can!"

"Yes, rather!"

"And most of the credit is due to Figgins. I vote that he goes and does the reporting," went on Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"Not a bit of it," said the modest Figgins. "We'll all go together."

After some discussion this was agreed to, and the eight juniors made their way to the study of the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare, who was about to have tea, looked somewhat surprised at the invasion.

"Hallo! We've come at a wrong moment!" said Tom Merry. "Another time—"

"It's all right," said Kildare. "What is it?"

"We've come to report."

"Report what?"

"The death and burial of the Smart Set."

The captain stared.

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!"

"I know I can rely upon you, Merry," said Kildare, after a pause. "But you had better tell me all about it—without mentioning any names, if you like."

"Right-ho!"

And Tom gave a graphic description of the campaign against the Smart Set.

Kildare listened gravely at first, and then laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"It's a good thing well done," he exclaimed, "You all deserve great credit, and so long as you keep the negatives I think the Smart Set will remain out of existence. Have you fellows had tea?"

"Not yet."

"Then, unless you've got something especially good in your studies, suppose you sit down and have tea with me?" suggested Kildare.

"Oh, Kildare!" said the juniors breathlessly.

To be asked to tea by the captain of St. Jim's was an honour that rarely fell to a junior, and the reformers had not dreamed of it.

"Will you?" asked the captain.

"Well, rather, and thanks awfully!"

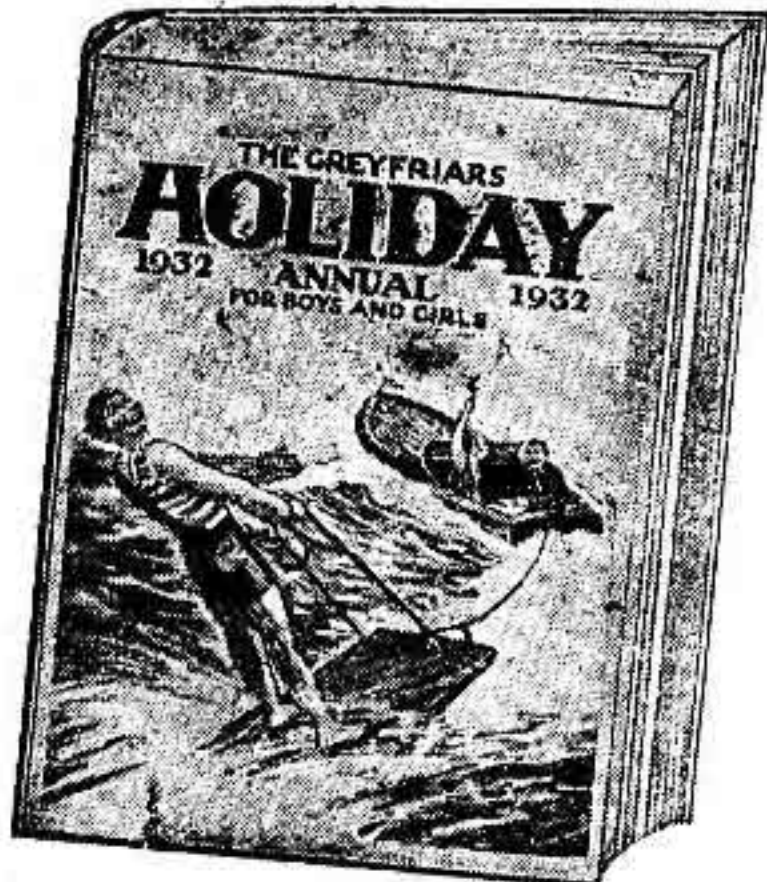
"Yaas, wathah! We are extremely honahed, deah boy!"

It was a jolly tea in the captain's study, and the noble reformers felt quite repaid for the trouble they had been put to in extinguishing the Smart Set at St. Jim's.

THE END.

(Exit the Gay Dogs! For once in a way a Merry-Blake-Figgins combine has come to something! Next week relations are slightly strained in "THE JAPER OF ST. JIM'S!" Don't miss it.)

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THE WINGER!



CHAPTER 1.

£1,000 Reward!

LONDONERS smiled covertly behind their morning papers. Young police officers hitched their fingers in their belts, and looked more keenly at smart young men strolling about the West End.

"£1,000 REWARD."

"The above sum will be paid to anyone giving information which will lead to the arrest of the 'Winger,' or as to his true identity. Such information must be given in person to Detective-Inspector Thomas at Great Scotland Yard."

"Scotland Yard getting their backs up at last," observed a young man, travelling down the Strand on a bus. "Wish I could lay hands on the Winger."

His companion frowned and looked doubtful. The Winger had amused London for many weeks now. His cool audacity and simple ways of committing a crime captured the Londoners' fancies.

"The money will make some of his gang give him away," remarked the other man, with a shade of sadness in his voice. "Money'll do anything."

"Wouldn't you earn that thousand quid if you knew him?" demanded the first young man.

The other looked away. That was a question thousands of Londoners were asking themselves.

Would they help arrest the Winger, if they knew him?

"I expect he's handsome, and, anyhow, he's a real sport and never kills anyone," a girl typist argued in the City.

"He helped the police and captured the murderer of the caretaker at Boyle & Hallet's Bank," remarked a big man on the Stock Exchange. "Jove, I'd like to meet him—"

"To earn the thousand pounds?" asked a shipping magnate.

Which nearly brewed a quarrel between them.

Lying in his home-made paddle boat in Barking Creek, Snap Fane, the only human being in London who had knowingly associated with the Winger, apart from his gang, looked thoughtfully up at the grey skies. He, too, was asking himself that question:

Would he betray the Winger for a thousand pounds?

He shifted restlessly. Ever since the affair of the Calshot Castle, when he had accidentally run across the Winger's path, he had striven with all his might to bring that young, aristocratic crook to justice.

Now he was troubled. Men, women—anyone will do a lot for money.

"It ain't fair," he muttered, and started to hear his own voice.

"Blow!" He sat up and looked across the desolate mud flats as if expecting to see the Winger there.

"Wot's oof, anyway?" he asked a sparrow which perched on the stern of his crazy boat. "Lumme, I'd like to bag the Winger, 'cause he really oughter be bagged. But to sell him—waugh! S'rotten!"

For several days now London had heard nothing of that famous young crook. Not since his daring stunt at the Winston Stadium, when he and his gang took most of the gate money and got away in an aeroplane.

But this silence was usual. The Winger wanted only roady cash for himself and his band of merry Robin Hoods. So long as that lasted he left robbery severely alone.

Money doesn't last for ever. The Winger would soon speak again.

How? When?

Snap picked up his pocket radio set, a gift from the River Police, and absently tuned in on the usual short wave length used by his opponent, the Winger.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he gasped, then strained closer to the instrument.

Music was coming through—music played on a violin and piano. A grin spread over Snap's face as he recognised the tune:

It was the "Policeman's Chorus," and accompanying

the music was a chorus of male voices, blending harmoniously.

His eyes gleaming, Snap listened right to the end, lips parted and laughter dancing across his features.

"Bravo, Winger—bravo!" he cried into the transmitter.

Then he froze to fresh attention. A merry laugh came through. There was no mistaking that laugh. It was the Winger's.

A moment later:

"Now, gentlemen, all together, and remember the greatest police institution in the world is listening to you."

The piano and violin tuned in. London and Snap listened spellbound as the Robbers' Chorus from "Chu Chin Chow" came melodiously through the ether.

Work ceased in thousands of households. Hundreds of people gathered outside wireless shops who broadcast above their doorways.

Half a million lips muttered the same words:

"The Winger!"

Sergeant Hull, sitting in Limehouse Reach Riverside Police Station, simply goggled at his radio set. Detective-Inspector Thomas, at Scotland Yard, sat white-faced, grim, and desperate as the merry chorus floated around his office.

"Bravo, Winger!" cried Snap, when it finished.

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£1,000 REWARD FOR THE WINGER!
And the Winger gets it himself!

"That you, Snap?" came the suave voice of the Winger. "Thanks for the applause. By the way, Snap, what do you think of them putting a price on my head, eh?"

"Rotten!" snapped Snap Fane.

A merry laugh, cool as ice, answered him:

"Not at all," said the Winger. "I like other people to make money, too. But I thought the Yard would have considered my head worth more than a paltry thousand. It will interest you to buy a copy of the 'Evening Mirror' to-night. Might be seeing you soon, Snap. Good-bye, London—good-bye, everybody!"

Silence. In vain Snap tried to get his friendly enemy again.

"Corks, wot did he mean about buying the 'Evening Mirror' to-night?" he asked himself. "Here, I'm gonna see Mr. Hull and Mr. Thomas!"

