

HALF-CROWNS FOR READERS' JOKES!

The GEM

2P

IN THIS ISSUE

THE PRICE OF SILENCE !

By Martin Clifford.

THE REMOVE WELCOME !

By Frank Richards.

AND

MANY OTHER GRAND
FEATURES.



The
PRICE of SILENCE!



In Town To-day

Introducing
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy
to the Microphone. By a
B.B.C. TALENT SCOUT.

INTERVIEWER: How do you do, D'Arcy? Will you sit just here?

D'ARCY: Thanks, deah boy—I mean, Mr. Interviewah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, D'Arcy, I want you to reveal to the listeners an interesting secret.

D'ARCY: Bai Jove! I was unaware that I had any secwets on my conscience, Mr. Interviewah.

INTERVIEWER: This is a perfectly harmless secret, I assure you. You see, a number of St. Jim's juniors, and an even larger number of GEM readers, have banded together with the request that you should tell them—and the world at large—just how you present that immaculate appearance which is the envy of both Houses at St. Jim's.

D'ARCY: I believe that pwactical jokah Blake has put you up to this, Mr. Interviewah?

INTERVIEWER: No, really. Everybody would like to know.

D'ARCY: Weally, I feel quite embawwassed at bein' asked to talk about my clobber. It's weally a knack, you know—nothin' more. One fellow puts on his twousahs—Gwundy, for instance—and succeeds in lookin' like George Wobey, or Charlie Chaplin, or Donald Duck, whilst another fellow, with no more effort, contwives to appeah weasonably smart. By the way, I am smartin' in another way just now. I weally should like to apologise for the state of the twousahs I am weawin' at this moment—

INTERVIEWER: Why, they look very dapper to me!

D'ARCY: They are my second-best pair. Unfortunately, a burglawious wascal purloined my best ones—

INTERVIEWER: You mean you have actually been robbed, D'Arcy?

D'ARCY: Good gwacious, no, deah boy—I mean, Mr. Interviewah! I did not mean to make an accusation. My twousahs were bowwowed—without permission.

INTERVIEWER: But who do you think would do a thing like that?

D'ARCY: I have no doubt whatevah—considewin' that I saw him with my own eyes. Of course, I could not possibly give the fat wottab away. I might pewwaps tell you—in confidence—that his name is Twimble.

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INTERVIEWER: And is this Twimble a thief?

D'ARCY: No; merely a fat scowwagh with no ideas whatevah except w'ong ones. This mornin' it appeahs that Eggy Twimble, by some absurd mental process, got it into his head that it was him you wanted to bwroadcast instead of myself—and accordin'ly he attempted to awyay himself in a mannah suited to the occasion. Saved with my suit, in fact.

INTERVIEWER: But has Twimble no clothes of his own, D'Arcy?

D'ARCY: Twimble has worn his suit for two whole terms; the twousahs are covered with jam and ink stains. Blake says Twimble sleeps in his clobber sometimes, he is so lary; but that is pewwaps exaggeratin' a little. But to-day I found Twimble emerge' from the dormitory jammed into what as you think!—my best twousah, and, in addition, wearin' my best Eton jacket. It scowwaled until it split up the back, and my best shoes were stretched, too, and they were weally beautin' at the sides. And on Twimble's weard, bulst head was the weay awrest of my scowwases suggahs!

INTERVIEWER: Almost too awful to imagine, D'Arcy!

D'ARCY: Yaas—even by a stretch of the imagination. I was too lary to speak.

INTERVIEWER: Being unable to speak, what did you do?

D'ARCY: I demanded of Twimble where he was goin'. He said he was going to bwroadcast. I replied "Very well, you shall bwroadcast, Twimble!" And with that I seized him by the scowf of the neck and shook him until his bones fairly rattled! Twimble let out a series of feeble pells—and before I had finished with him he was bwroadcastin' to the whole school. Indeed, I think it pwobable they could have heard him at Land's End—without a wadio set!