Half an hour later Snap dashed into Limehouse Police Station.

"Get it, Mr. Hull?" he asked the sergeant.

"Yes; and if that fool is up to some fresh game I'll get him and the thousand pounds!" barked the sergeant. "Of all the cheek—"

Snap waited for no more. He darted to his boat again, and paddled frantically to Scotland Yard, where he had free entry into the private office of Detective-Inspector Thomas.

"Coo, is it your birthday, Mr. Thomas?" he asked, eyeing the piles of letters on the officer's desk.

"No; all these are from people who profess to know the Winger," barked Inspector Thomas sourly. "I've had at least fifty callers this morning, and a dozen this afternoon, who say they know that crook."

Snap grinned, and, brushing aside some letters, seated himself on the corner of the desk.

"Some people would sell their own father for tuppence," he said disgustedly.

"Look here, young feller, I heard you talking to the Winger over the radio, and you'll be getting into trouble if you're not careful. You seem over friendly with that infamous crook."

"Aw, cut that!" grinned Snap. "I'm the only man in London who has worked with the Winger. I've nearly got him several times. Many times I've stopped his game, or nearly done so. I'm out to get him, too, but I wouldn't take a penny for doing it. He might be a crook, but he's a toff. What're you going to do?"

"That's my business—Hullo, another informer!" growled Mr. Thomas, as a policeman ushered a little wrinkled old man into the office. "Well, who're you?" he demanded curtly.

"Please, sir, I've come about that there reward," squeaked the man in a thin, piping voice.

"You know the Winger?"

"Yes, sir—that is, my son, wot works in a factory down Poplar way, knows a chap whose landlady's cousin—"

"Do you know the Winger or where we can lay hands on him?" roared Inspector Thomas, leaping angrily to his feet. "I've had too much of my time wasted to-day by fools like you—Here, hold up!"

The little man staggered and went reeling to his knees. Snap sprang to help him as he clawed his way up the safe against the wall.

The old man's face was sallow yellow. His eyes were black-ringed, and he shook like a jelly as Snap led him to a chair.

"Sorry, sir," he muttered humbly. "I ain't used to bein' shouted at. 'Eart, you know. Well, p'r'haps I'd better be goin'. It's on'y rumour, arter all."

He tottered to the door and went out.

"That's the sort of thing I've been pestered with all day since that reward's been announced," fumed Thomas. "People come here who say their mother-in-law knows a man whose great aunt's married sister knows a baker who believes the Winger—the Wing—"

"You've lost two thousand pounds, sergeant—er, I'm sorry, I mean Detective-Inspector Thomas," came a well-known voice from the radio set.

Mr. Thomas crashed into his chair. Snap's grin froze to his face. The Winger's icy cool laugh trilled in the corners of the stuffy little office.

"Gosh, that was him!" gurgled Snap. "That old bloke—the—Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Winger Shows Up!

"GET out! Get out!" roared Inspector Thomas.

"What did he mean by two thousand pounds?" asked Snap, edging nearer the door. "You're only offering one thousand reward, ain't you?"

He swung round. The door was hurled open, and in came a high officer.

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"Read that, Thomas!" he literally stuttered, his face blue with rage.

Snap snatched the paper, and read a front-page announcement:

"THE WINGER OFFERS REWARD."

"In addition to the £1,000 offered by Scotland Yard, the Winger himself offers £1,000 to anyone who can get him arrested within forty-eight hours. The additional £1,000 is deposited with Barclays Bank."

"My hat!" he shouted, flinging the paper to Mr. Thomas. He waited just long enough to see the inspector's face flush like a tomato, then fled back to his boat.

That was why the Winger suggested he should get an "Evening Mirror." He was offering an additional £1,000 to anyone who could effect his arrest within forty-eight hours.

Snap paddled under Charing Cross Bridge, his brain teeming with joy. This was the cheekiest stunt the Winger had ever attempted.

"Wot did he go to Mr. Thomas' office for?" he asked himself, as he drifted down on the tide. "Crumbs! To think I helped him to get up—"

He broke off. His cute eyes narrowed, and his lips pursed. Like a shot he paddled to the nearest steps and darted back to Scotland Yard.

"Say, Mr. Thomas, the Winger didn't just come here for fun!" he cried, bursting into the detective's office. "He had some good reason—Oh, orl right!"

Crash! A paper-weight missed him by inches as he slammed the door and bolted outside. Once again aboard his craft, Snap drifted on the tide.

Why had the Winger gone to Scotland Yard? Not for sheer devilment, Snap was sure. The additional reward was just impudence. But going to Inspector Thomas' office was a risky thing to do, even for the Winger.

Why had he done it?

"Gosh, I wish I knew!" muttered Snap, watching a swift little motor-launch speeding down the Thames.

He lay back, little thinking that the man he wished to see was aboard that sleek little motor-launch, heading for one of the most audacious stunts he had ever perpetrated.

"Snap Fane drifting down on the tide, chief," said Blake, his first lieutenant.

The Winger, in the act of changing from an old suit of ragged clothes and a grey beard and tangled hair, smiled and nodded.

"I'll want him later, Blake," he said softly. "My word, the way I took that old fool Thomas in just now was a treat! He wouldn't even listen to an old man's story about my son wot works in a factory down Poplar way. Ha, ha, ha!"

He completed his change from being an old man to a burly, red-faced police-sergeant.

"Pity Sergeant Hull is so stout, Blake," he observed whimsically. "These padded clothes are dashed uncomfortable. Still, it's worth it."

He smiled absently as he surveyed himself in the mirror of the tiny cabin aboard the motor-launch. A master hand at disguises, the Winger was the image of the sergeant commanding Limehouse Riverside Police Station.

"Think it's worth the risk, chief?" asked Blake, himself donning a waterside policeman's uniform.

"The safe is easy!" snapped the Winger. "I could open it even with gloves on. And it'll wipe the eyes of that bombastic ass, Thomas, and make London roar with laughter."

A head appeared at the little scuttle.

"Limehouse Reach closing, sir!" a young police officer called down.

"Good! Stop the engines, and let her drift for a few minutes!" commanded the Winger. "Muster all hands aft!"

The engines were stopped. All hands, which meant four of his gang besides Blake and himself, mustered in the cockpit aft.

"Well, gentlemen, it is time I told you what I'm about to do," said the master crook smoothly. "I'm dressed up as Sergeant Hull, as you see. You chaps are supposed to be waterside policemen. I've been to Scotland Yard and interviewed Inspector Thomas—"

"You've been in his office, chief?" gasped a young recruit to the Winger's band of free lances.

"Sure! And I've looked at the safe," went on the young crook. "I can open it easy as opening my own front door. I happen to know that it contains something over a thousand pounds—maybe considerably more. Thomas has had the infernal impudence to offer a thousand pounds reward for my apprehension—a mere paltry thousand, mind you, the insulting rotter!"

He stopped. His jaw set into hard, grim lines.

"I'm going to ransack his safe, take whatever money is

in it, and then tell the whole world what I've done!" he snapped. "To do this, I must get Inspector Thomas out of his office for half an hour this evening. But, first of all, I'm going to capture Limehouse Riverside Station, old Hull included. Full speed, and draw up at the police station steps."

Even Blake, used as he was to his chief's bold deeds, looked askance. Never in the history of crookdom had anyone held up a London police station.

Yet, to argue with this suave young man was useless. The Winger was angry that Scotland Yard thought his capture worth only a thousand pounds.

His vanity was hurt. Inspector Thomas must foot the bill.

The launch stopped beside the steps and made fast.

"Sergeant Hull ahoy!" cried the Winger.

The door opened. The burly figure of Sergeant Hull appeared framed against a lighted background.

"Who's that?" he asked gruffly.

"Got the Winger here!" growled the Winger. "Like to see him?"

The bait was swallowed on the instant. Sergeant Hull uttered a snort of mixed disappointment and joy, and dashed down the steps.

A moment later he lay unconscious, drugged and bound and gagged, on the deck of the launch.

"Fine!" purred the Winger. "Put him down the fore-peak, and batten him down. Let me know when you see Snap's boat coming. He'll add to the atmosphere of the game. Besides, I'd hate not to let him share the joke."

He sprang ashore, and walked up the steps into the office, where a constable was toasting some cheese before the bogey fire.

"Heard the news?" he asked of the man standing between him and the doorway. "Rumour has it that the Winger is caught—is, in fact, in a police station at this moment."

"You don't say!" gurgled the constable, turning round and staring wide-eyed at the Winger. "And you wanted to get him yourself, didn't you, sergeant? What a shame! Ouch!"

A drip of melted cheese fell on his hand off the toasting-fork, and made him gasp with agony. The Winger smiled to himself. He had passed the test all right. If this constable, who a few seconds before had been seated with Sergeant Hull, had not penetrated his disguise, all was well.

"Where did they catch him, sergeant?" asked the constable.

"I can't say for certain, but perhaps those chaps outside can tell you. Go and ask 'em while I call up Inspector Thomas."

The man went obediently. Two minutes later he joined Sergeant Hull down in the fore-peak of the sleek little launch.

"O.K., chief!" reported Blake. "Snap's boat is in sight."



"I'll wing you, Winger!" cried Snap, but as he fired the Winger slammed the safe door. Click! The lock went home. Snap was a prisoner!

"Fine! Man the police launch and stand by. Hail Snap and tell him Sergeant Hull wants to see him. Let Number Five represent me, and have him manacled."

Blake went back to carry out orders. The Winger picked up the telephone, and got on the private line to Scotland Yard.

"That you, Inspector Thomas, sir?" he asked, imitating the voice of the man he was impersonating. "Sergeant Hull speaking. I've got the Winger in this office."

"You've—what?" rasped Inspector Thomas, glaring at the transmitter.

"The Winger—he's here in this office now with me!" snorted the Winger. "You'd better come along, eh, and take him from me before his gang come to rescue him."

"I'll be with you in ten minutes, Hull!" snapped Thomas. "Hold him, for the love o' Mike!"

He cut off, snatched up his cap, and flew from Scotland Yard, leaping into his little sports car.

The Winger slowly hung up the receiver. Blake came back into the office.

"Our motor-boat's moored to the jetty, chief," he announced. "We've manned the police launch, and got Number Five dressed in evening clothes with a rubber-skin mask on his face."

"Where's Snap?"

The door opened with a bang, and that cute lad burst into the office.

"Wot do you want me for, Mr. Hull?" asked Snap eagerly.

The Winger faced him squarely, and let the light fall on his own face.

"The Winger is caught, Snap!" he said gruffly.

Snap gripped the table and gaped.

"Him! You've copped the Winger?" he gurgled.

CHAPTER 3.

Snap Finds Out!

"YES, he's here!" chuckled the young crook. "Mr. Thomas is coming to collect him——"
"Where is he?" asked Snap, the grin fading from his face.

"Inspector Thomas'll find him aboard my police launch," answered the bogus Sergeant Hull. "Here comes Mr. Thomas now."

Snap sat down, not knowing whether to feel glad or sad. The door leading to the street opened, and in strutted Detective-Inspector Thomas.

"Where is he, Hull—where is the rascal?" he shouted excitedly.

"Aboard my launch, sir," answered the Winger, turning to quit the room by the wharfside steps.

His right hand went to open the door, passing close past Snap's face.

Absently Snap noticed how white that hand was, and wondered if this rough-and-ready police-sergeant had been to a manicurist.

"Gosh! The poor old Winger!" he muttered, as Hull led Thomas out into the darkness of the wharf outside. "Caught at last!"

The Winger heard him and peeped back.

"Sounds as if you were a crook yourself, Snap!" he grinned back, one hand on the doorpost. "This'll mean a thousand pounds for me from the safe of Scotland Yard!"

Snap frowned, his eyes absently on those wonderfully manicured fingernails. But his brain was too stunned to take particular notice of this change in the hand of a London police-sergeant.

He roamed the empty office, head down, hands deep in pockets. The Winger caught at last—poor old Winger!

Inspector Thomas literally jumped aboard the police launch—right into the arms of Numbers Eight and Eleven of the Winger's gang.

A drugged wad was pressed over his nostrils. A few feeble kicks, and, like Sergeant Hull and the constable, he subsided.

"Take 'em to Twickenham and tie the launch up there," ordered the Winger. "Leave this printed bill stuck on the side. They'll be found in the morning. Blake, meet me outside Great Scotland Yard at eleven o'clock sharp with my car."

He stood on the wharf watching the police-boat vanish into the darkness. Aboard it were Inspector Thomas, Sergeant Hull, and one policeman who had not been able to eat his toasted cheese.

They would be found at Twickenham in the morning. The Winger turned and re-entered the office, to find Snap absently chewing rubbery, half-toasted cheese.

"Like to come to the Yard and see the Winger, Snap?" he asked gruffly. "Mr. Thomas has taken him away in the launch and asked me to drive his car back there."

"Lumme, not 'arf!" growled Snap. "I want to tell the Winger it wasn't my fault."

Seated beside the Winger, Snap felt about as unhappy as he could be. Lost in thought, his usual keen wits were numbed. Scarcely knowing where he was going, he followed the bogus sergeant into Scotland Yard.

"Is that right you got the Winger, Hull?" another officer asked, as they passed along a corridor.

"He's under arrest now!" retorted the Winger; and the man went away, little dreaming of the double meaning of that remark.

"Well, Thomas'll be here soon, Snap," smiled the Winger, shutting the door of Inspector Thomas' private office. "Or, at least, he ought to be, unless the Winger stopped him——"

Snap looked up. The bright electric light shone full into the Winger's green eyes, making them look like sparkling emeralds.

Snap stared—leaned forward—stared harder, then suddenly punched Sergeant Hull hard in the stomach. His fist hit a padded waistcoat.

Those eyes—the manicured hands and no tattoo marks around the right wrist.

The Winger smiled and turned the key in the lock.

"Quite right, Snap. I am the Winger," he announced suavely.

Snap nodded.

"Wot's the game, Winger?" he asked.

"That safe—and showing Thomas he can't buy me so cheaply!" chuckled the Winger. "Sit down—no, not at the desk, you might tamper with the radio or telephone. Over there in the corner!"

He whipped out a shining automatic and pushed the amazed boy across the office into a hard chair next the bookcase.

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"You are a pal, Snap!" he smiled. "I believe you were sorry when you thought those fools had arrested me!"

Snap said nothing. Fascinated, he watched the crook manipulate the safe lock with those fine, tapering fingers.

The lock clicked. The Winger stooped and placed his ear against the steel door.

It clicked again and the door swung open silently.

The Winger placed his automatic on the carpet and reached into the safe.

Snap reached up and grabbed a heavy volume.

"Stop that you—— Ugh!" It struck the Winger in the small of the back, hurling him half-way into the safe.

CHAPTER 4.

Fifty-Fifty!

S NAP sprang for the automatic and got it. The Winger, flat on his face inside the safe, kicked frantically out at Snap and sent him reeling aside.

Crash! Snap staggered against a chair, upset it, and went flat on his back on the floor.

The Winger was on his feet again, a thick wad of Treasury notes in one hand and his wig all awry.

Like a tiger he sprang at Snap, winding both arms around his body and trying to hold him.

Snap wriggled like an eel.

"I've got you, Winger!" he gasped.

"Not quite, Snap, old pal!" purred the Winger, lifting him clean off his feet.

Snap wriggled the automatic round and tried to aim at the crook.

A second later he was held high above the Winger's head—held in a grip of steel.

His weight made the Winger reel across the floor towards the safe.

"Drop me or I'll shoot!" threatened Snap.

The Winger's arms went back, then lunged forward. Snap shot feet first into the open door of the safe and struck a row of steel drawers at the back.

The shock half stunned him. The pistol fell with a clatter to the steel floor.

"No, you don't!" he panted as the Winger made to retrieve his weapon.

He kicked it aside just in time, and, doubling over, tried to grab the Winger's wrist.

He just missed, but got the pistol.

"I'll wing you, Winger——"

Bang—crash!

As he fired the Winger slammed the safe door. A click and the lock caught. Snap was a prisoner in the safe.

The Winger glared at the closed door, then down at the wad of Treasury notes in his hand and smiled calmly.

"My word, he's a game youngster!" he told himself, hastily straightening his wig. "I've got a thousand pounds, but there was more in those drawers."

Muffled bangs came from inside the safe. Snap was kicking the door and banging with the pistol on the steel.

Steps sounded outside in the corridor. The shot had been heard. Police-officers were coming to investigate.

The Winger stuffed the money into his pocket, darted to a window and raised it. The door handle turned, but he had locked the door.

Whoever was outside rapped.

"What's up inside there, Mr. Thomas?" the knocker shouted.

The Winger glared at the safe door. Snap was beating a tattoo against the inside, making the whole room echo to the din.

He swung himself astride the window-ledge and looked out. A ledge ran along the outside of the room. Swiftly the Winger got on to it, silently pushed the window down, and slipped the catch with a thin-bladed pocket-knife.

Then, like a cat, he edged along to a drainpipe which ran down into a courtyard below. One false step, and he would fall and break his neck.