INTERVIEWER: No doubt you felt better after that?

D'ARCY: Yaas; except that in my excitement I had forgotten to strip my clobber off Twimble—and in the wough and tumble ewewythin' was all but wuined!

INTERVIEWER: If it taught Twimble a lesson, perhaps it was all to the good, D'Arcy. But you still have not told us how you contrive to preserve your elegant appearance—even in your second best.

D'ARCY: Pewwaps it's just as well not; it might look wathah like boastin', and I'd hate that, deah boy—I mean, Mr. Interviewah.

INTERVIEWER: Nevertheless, thanks very much for the chat.

D'ARCY: Don't mench, Mr. Interviewah. Call in any time you are passin' St. Jim's—I'll see that Blake and Hewwies and Dig are lookin' their best for you.

A FAKED ALIBI SAVES A ST. JIM'S SENIOR FROM THE "SACK"—BUT HE HAS TO PAY—

The Price of Silence!



"Do you remember what time yesterday you rescued St. Leger from the river, Trimble?" asked the Head. "Certainly, sir!" said Baggie, remembering what Cutts had told him. "It happened about a quarter to four, I should say."

CHAPTER 1.

Left on the Beach!

BAGGY TRIMBLE of the Fourth Form put his head into Tom Merry's study.

There was an ingratiating grin on Trimble's fat face, which showed that he was, as usual, "on the make."

The Terrible Three of the Shell were quite busy. Tom Merry was slicing a loaf, Monty Lowther was buttering the slices, and Manners was jamming ham between them when buttered.

A bag was open on the table, in which a jar of jam and a packet of biscuits and several bottles of ginger-beer and other articles had been packed. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and

the Terrible Three had decided that a picnic up the river was the "proper caper." Hence the preparations that made Trimble's covetous eyes glisten as he regarded them.

"You fellows want me, I suppose?" Trimble remarked.

Tom Merry looked astonished. "Something wrong with your supposer, then!" he said. "I should have it oiled!"

"He, he, he!"

"My hat! What are you he-he-heing for?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Tommy's little joke!" chuckled Trimble. "He, he, he! I can take a joke, you know. I'm going to carry your bag for you."

"You needn't trouble!" said Manners.

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

It's an easy matter to get Baggie Trimble to bear false witness. But it's not so easy to keep the fat junior's mouth shut afterwards!

"It won't be a trouble."

"Yes, it would—for us!"

"He, he, he!" laughed Trimble of the Fourth, evidently determined to regard Manners' remark also as a joke. "Can I help you pack it?"

"No, you can't! Buzz off!"

"I'll steer for you, too," said Trimble. "I'm rather good at steering."

"We're not going in a boat."

"Well, I'll drive for you."

"We're not going to drive."

"Well, I'll—I'll come with you, anyway," said Trimble. "The fact is, I'm short of money. I lent D'Arcy my last quid this morning. I'm always lending chaps money, and when they don't settle up I find myself short of tin. The fact is, I'd like to come!"

"Go hon!"

"Look here, you know you want somebody to carry that bag," said Trimble persuasively.

"Cutts of the Fifth has asked me to go out with him this afternoon, with St. Leger and that set; but I've told them I'm sticking to my old pals."

"Then I'd advise you to stick to your old pals," said Lowther. "I don't know who they are, but I recommend you to go and look for 'em!"

And he slammed the study door. Baggy Trimble jumped back into the passage, and his nose just escaped violent contact with the door.

Trimble snorted. Evidently the boom of his society was not yearned for by Tom Merry & Co.

Nearly everybody was going out that sunny afternoon. Baggy Trimble was in his usual stony state, and he had made up his mind, as usual, to attach himself to somebody who was too good-natured to kick him out. But the Terrible Three were fed-up with Trimble.