But the Winger seldom made false moves. He dropped light as a feather into the yard, straightened his peaked cap on his head, and strutted out through a gate—free!

"Good-night, Sergeant Hull!" a policeman greeted him on the pavement.

The Winger returned his salute and greeting, then went across the road and jumped into a waiting car.

"Home, Blake!" he snapped.

The car sped past the tall, sombre buildings of Great Scotland Yard.

"I got a thousand, but Snap saved the rest," he said, with a merry laugh when they were speeding through the dark country lanes of Essex. "I had to lock the little blighter in the safe, for he got my gun and tried to hold me up."

Snap Fane blinked when they opened the door. "The Winger—where is he?" he asked, when he had hurriedly related how he came in that safe.

The police-officers scratched their heads and looked glum. "Gosh, he got away with a thousand quid!" grinned Snap. "If you hadn't seen through his disguise, he'd have got away with more than that," observed a clerk dryly. "There's another thousand or more in those steel drawers." "But where is Inspector Thomas?" demanded a high official.

Not even Snap could answer that. All the long night the wires buzzed between police stations. Policemen on duty searched passing motor-cars in vain for the missing officer.

Then Limehouse Riverside Police Station was found abandoned. Here was a fresh mystery. Where were Sergeant Hull and Constable Brown? Where was Sergeant Hull's police launch?

The morning papers told them everything, for the Winger had sent a typescript story to every London editor:

"THE WINGER'S GREATEST HOAX!

TAKES £1,000 FROM SAFE.

INSPECTOR THOMAS ABDUCTED.

POLICE LAUNCH FOUND AT TWICKENHAM WITH OFFICERS."

The first information that the police had on the subject came from the newspaper offices, for as soon as the Winger's story was received, the police were informed. The river at Twickenham was searched immediately, and before long news reached Scotland Yard that an abandoned police launch had been found, and in it were found also Inspector Thomas, Sergeant Hull, and others!

A night spent in cramped quarters, entirely apart from the indignity of the whole affair, had not improved the tempers of either the inspector or the sergeant. They came

out of that police launch more determined than ever to get even with the Winger. They both of them quite forgot to be disappointed at the fact that the Winger had not been captured at all, so angry were they. Snap Fane took one good look at Inspector Thomas when he arrived back at Scotland Yard, and fled chuckling. The young Cockney decided that it was no time for chipping the worthy detective; it might have disastrous results.

That afternoon, lying in his boat at Barking Creek, Snap suddenly sat up.

"You little devil, Snap! That was a close shave for me!" said the Winger's voice over the radio. "Fifty-fifty, eh? I got a thousand, but you saved me getting as much more."

"Any malice, Winger?" asked Snap.

The Winger's cool laugh came back.

"Not a drop, Snap!" he answered.

The papers all sold out. London was laughing again as it read the whole story of the Winger's latest escapade.

"They'll never get him!" chuckled the man on the bus.

"E ain't arf a brainy cove, wot?" a docker grinned at his mate.

Inspector Thomas sat in his office, frowning at the safe. "Who'd have thought the blighter could pick that lock with his bare fingers?" he asked the fireplace. "Bah! He's made me the laughing-stock of London!"

He had! London's sides shook with laughter.

The Winger had actually come along and pinched the reward that had been offered for him, and yet he was still free. Surely, people said, he must be the first man who had ever succeeded in obtaining the price placed on his own head. But it was just like the Winger, the most daring crook that London or any other city had ever known. But no one was more amused than Snap, for he had had the opportunity of seeing Thomas' face, and he would not forget that for a long time!

(That's just about the cheekiest thing the Winger has done yet! Whatever you do, don't miss next week's yarn about this super-crook!)

NEWS OF NEXT WEEK— AND GOOD NEWS, TOO!

What you will find in the GEM!

If you look at the small reproduction of next week's cover alongside, you will see that Figgins and Co. don't seem to be enjoying their feed much, do they? It serves them jolly well right, as you will find out in

"THE JAPER OF ST. JIM'S"!

OUT NEXT WEDNESDAY.

It is one of Martin Clifford's best yarns, and you will thoroughly enjoy it.

You will also enjoy the tip-top Rookwood yarn by Owen Conquest, in which Carthew learns a thing or two. It is called

"THE PLOTTER OF THE FOURTH"!

And what of the Winger? Well, you must wait till next Wednesday if you want to know what happens to him, but as usual that yarn is packed with thrills.

Potts, the Office Boy, will again be on duty, and your Editor has prepared another ripping news page for you!



TUBBY'S STARTLING STUNT!

By

OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1.

Poor Old Tubby!

"IT'S funny!"

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth at Rookwood made that remark.

Lovell and Newcome and Raby, who were accompanying their leader on a stroll round the quad before morning break concluded, looked surprised.

"Can't see anything funny in it!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Same here!" said Raby rather warmly. "Tubby Muffin's the only man in the House in the habit of tuck-raiding, and Tubby's the one that pinched the tuck from the Head's study right enough."

"Of course, it's rough his getting a public flogging," said Newcome, with a shake of his head. "But, after all, he knew the risk he was taking."

"Just what I think," nodded Raby. "What's left to argue about, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Well, nothing much, I suppose. Tubby has earned half a dozen public swishings he hasn't got, so this one won't be out of place. Still, it's rough if he's getting it in the neck for something another chap did."

"But he's the one that did it, ass!"

The leader of the Fistical Four shook his head.

"I'm not convinced. Of course, when that cake was found tucked behind the books in his study it looked a cert. But I'm not so sure about that cake now I come to think over it. I have a faint idea it may have been 'planted' on Tubby."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Who the thump d'you think would do that, then?" demanded Lovell.

"Why, the chap who really pinched the tuck, of course!" was Jimmy Silver's calm reply. "Can't you fellows see that there's a distinct possibility of the whole thing being a frame-up?"

"Great pip!"

"It's possible, anyway," said Jimmy Silver. "What's made me think about it is the really surprising feature of Tubby having the nerve to raid the Head's room. I can't believe it, somehow. We all know he's the biggest funk in the school, and it wanted nerve to do that, particularly as he was the first chap on whom suspicion would fall!"

"Logic in that, certainly!" admitted Lovell, rubbing his

chin thoughtfully. "But—but if it wasn't Tubby, then who was it?"

"Might have been anyone, of course," replied Jimmy Silver. "Between ourselves, I rather suspect Peele and Gower and Lattrey."

"Oh!"

"Just the caddish sort of thing they'd do, you see, and, apart from that, I happened to notice that they were among the last to turn up on the playing fields that afternoon."

"They were, were they?" remarked Newcome grimly. "Well, it wouldn't surprise me, now you put it like that, Jimmy. But how's it possible to prove anything?"

"Doubt whether it is possible," answered the leader of the Fistical Four. Then he broke into a grin as a fat figure rolled towards them. "Hallo, hallo! Here's Tubby! How goes it, old fat man?"

"I say, you fellows, I'm feeling ill!" groaned Tubby Muffin, coming to a stop in front of the Fistical Four. "I've got a fearful headache, and a sort of shivery feeling down the spine, and my feet are stone cold. Do you think if I get a doctor's certificate the Head'll let me off?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I can see what you're laughing at! Look here, can't you chaps do something?" asked the fat junior pathetically. "Here am I, as innocent as a new-born babe, booked for a public swishing to-morrow morning. Can't

you see the Head for me and tell him what an unjust rotter he is?"

"Don't all speak at once!" grinned Lovell. "Bound to be a tremendous rush!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've seen Dalton and Greeley, and neither of 'em'll stir a finger to help me out of this mess. It's—it's awful," said Tubby Muffin. "I didn't touch a crumb of that feed-honest injun! I wouldn't do it, you know; it's against my principles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing funny in that, is there?" almost wept the porker of the Fourth. "I'll jolly well swear I didn't have that tuck, anyway!"

"Worst of you is, you've got such an awful reputation that nobody'll ever believe you, even when you are telling the truth!" remarked Jimmy Silver severely. "This ought to be a lesson to you, Tubby!"

Tubby Muffin groaned.

"I wish you wouldn't rot at a time of crisis like this! Look here, you fellows, I've thought of one way out if

"Oh lor!" said Tubby. "How shall I
Evade the scrape I'm in?
I know: I'll save the Doctor's life,
And that will save my skin!"

you'll only help me. It's useless to tell the Head I didn't do it."

"Worse than useless!" nodded Jimmy Silver.

"But supposing something happened to make the Head awfully grateful to me, the Head might call it off, then," said Tubby. "For instance, suppose I saved the Head's life—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"It stands to reason he couldn't flog me after that, doesn't it? Well, that's the idea, then; I've got to save the Head's life!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Potty! It's turned his brain!" said Newcome. "If it's any use asking you a reasonable question, Muffin, how in thunder do you propose to save the Head's life? Do you think he's in any danger of losing it?"

"Nunno—certainly not!" answered Tubby Muffin hastily. "But that's where you come in!"

"Us?"

"All of you!" nodded the fat junior. "This is the idea—"

"Mean to say we've got to put the Head's life in danger so that you can save him?" howled Lovell. "Why, you fat-headed coon—"

"Wish you wouldn't jump to conclusions, Lovell!" groaned Tubby Muffin. "I don't want you to put him in real danger. All I want you to do is to make him think he's in danger."

"Oh!"

"If you fellows disguise yourselves as footpads and hold up the Head in some lonely spot," explained Tubby patiently, "then I can come along as if by accident and chip in. With reckless bravery I can fling myself into the fray and put you to flight, and thereby earn the Head's undying gratitude. See?"

"M-m-my hat!"

"So—so that's it, is it?" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Sure that's all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell and Newcome and Raby yelled, and as the full realisation of Tubby's brilliant plan dawned on him Jimmy Silver joined in. The Fistical Four saw the funny side of it and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I see anything to chortle about!" said Tubby Muffin peevishly. "Look here, you chaps, it's up to you, as my old pals, to see me through. You can get your disguises from the dramatic society's props, and scare the life out of the Head. It'll be easy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll do the same for you if ever you're in the same kind of hole!" promised the fat junior in a burst of generosity. "Look here, you chaps, I'm serious; it's a jolly good wheeze—"

"Oh crikey! Awfully good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm relying on you to back me up," said Tubby. "Are you chaps willing to do it or not?"

"Not!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Sorry, old bean, but it simply can't be done!" said Jimmy Silver, wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes. "You'll have to ask somebody who's braver than we are—Cook or Mornington or someone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But this is jolly serious—"

"Wrong, old bean! It's the funniest thing we've heard this term! Come over to the tuckshop and have a snack; you're worth it!"

Tubby brightened up and very willingly accompanied the Fistical Four across to the school shop. There they discussed ginger-pop and jam-tarts and cream-puffs and meringues; but Jimmy Silver & Co. positively refused to discuss Tubby's original wheeze for earning the Head's undying gratitude.

The fat junior emerged from the tuckshop, refreshed and in slightly better spirits. But the swishing for which he was booked on the morrow still, like the sword of Damocles, hung over his head, and Tubby was soon as despondent as before.

CHAPTER 2.

Peele Takes a Hand!

'GOT it!"

Tubby Muffin made that sudden ejaculation as he was in the act of rolling past the notice-board in the Hall after morning classes.

Peele and Gower and Lattrey, the black sheep of the Fourth, were standing near the notice-board. They grinned as they spotted the fat junior. Most fellows were feeling rather sorry for Tubby Muffin now that the time

for his punishment was drawing near, but the sight of him seemed to give considerable amusement to Peele & Co.

"Why, if it's not Fatty!" smiled Peele. "What price leather-seated trousers, Muffin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin hardly heeded their laughter. His little eyes were gleaming with excitement.

"I say, you fellows, I've got it—the very wheeze that's going to get me out of this awful hole I'm in!" he gasped. "Look here, Peele, you're just the man I want to help me!"

"Me?"

"You!" nodded Tubby. "I've always been a pal of yours, really, you know, old chap. I—I admire and respect you—always did. Any of the chaps will tell you I've said often that you're not such a shady beast as you look!"

"Why, you howlin' fat ass!" gasped the indignant Peele, while Gower and Lattrey burst into a laugh.

"I've been thinking of the best way to save the Head's life so that he'll let me off that flogging," rattled on Tubby Muffin, unaware of Peele's homicidal glare. "Now I've got it!"

"Good gad!"

"The Head goes for a stroll round the Cloisters every afternoon before classes begin," said Tubby. "On his way he passes underneath the Fourth dorm."

Peele suppressed his anger, and regarded the fat junior curiously through his shifty eyes.

"Well?"

"Some of the guttering is a bit loose just above the dorm windows," said Tubby Muffin eagerly. "If it fell off just as he was passing it would hit him on the napper, wouldn't it? Well, here's the idea—you go up to the dorm and loosen the guttering—"

"Oh, gad!"

"And wait for him to come along. I'll be hanging about ready. Along comes the Head. I rush forward, grab him by the arm, and yank him away. Half a second later you chuck down some of the guttering at the spot he's just left. See?"

"Good gad! I see!"

"Result—the Head'll think it came down accidentally, and that I've saved his life!" said Tubby Muffin cheerfully.

"What do you think of it?"

Gower and Lattrey were just ready to yell.

But something stopped them. That "something" was a wink from their leader.

Peele had suddenly, for reasons best known to himself, become very grave and attentive.

"My hat! That's a rattlin' good wheeze, Muffin!" he said seriously. "Best I've heard for a long time!"

"Thought it was pretty good myself!" grinned the porker of the Fourth. "The thing is, Peele, are you willing to help me?"

"Certainly," said Peele promptly, to Tubby Muffin's gratification, and to the unbounded astonishment of Gower and Lattrey. "It's understood, of course, that you grab the Head before I chuck down the gutterin'?"

"Naturally," nodded Tubby unsuspectingly. "Wouldn't do to risk a real accident, of course. I'll yank him out of the way first. Then I wait for you to do your stuff."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gower and Lattrey, suddenly perceiving in the little plan a possibility that had apparently not occurred to Tubby—the possibility that after manhandling the Head Tubby might have to wait in vain for the guttering to fall and explain his unorthodox behaviour.

Peele frowned at them.

"This isn't funny, you men; I think it's up to me to help Muffin. I'm goin' to do it!"

"Oh gad! Quite, old chap!"

"Can't we help, too?" asked Lattrey, with a wink at Gower. "You might need someone to help you chuck down that guttering, Peele!"

Peele nodded gravely, and frowned on Gower, who was still grinning.

"Surprised at you, Gower, laughin' when we're tryin' to help Tubby! I think Lattrey's suggestion's a jolly good one. We can all go up to the dorm after dinner and perform this little act of kindness—that is, if you're willin', Gower!"

"Dear man, I'm willin' to do anythin' for Muffin," grinned Gower. "I was just thinkin' we ought to have a sort of dress rehearsal before dinner. Suppose we three go up now an' rehearse the whole thing?"

"I say, Gower, that's a jolly fine wheeze!" said Tubby Muffin, enthusiastically. "Don't chuck down the real guttering, of course—just bits of screwed-up paper'll do. I'll wait down below, and you can watch me do my part."

"Good egg! Well, you cut along an' leave it to us!" said Peele.

Tubby Muffin nodded, and rolled away towards the exit at express speed.

Peele & Co. watched him out of sight. Then their bottled-up feelings found vent in an explosion of mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ye gods an' little fishes!" gasped Peele. "Can you imagine it? That fat fool's goin' to rag the beak—maul him about, you know—in the expectation that we're goin' to send a length of gutterin' hurtlin' down from above! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't you see the fat idiot's face when he finds he's assaulted the sacred person of His Nibs without reason?" chortled Gower. "It ought to be worth a guinea a box!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut the cackle an' get to the 'osses, anyway!" said Peele briskly. "We've got to get upstairs an' carry through a dress rehearsal. Must encourage Tubby so he'll set about the Beak as though he means it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, you men!"

And Peele & Co. went upstairs to assist in the "dress rehearsal" of Tubby Muffin's astounding scheme.

Evidently that rehearsal was a success. When they came in for dinner Peele & Co. were grinning, and Tubby Muffin was beaming. Already Tubby saw the Head overcome with remorse, cancelling the flogging, and perhaps substituting a feast in his honour instead.

Whether that optimistic dream would become a reality remained to be seen. Peele & Co. held rather decided views on that subject—but they did not communicate them to Tubby Muffin.

CHAPTER 3.

Not According to Programme!

"HE, he, he!"
"Hallo, hallo! Something tickling you, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he came across Tubby Muffin on the steps of the School House after dinner.

The leader of the Fistical Four had just been in time to hear the unmusical cachinnation which the fat junior had uttered. He looked rather surprised. In view of the fate which awaited Tubby on the morrow, it came quite as a shock to hear him laugh.

Tubby Muffin's podgy face straightened as he recognised the newcomer.

"'Fraid I don't quite follow you, Silver. What did you say about being tickled?" he asked.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Only that you look as if you've just won the Irish Sweep! What's happened, old fat bean?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all!" replied Tubby Muffin hastily. "I'm not going to save the Head's life this afternoon, and Peele and his pals aren't going to help me! Why should they?"