The fat Fourth Former went down the passage, grunting. He stopped at Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, where preparations were also going on. The voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth could be heard.

"I refuse to cawwy the sandwiches in my hat, Blake! I distinctly refuse to do anything' of the sort!"

Trimble looked in. Blake, Herries, and Digby were making up little packages on the table. They were going up the river for the afternoon.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was chiefly occupied in regarding his reflection in the glass, tilting his handsome hat at precisely the correct angle. And he replied with great emphasis to Jack Blake's playful suggestion that he should carry the sandwiches in that handsome hat.

"I'll carry the sandwiches for you, you chaps!" said Trimble generously. "Don't you bother about that! I've just looked in to tell you I'm coming."

"Then you can look out again!" said Blake gruffly.

"The fact is, I'm rather hard-up this afternoon," said Trimble confidentially. "I've lent Tom Merry my last five bob."

"Liar!" said Blake cheerily.

"Ahem!" I'm sure you'd like me to steer the boat—"

"Bow-wow!"

Look here," growled Trimble, "if you rotters don't want me to come—"

"Right on the wicket!" said Jack Blake cheerfully. "Shut the door after you, Trimble!"

Trimble closed the door after him with a bang. Kangaroo of the Shell came down the passage with Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. The three

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Shell fellows were looking particularly cheery, and Trimble intercepted them at once.

"Going out?" he asked cordially.

"Yes."

"Good! I'll come!"

"I shouldn't call that good—I should call that rotten!" said Kangaroo politely. "Have you lent all your money to the Head and gone stony? Or have they forgotten to send you a cheque for a hundred pounds from Trimble Hall? If they have, I suggest reminding them. Ta-ta!"

Kangaroo & Co. walked on, grinning.

Trimble snorted.

Never had his popularity seemed at so low an ebb. As a matter of fact, nobody wanted to be bothered with a boulder who was generally complaining, always selfish, incessantly swanking, and an unconscionable bore.

"Well, this is rotten!" growled Trimble. "I suppose I shall have to try Cutts, and he is rather a beast."

It was with doubtful feelings that Baggy Trimble turned his steps in the direction of the Fifth Form passage, to try his luck with Gerald Cutts. He knew that Cutts and St. Leger and Gilmore were going out that afternoon, and he knew that the dandy of the Fifth took a fag with him sometimes on his little excursions, to make himself useful. Trimble was not willing to be useful, but he was willing to agree to anything if there was a feed in prospect.

Cutts' door was open, and Trimble looked in hopefully. Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger were there. They were arguing.

"Better come with us, St. Leger!" Cutts was saying. "That fellow Griggs is no class, anyway."

"Oh rats!" said St. Leger. "You meet him yourself sometimes."

"He'll skin you!" said Gilmore.

"Rot!"

"I tell you—Hallo, what does that cheeky fag want?" growled Cutts. "Cut off, you fat toad!"

"I say, Cutts, if you want a chap to carry your things—"

"I don't!"

"Look here, you know, I'm willing to—"

"Are you willing to clear off?" asked Cutts politely. "Because if you're not I'll help you with my boot!"

Trimble sniffed and cleared off; but he waited about at the end of the passage. He had discovered that the chums of the Fifth were separating for the afternoon, and he looked on St. Leger as a last resource.

St. Leger came down the passage a few minutes later, frowning.

Trimble rolled in his way.

"I say, St. Leger—"

"Cut off!"

"You're not going with Cutts," said Trimble. "I'll tell you what—I'll come with you, if you like—"

St. Leger took Trimble's fat ear between a finger and thumb, and Trimble's remarks finished in a wail of anguish.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Now, cut off, and don't be cheeky!" said St. Leger.

"Yow-ow-ow!" Trimble backed away, glaring at the Fifth Former. "You rotter, I know what you're going to meet Griggs for—I know that boulder Griggs of Wayland! You're going to play cards—yaroooh!"