"Give it up," said Jimmy Silver, staring. "What's your little game, then, Tubby?"

"No game at all," answered Tubby Muffin, with an effort to assume a look of cherubic innocence. "I wouldn't dream of getting Peele to chuck down that guttering from the dorm. I hope you're not going to be a suspicious beast and disbelieve me, Silver!"

"What the thump—"

"I say, old chap, I shall have to be going now. Here's Peele!"

And Tubby Muffin rolled off to meet Peele & Co., who were approaching the door, leaving Jimmy Silver fairly blinking.

Peele & Co. ceased to grin, and saluted their fat host with the utmost solemnity as he rolled up to them.

"All ready, Tubby?" asked Peele.

Tubby grinned.

"Oh, rather! I've made up my mind to make this little stunt go with a bang! I say, you fellows, you won't let me down, will you?"

Quite a pained look came into Peele's face.

"Now, I ask you, Tubby. Do we look as if we're the kind to let you down?"

"I hope not; but you must admit yourselves that you've got the reputation of being rather shady beasts!" said Tubby Muffin candidly. "However, you've been pretty decent to me over this bizney, so far, so I shouldn't be suspicious, I suppose. Well, are you ready?"

"Oh! Ah! Absolutely!"

"Quite—quite!"

Peele & Co. looked for a moment as if they were half inclined to seize their fat host and scrag him. But they nobly forbore, in the anticipation that a much more satisfying revenge would soon be theirs.

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Peele & Co. and Tubby Muffin parted, the first-named going indoors, while Tubby rolled along to the quiet spot beneath the Fourth dormitory windows, where his coup was planned to take place.

Tubby waited there expectantly. After a minute or so, one of the windows was pushed up and Peele looked out.

"All serene?" asked the cad of the Fourth.

"All right down here! I—I say, Peele, are you sure that guttering's loose enough to come away when you pull it?"

"Oh, absolutely!" grinned Peele.

"Good egg! Dodge in, now, Peeley. I believe I can see the Head!"

Peele needed no second bidding. He was not at all anxious to be seen by Dr. Chisholm that afternoon!

Tubby waited, with his heart thumping rather painfully, now that the hour had come. Tubby Muffin was rather a simple youth; and he did not doubt that Peele & Co. intended to do their part. But even though the prospects of success did look bright, it wanted a lot of nerve to grab the Head, and forcibly divert him from his path.

The Head loomed on the scene, walking with slow and stately stride.

Tubby Muffin pretended to be admiring the scenery.

The Head reached the "spot" that had been chosen for him:

Suddenly Tubby Muffin leaped into activity.

With a bound he was across the space that separated him from the Head.

A moment later Dr. Chisholm received a shock. To be grabbed and sent flying a distance of some yards by a Fourth Form junior was an experience that had so far not been his. But he had it now. Tubby Muffin made no mistake about it. He seized the Head round the waist and fairly whirled him across the grass.

Dr. Chisholm staggered, lost his balance, and fell.

Thud!

"Ow! Oh! Ow!" gasped the Head dizzily.

Tubby Muffin looked up. Now was the time for the guttering to crash down, providing the climax which would win the forgiveness of the Head.

But Tubby looked up in vain. Things didn't go according to programme. The guttering didn't crash down on the spot where the Head had been. With a sudden shivery feeling up the spine, Tubby began to realise that that guttering was not coming down after all!

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

He turned to bolt, but the stern voice of the Head stopped him.

"Muffin! Wretched boy! Stop! How dare you!"

"Oh—oh crikey!" stuttered the trembling Tubby Muffin. "I didn't do it, sir!"

"What?"

"It—it must have been someone else—I mean, it was me!" corrected the fat junior hastily, recognising, from the expression on the Head's face, that complete denial was out of the question. "I did it, sir, to save your life!"

"Boy!"

"That guttering up there is loose, sir!" babbled Tubby Muffin, perspiring freely, as the Head glowered down on him. "You see, I thought it was going to fall down on your head and kill you, sir, so I thought I'd better chip in and save your life! W-w-wasn't it brave of me, sir?"

Evidently the Head didn't think so. He continued to glare at the porker of the Fourth with a basilisk glare.

"Wretched youth! How dare you seek to make excuses for your inexcusable assault? Why should you suppose that the guttering was about to fall?"

Tubby Muffin groaned.

"It was, sir. It would have fallen, anyway, if that beast Peele and the others had chucked it down. I—I mean—"

The Head's expression had suddenly become terrific in its intensity.

"You are telling me that Peele and certain others intended throwing some guttering on to my head?" he thundered.

Tubby Muffin's fat knees began to knock together.

"Nunno, sir! Certainly not! What ever makes you think that?" he gasped. "I didn't even suggest to Peele that I wanted to save your life so you'd let me off that flogging! And when I did, he didn't have anything to do with it! If you think Peele and Gower and Lattrey rehearsed it with me this morning, you're quite mistaken—they didn't!"

Dr. Chisholm stared at the porker of the Fourth with a stare that was a little less annihilating. He was becoming enlightened.

"So it was a put-up piece of work, designed to put me under a debt of gratitude to you, so that I should cancel your punishment?" he exclaimed. "And those young rascals, Peele and the others, agreed to help you, merely in the hope of getting you deeper in the mire! Follow me, Muffin!"

"Where are you going, sir?" gasped the fat junior. The Head's lips set grimly as he made answer. "To interview Peele and Gower and Lattrey!"

CHAPTER 4.
Justice for Tubby!

"O H gad!" There was a gasp of dismay from Peele and Gower and Lattrey.

The black sheep of the Fourth had been enjoying themselves. They had stayed in the Fourth dormitory sufficiently long to see Tubby Muffin bring the Head down, and to observe the fat junior's utter dismay on finding that the intended sequel was not to materialise. Then they had fled back to their study.

In that sanctuary they had flung themselves into chairs and just howled with hilarious mirth.

Then the door opened, and a stately figure in cap and gown dawned on their consciousness. And Peele & Co.'s mirth quickly gave way to fear.

Peele & Co. jumped to their feet and eyed Dr. Chisholm and the fat junior who rolled after him with great uneasiness.

"G-good-afternoon, sir!" stammered Peele. "Won't you take a seat, sir?"

"I have come to inquire into a matter of great seriousness, Peele," said the Head, in a deep, deep voice, without deigning to answer that question. "I have reason to believe that you three were up in your dormitory within the last ten minutes."

"Not at all, sir!" said Peele calmly. "We've been here ever since dinner-time, haven't we, you fellows?"

Dr. Chisholm elevated his eyebrows.

"Strange that Bulkeley and Jones major, to whom I have just spoken, should have been under the impression that they had just seen you coming down! I will send for them!"

Peele bit his lip.

"I'm sorry, sir! Come to think of it, we did just go up to the dorm for a couple of minutes. I brought down some collars I want to change—wrong size, you know, sir."

"Can I see those collars, Peele?"

Peele paled a little.

"I—I put them on one side somewhere, sir!"

"Kindly find them at once!"

"Ye-es, sir!"

Peele made a pretence of searching the study, while the Head looked on grimly. Gower and Lattrey, who knew only too well that those collars were entirely imaginary, shifted uneasily.

"You are sure you brought the collars into this room, Peele?" asked the Head steadily, as Peele began opening cupboards and drawers without result.

"I—I can't altogether remember, sir!" stammered the black sheep of the Fourth. "We—we were rather deep in conversation. I may have left them somewhere or other!"

"You are sure you are not telling me an untruth, Peele? You are sure that you did not go up to the dormitory for quite another purpose?"

Peele drew a sharp breath.

"If Muffin's been telling you some yarn, sir—"

"Muffin has been telling me no yarn, Peele. The suspicions I have are the result of inferences I have drawn. Once again, Peele, are you telling me the truth?"

"The absolute truth!" answered Peele, between his teeth. "I'll find those collars somewhere. Why don't you fellows help?"

Gower and Lattrey, their faces even whiter than the face of their leader, joined him in the solemn farce of searching for the non-existent collars, while the Head looked on with a brow that grew more thunderous every moment.

All of a sudden he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Lattrey! Pray show me that piece of paper in your hand!"

Lattrey had been turning out the wastepaper basket. He stared at the piece of paper which had attracted the Head's attention in considerable surprise.

It was a torn piece of transparent paper such as is used occasionally as a wrapping for biscuits, cakes, and sweetmeats. Lattrey handed it over without misgivings, wondering why the Head was interested.

He soon knew.

The Head glanced at it, then looked at Peele & Co.

"Can any of you tell me where this came from?" he asked. Peele looked at it. His eyes narrowed as he saw that it was the wrapping from a piece of shortbread that he and his henchmen had enjoyed at tea the previous day.