St. Leger's boot cut short the conversation, and

Trimble fled with a yell. He did not stop till he was safe in the quadrangle.

"Yow-ow! Of all the rotters!" mumbled Trimble.

His last hope had failed him, and he rolled away discontentedly to the school shop to make a desperate effort to persuade Dame Taggles to add some items to the account she had already against him—an effort that was doomed to be a complete failure.

CHAPTER 2.

An Unexpected Meeting!

"THIS looks a nice spot!"

The Terrible Three halted.

They were following the path along the winding Rhyl, Tom Merry carrying the parcel, Manners his camera, and Monty Lowther strolling with his hands in his pockets.

"Right!" said Tom Merry. "And I'm getting jolly dry. Ginger-beer's the thing now."

"I haven't taken any photographs yet!" remarked Manners.

"Don't!" suggested Lowther.

"Oh, rot! What did we come out for?"

"Not to watch you monkeying with a camera!" yawned Lowther. "I'll have that camera to sit on, if you like!"

Manners' only reply was a glare.

The Terrible Three turned from the path and entered the wood. Through the foliage a voice came suddenly to their ears:

"Nap!"

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "'Tisn't such a lonely spot as I thought. That's St. Leger's voice!"

The next moment they were in sight of the speaker.

On a grassy bank under the trees, St. Leger of the Fifth was seated, facing a young man whom the Shell fellows recognised at once. It was Mr. Griggs, who honoured the estate agent in Wayland with his services, and was a local knut.

Mr. Griggs, a weedy and pasty young man, had a soft hat on the back of his well-oiled head, a cigarette between his discoloured teeth, and cards in his hand. A flask was in the grass beside him, containing something a good deal stronger than ginger-beer.

St. Leger of the Fifth looked round sharply as the juniors came through the trees. His brow grew black and lowering.

Tom Merry & Co. were not at all likely to sneak, but it was a serious enough thing for a senior of St. Jim's to be caught occupied as St. Leger was occupied now. The young rascal's conduct had only to become known to Dr. Holmes for the "chopper" to come down hard and heavy.

"You spying young cads!" he began hotly, starting to his feet.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom unceremoniously. "We're not spying, and you know it! We didn't know we were going to meet a blackguard here!"

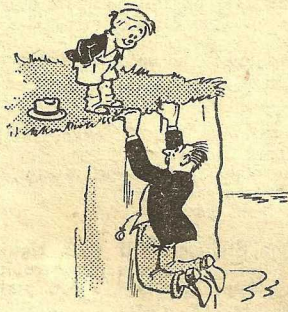
"You cheeky hound!"

"Here's a chance for your camera, Manners," said Monty Lowther. "This would make a ripping picture! We could have it framed and hung up in the Common-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With the title 'The Road to Ruin,' or 'Evil Communications Corrupt Good Manners!'" said Lowther.

The juniors chuckled. St. Leger clenched his



"Got any fag cards, mister?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 107, Danethorpe Vale, Sherwood, Nottingham.

fists savagely, but the chums of the Shell were not afraid of St. Leger.

The Fifth Former realised that, and he restrained his temper.

"Clear off!" he growled.

"Oh, we'll clear off!" said Tom disdainfully.

"We're not looking for this kind of company!"

The Terrible Three passed on into the wood, and St. Leger, scowling and uneasy, dropped into the grass again. He was sure that the juniors would not betray him, so far as that went; but he was not at all sure that they would not talk about the incident, and any talk on the subject was dangerous.

"Precious rotters!" said Manners, as the Shell fellows went into the wood. "St. Leger isn't quite such a rotter as Cutts, but jolly nearly. That fellow Griggs is skinning him. I could see that in his face. Where are we going to camp?"

"Get a distance from those rotters!" said Tom.

"Hallo, blessed if the wood isn't full of boudiers this afternoon!" said Lowther, a full minute later. "Here's old Stringer!"

"Shush, you ass!"