There was nothing, of course, in Peele & Co. having shortbread for tea. But there was something rather special about this shortbread. It was, as a matter of fact, one of the articles taken from the feed in the Head's study, for the alleged purloining of which Tubby Muffin was booked for a public flogging in the morning!

Peele licked his dry lips. Something seemed to be going wrong with his little schemes all of a sudden.

"Oh, that!" he said, with an attempt at nonchalance. "Just some shortbread we had yesterday, sir—from the tuckshop."

Dr. Chisholm eyed Peele with a keen and searching glance. "I am rather interested to know that this particular kind of shortbread is sold in the school shop, Peele! I will send



Tubby Muffin made no mistake about it. He seized the Head round the waist and fairly whirled him across the grass!

at once for Sergeant Kettle to obtain his confirmation on the point."

Peele gasped.

"I—I shouldn't do that, sir. I remember now, we didn't get it at the tuckshop; it came from Robinson's at Bagshot."

"That circumstance is equally interesting to me. I will ring up Robinson's on the telephone and ask them—"

Peele panted.

"Perhaps I'm mistaken, sir. Anyway, it doesn't matter much—"

"Pardon me, Peele, but it matters a great deal to me!" said the Head. Pointing to the wondering Tubby Muffin, he went on: "This boy has been ordered to receive a flogging to-morrow morning for taking from my study certain

comestibles with which I had intended entertaining a number of Sixth Form boys. Since I have entered this study, I begin to entertain a suspicion, which is now more than a suspicion, that in convicting Muffin I have unintentionally fallen into a grievous error."

There was a sudden gasp from Tubby.

"I say, sir, that's right; didn't I say all along that—"

"Silence, Muffin! To proceed, Peele—I recognise this particular make of shortbread as a kind that Mrs. Chisholm brought back with her from a recent trip to Edinburgh, and that recognition is convincing me that it was not Muffin but you and your friends here who made the raid on my study!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tubby Muffin, his little eyes almost bulging out of their sockets at that unexpected revelation.

"Peele, you awful rotter—"

"Silence, Muffin! Now, Peele, and you others! What have you to say?"

"It's false, sir!" said Peele hoarsely. "I can explain it all—"

"And you, Lattrey and Gower?"

Lattrey and Gower were white to the lips. They looked from the Head to their wretched leader.

"What's the use, Peele?" asked Lattrey, in a tremulous voice. "Why pile up trouble by more lies when the game's up? I'm givin' in, anyway!"

"Same here; it's—it's true, sir!" groaned Gower. "We didn't mean any harm—it was a jape—"

"And the hiding of a cake in Muffin's study so that suspicion should fall on him—was that also a 'jape'?" demanded Dr. Chisholm sternly.

"We—we wouldn't have allowed it to go through—"

"I regret to say that I do not believe you!" said the Head.

"What I have seen since I entered this study has shown me that I am dealing with three unprincipled young rascals. I am almost tempted to expel you. But I will not. I prefer to see whether the application of stricter discipline will make a difference to you. Muffin! I have done you a grave injustice. The flogging which you were to receive to-morrow morning is quashed!"

"Hurrah! I mean, th-thank you, sir!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"Peele, Lattrey, and Gower! You will take Muffin's place," said the Head grimly. "It will be difficult to mete out punishment commensurate with your offence; but I will do my best to see that the punishment you receive is adequate!"

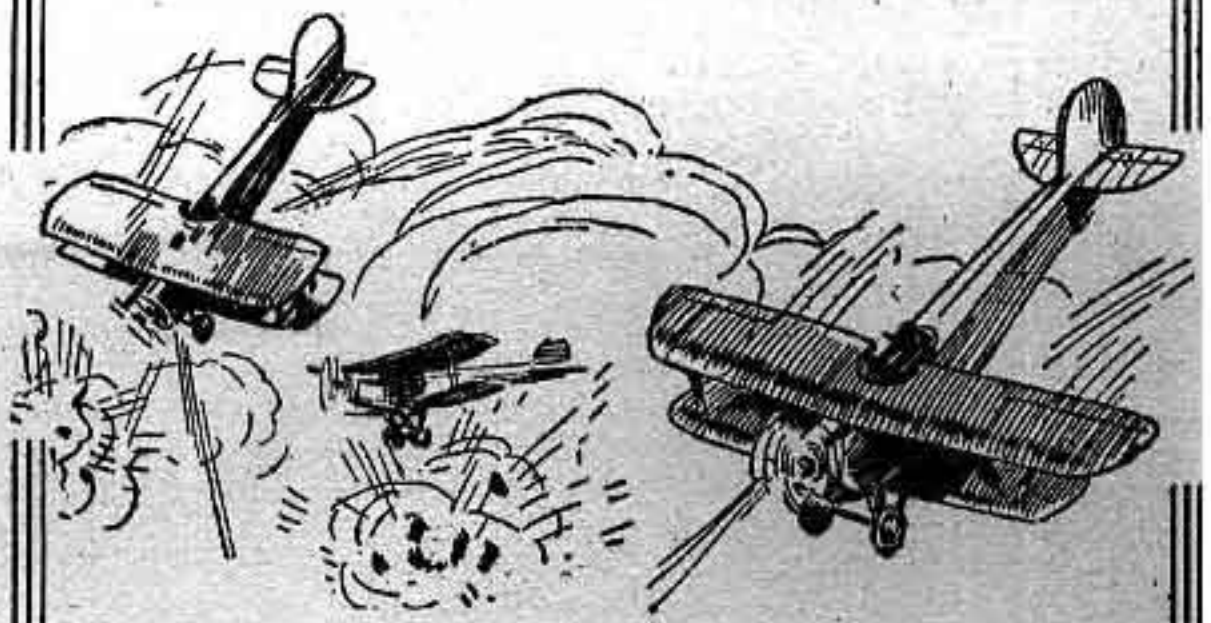
And with that dire threat, the Head departed.

The Head kept his promise. By the time he had finished with Peele & Co. the cads of the Fourth felt that he had more than kept it! Undoubtedly it would be a long time before Peele & Co. ventured to work a jape which in any way involved the Head.

THE END.

(Tubby's stunt worked after all, but not the way he meant it to! It's Carthew's turn to catch it in the neck next week, so don't miss "THE PLOTTER OF THE FOURTH!")

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“After him!” muttered Figgins.
Gore was bolting for his life across the quadrangle towards the School House. Figgins and Fatty Wynn dashed after him as fast as they could go. They really had no intention of ducking him, but Figgins wanted to make his scare complete. Kerr did not join in the pursuit. He did not feel quite fit just then.
Gore had reached the little window he had left open at the side of the School House. He had left it open about an inch so that it would not show, and yet could be easily opened from the outside. He had not expected seconds to be so very precious at the time of his return, of course.
He reached the window and pushed it open. That occupied only a moment. But a moment meant much to him then. He hurled himself head first in at the window, and at the same moment Figgins and Fatty Wynn overtook him.
“Catch hold of his legs!” gasped Figgins.
Gore kicked out violently.
Fatty Wynn gasped and sat down as a boot came heavily upon his chest. But before Gore could wriggle in at the window Figgins had a grip on each of his ankles, and held him fast.
“Got him!” said Figgins.
Gore wriggled spasmodically. He was too far in at the window to get out again, and he could not get completely in while Figgins held his ankles.
“Lemme go!” came a muffled voice from within the window. “Leggo, you beast!”
“Not this evening,” said Figgins. “Some other evening.”
“You beast! I’ll yell and wake the House!”
“Right-ho! Then you can explain to your Housemaster what you were doing out of the House at half-past twelve.”
Gore ground his teeth with helpless rage. He dared not rouse the House, and he was absolutely at Figgins’ mercy. He began to plead, changing his tone as he found that bullying would not serve.
“I say, Figgy, let me go! You’re a decent chap!”
“Yes, that’s so; and it’s rather a come-down to touch a chap like you,” said Figgins cheerfully.
“Don’t rot, old chap! Lemme go!”
“Shan’t!”
“You beast! I’ll break your neck for this to-morrow!”
“You contradict yourself, Gore. I can’t be a decent chap and a beast, too. As for breaking necks, you look a good deal more like breaking your own at present, and I know you’ll hurt yourself if you wriggle about like that.”
“Let me go!”
“Don’t let him go till I’ve stuck this pin in him!” gasped Fatty Wynn, getting up. “The brute has knocked all the breath out of me!”
Gore writhed with horrid anticipation.
“Don’t! Don’t let him, Figgy! Oh, scissors, don’t let him!”
“Well,” said Figgins gravely, “you admit, Gore, that you ought to be severely punished for being such a rotter!”
“No, I don’t! Hang you!”
“H’m! Have you got that pin handy, Fatty?”
“Yes, here it is.”
“Keep him off!” gurgled Gore, in an agony. “I admit it, Figgins. I admit anything you like.”
“H’m! Will you promise, honour bright, to turn over a new leaf?”
“Yes, yes.”
“You’ll keep your word?”
“Yes, yes.”
“You will never go to the Golden Pig and meet those other pigs again?”
“Never!”
“Shall we trust him, Fatty?”
“Better stick the pin in, in case of accidents!” said Fatty Wynn solemnly.
“I promise!” howled Gore. “Let me go!”
“Well, perhaps—”
Figgins relaxed his hold, and Gore finished going through the window—suddenly. He came down on his hands and turned a complete somersault, and there was a fearful crash of broken crockery. Then a yell from Gore.
“My hat!” said Figgins. “Surprising how accidents will happen! Are you all right, Gore?”
“Hang you!”
“You’ve broken something, I think! I hope you haven’t shed any of your gore, Gore!”
“I’ll get even with you for this, Figgins!” hissed Gore.
“Just you wait, you beast!”
He slammed down the window. The next moment he was crouching in a corner, shivering. A footstep had sounded in the gloom, and a glimmer of light came through the darkness.
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“Mein gootness! Is tat some of dose poyes before?”
If Kerr had been in the School House, Gore might have suspected another impersonation, but he knew that this must be Herr Schneider.
Although Gore did not know it, Herr Schneider had, of course, been disturbed once before that eventful night. The German master had not been able to get to sleep again, and he had heard the noise below and come down to investigate. He had no doubt that it was caused by some more of the juniors being out of their beds.
Gore was crouching in a little room attached to the kitchen where Mrs. Mimms, the House Dame, kept a great deal of crockery. Gore had settled a good deal of that for her. The glimmer of a candle appeared in the doorway.
“Vat was tat noise after?” demanded Herr Schneider, standing there in his dressing-gown and slippers, and surveying the room. “Ach! Dere is mooch grockery proken mit itself before. Vas it te cat, or vas it vun of dem poyes after?”
Whiz!