The Terrible Three raised their caps respectfully as the tall, angular form of Major Stringer came in sight, striding through the wood. The old major was a governor of St. Jim's. He gave the juniors a nod and a smile, and stopped to speak.

Tom Merry had once helped the major in a very plucky way, when he was attacked by a gang of footpads, and the old gentleman had not forgotten it.

Tom Merry glanced back involuntarily, thinking of St. Leger.

The two gamblers had been left about twenty yards behind, but they were quite hidden from sight by the thick wood. If the major kept on in the direction he was following, he was certain to walk right upon Griggs and St. Leger.

It was no business of Tom Merry's, of course, if St. Leger was caught in his rascality, and received the just reward of his misdoings. The major would certainly report him to the Head—it was his duty as a governor of the school. That would almost certainly mean the "sack" for St. Leger. Tom would willingly have saved the Fifth Former from that danger, if he could.

"Enjoying your half-holiday, what?" said the major cordially. "Taking photographs—eh?"

"Going to, sir!" said Manners.

"Manners would like to take you, sir, if you'd let him!" said Tom Merry.

Manners started. As a matter of fact, Manners, who was careful with his money, did not want

to waste a film on the major. But he could only nod a polite assent after Tom Merry's remark.

The major smiled.

"Another time, my lad!" he said. "Another time! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

The major strode on.

He disappeared through the bracken, and Manners stared at Tom Merry.

"You duffer, you nearly made me waste a film!" he said. "What on earth——"

"It's all up now!" said Tom.

"What is?"

"St. Leger. Major Stringer will walk right on him!" said Tom. "If he'd let you photograph him it would have kept him here a bit, and St. Leger might have taken the alarm."

"Why, you ass, were you going to make me waste a film to save that rotter from being bowled out?" said Manners indignantly.

"He will get it in the neck!" said Tom.

"Serve him right!"

"Well, yes, but——"

"Let's get on!" said Lowther. "The major's certain to run on him, and we don't want to be called as witnesses."

"By Jove—no!"

The Terrible Three hurried on. Tom Merry's good-natured attempt to save St. Leger from the consequences of his sins had been in vain.

In a few minutes the Shell fellows had put a good distance between them and the spot. They did not stop until they had covered half a mile, and then they camped under the trees by the shining river and soon forgot all about St. Leger.

CHAPTER 3.

Caught!

"YOUR deal!" growled St. Leger.

The black sheep of St. Jim's was in a decided bad humour.

Matters were not going well with him. The knotty Mr. Griggs had cleaned him out at their last meeting, and he had offered St. Leger his revenge. St. Leger's revenge seemed to consist in transferring all his ready cash to Mr. Griggs' pocket, so in this case it could not be said that revenge was sweet.

Mr. Griggs was smiling cheerfully. Luck was running his way; perhaps he was helping it a little, being a young man with a great experience in that peculiar line.

Mr. Griggs dealt the cards. St. Leger took up his "hand" with a discontented frown. His supply of cash was running out, and his temper along with it. Unless luck changed he had a prospect of being stony for a long time ahead, and the prospect was not pleasant.

A step in the wood startled him, and he looked round with a furious scowl, under the impression that the juniors were returning.

But it was not Tom Merry & Co. A tall, angular gentleman stepped into view and stopped dead at the sight of the gamblers under the trees.

St. Leger sat frozen.

He recognised Major Stringer, a member of the governing board of St. Jim's.

The major stared at him grimly.

There was a cigarette in St. Leger's mouth, there were cards in his hand, and there was a little heap of money on the ground beside him.

The astonishment in the major's face gave place

to an expression that could only be described as terrific.

"Huh!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo!" said Mr Griggs. "Anything wanted?"

"I have nothing to say to you," thundered the major—"nothing, excepting that you are an arrant blackguard, sir, to be leading a foolish schoolboy into this discreditable conduct!"