Gore, in desperation, hurled his cap at the candle with deadly aim. The candlestick went to the floor with a crash, and, being a china one, smashed to pieces. The candle, of course, went out.
Herr Schneider staggered back in alarm, and as he did so Gore bolted past him and sped upstairs like lightning.



Amid a mass of broken crockery, Gore crouched in the House's pantry. The glimmer of a candle appeared in the doorway, and Herr Schneider entered!

“Ach! Mein gootness! Vat was tat after before?”
Before the startled German master could strike a match, Gore was out of sight. Herr Schneider, grumbling to himself in German, took his way slowly upstairs. He looked into the Shell dormitory, and cast a light of the candle on Tom Merry's face. Herr Schneider was always suspicious of Tom. When in doubt, go for Tom Merry, was his motto. But Tom was indubitably asleep, with his curly head resting on the pillow, and his eyes closed fast in repose, and Herr Schneider retired baffled, very much to the relief of Gore, who was palpitating in his bed, and did not breathe freely until the German master was gone. It had been a very eventful night for the chief of the Smart Set at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.
Figgins Takes the Lead.

TOM MERRY expected trouble the next morning as a result of the night's adventure, and he was right.
The swamp of water from the overflowed bathroom had done considerable damage to the ceilings below, and there would certainly have been an inquiry had not Herr Schneider already known the delinquents.

The German master, having made his report to the master of the School House, the delinquents were called over the carpet in Mr. Railton's study.
They could not very well explain what their object had been in leaving their sleeping quarters at that time of night, nor is it probable that the Housemaster would have approved of Blake's method of curing the transgressor by ducking him in a bath of water.
There was nothing to do but to face the music and grin and bear it, and that the juniors did. They came out of the Housemaster's study with their hands tucked away



under their arms, each of them looking as if he were trying to fold himself up into a kind of pocket-knife.
“Never mind,” said Tom Merry, “we’ve done our duty, and that’s a comfort! But I’d like to know what Gore was up to last night.”
He soon knew. After morning school Figgins & Co. came over to the School House on a visit to Tom Merry's study, to relate the startling happenings of the night.
Study No. 6 were called in to hear the tale. They heard it with mingled feelings. While Study No. 6 had been ducking Tom Merry by mistake, Figgins & Co. had been on the track of the offender, had bowled him completely out, and had given him a warm time.
Study No. 6 and the Terrible Two exchanged glances. The School House had certainly not had the best of it that time.
Figgins looked round, with a pardonable air of pride.
“Well, what's the verdict?” he demanded. “You remember our agreement?”
Blake looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.
“Do you remember any agreement with Figgins, Merry?” Tom looked at Manners.
“Do you, Manners?”

Manners looked reflective.
Figgins appeared about to explode with wrath.
“You know what that agreement was!” he bellowed.
“The chap among us who first distinguished himself in tracking down the Smart Set was to be the leader.”
“Yaas, wathah!” said Arthur Augustus innocently. “I wemembah that perfectly, Blake! I do, weally, Tom Mewwy! I wemembah— Oh!”
He turned upon Blake.
“What did you pinch me for, Blake? You know perfectly well how stwongly I object to such pwactical jokes.”
“You want pinching sometimes,” said Blake, “and at times you want killing. Then at times you require boiling in oil!”
“I weally do not see—”
“No, you never see anything, fathead!”
“I pwotest—”
“Oh, dry up! Figgins, old man, I have a faint recollection that there was some sort of a kind of an agreement, something like the one you mentioned.”
“Have you?” said Figgins sarcastically. “Try again, and perhaps you'll remember all about it, Blake, and won't try to wriggle out of it.”
“I don't want to wriggle out of it,” said Blake warmly.
“That's mean, Figgy! And I don't see how we can have a mean man for leader.”
“Look here—”
“Still, an agreement's an agreement!”
“Pity you couldn't think of that a little earlier.”
“Yaas, wathah!”
“So it's agreed?” said Figgins, looking round. “Mind, I don't want to insist on my rights. It's not much catch leading you silly School House kids, anyhow, and I dare say we could do the trick better alone, all off our own bat.”
“Hear, hear!” said the Co.
“Oh, come, let there be peace!” said Tom Merry, waving his hand. “Let dogs delight to bark and bite, it is their nature to—”
And Blake chimed in.
“Let New House wasters growl and fight, it is their nature to.”
“Ha, ha, ha!” howled Herries.
“What are you cackling about?” demanded Figgins.
“Have you broken anything inside, or do you always go off like that?”
“Ha, ha, ha!” shouted Arthur Augustus, who was always a few moments later than anybody else to see a joke, or anything whatever. “Ha, ha, ha!”
“My hat! Now Adolphus has started going off like a cracker!”
“Ha, ha, ha! That is weally extremely funnay, Blake!”
“There you are, Blake,” said Figgins. “You can set up as a mirth-merchant, now, with that recommendation from Gussy. If he says it's funny, it must be. You ought to know, as he's the funniest animal that ever funned.”
“Figgins, do you intend that remark to be taken in a dispawagin' sense? I shall be sorry to speak wudely or wuffy to any gentleman pwesent, but I must say that unless I am tweated with pwopah wespect, I shall feel compelled to punch the nose of any diswespectful boundah!” Arthur Augustus was looking warlike.
Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder and shoved him back.
“Hold on, Aubrey!”
“You have wuffed my jacket,” said D'Arcy. “I wish you would not be so wuff. And I think I have wemarked before that my name is not Aubwey, but Arthur Augustus!”
“Peace!” said Blake. “Let us have peace before we have pieces. The question is: Is Figgins entitled to the rank, style, and title of Leader of the Reform Movement?”
“Yaas, wathah!”
“Good old Gussy!” said Figgins. “I withdraw my remark about your being a funny animal. You are, of course, but I won't say so.”
“I am weady to overlook any hasty wemark.”
“Well, we'll put it to the vote,” said Tom Merry. “Is Figgins sufficiently extinguished—I mean, distinguished—to be considered leader of the Reform Movement?”
“Yes,” said the Co. simultaneously.
“Ye-e-es,” said Study No. 6 more slowly.
“Yes,” said Manners.
“There you are, Figgy,” said Tom Merry. “You're elected leader unanimously, and I must say I think you'll make a jolly good one. Fair's fair.”
“Right you are,” said Figgins. “Now I'm leader, I've got a suggestion to make.”
“Fire away!”
“We've been discussing the matter,” said Figgins, with a nod towards the Co., “and we work it out like this. Gore and his giddy Smart Set have got to be cured of”
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