"Oh, yeah!" said Mr. Griggs calmly. "Anything else?"

"Yes. If I have any insolence from you I will lay my stick about your shoulders, sir!" roared the major.

Mr. Griggs wriggled away in the grass. The angry old gentleman looked as if he would carry out his threat—and, though he was twice Mr. Griggs' age, he could have done it easily enough.

Major Stringer fixed his eyes upon St. Leger's flushed and dismayed face.

"You belong to St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

St. Leger did not speak—he could not.

"Your name, sir?" thundered the major. "You are aware that I am a governor of the school, I presume?"

Silence.

"I demand your name!" said the major, taking out a pencil. "I have seen you at the school; I remember your face perfectly. I shall report this to Dr. Holmes. I shall see, sir, that you are expelled from the school you are disgracing!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Mr. Griggs in a tone of remonstrance.

"Silence, sir!" thundered Major Stringer.

"Boy, I have asked you your name!"

St. Leger's dry lips moved.

But he did not utter his name. He knew that the game was up; that his conduct would be reported to the Head; that disgrace and probably expulsion from the school must follow.

On instinct he refused to give his name—though that was useless, as the major knew him by sight. The badge on his cap was sufficient evidence that he belonged to St. Jim's.

"Well, sir, I am waiting!" said the major.

St. Leger's lips closed.

"You refuse to give me your name! Very well, I shall report your conduct, all the same!" said Major Stringer. "I shall identify you at the school, sir!"

And with an angry snort the old gentleman strode on and disappeared.

St. Leger did not move. His face was white now, and his hands were trembling.

"What rotten luck!" said Mr. Griggs sympathetically. "Going on with the game?"

St. Leger shook his head and rose to his feet.

"I'm done for!" he said in a gasping voice. "Clean done for! That old fool knows me—knows me well! I'm ruined!"

"Not so bad as that, I hope," said Mr. Griggs, yawning a little.

"Oh, what a silly fool I've been! But—but who could have thought we'd be spotted here?" muttered St. Leger.

"Can't you bluff 'em somehow?" said Mr. Griggs. "He doesn't know your name. Suppose you deny you ever was here this afternoon?"

"How can I when he knows me and he's seen me?" St. Leger groaned. "I'm done for! What a fool I've been!"

He turned away without another word and went through the trees.

Mr Griggs glanced after him, shrugged his shoulders, and gathered up the cards.

St. Leger came out into the path by the river. In the sunshine his face was white.

A fat junior was coming along the towing-path, and he spotted the Fifth Former and hurried up.

It was Trimble of the Fourth.

"I say, St. Leger——"

St. Leger did not heed.

"My hat! You look queer!" said Trimble, eyeing him curiously. "I say, haven't you had the picnic?"

St. Leger was in no mood to be bothered by Baggy Trimble. He dealt the fat junior a cuff that sent him reeling, and strode on.

Trimble staggered down the bank and rolled into a bed of rushes and six inches of water. He sat up, gasping.

"Groogh-hoooh-oooh! Yoop! Grrrrrrr! Rotter! Yah!"

Baggy Trimble dragged himself out of the rushes, dripping. He shook a fat fist after St.

Leger as the Fifth Former disappeared along the towing-path.

St. Leger did not heed him; he was striding away for St. Jim's. There was a faint hope—perhaps Cutts could help him. The cool, clear-headed, astute Cutts—there was a chance that he might think of some way of escape from this fearful scrape. But the hope was faint, and St. Leger's heart was as heavy as lead as he tramped towards St. Jim's in the bright sunshine.

CHAPTER 4.

Lowther is Too Attentive!

"HALLO! You look wet!"

Baggy Trimble had arrived.

The fat Fourth Former had been on the track of Tom Merry & Co. when he had encountered St. Leger of the Fifth. He was wet and he was muddy, but he had not given up the trail. And as the Terrible Three settled down comfortably to their picnic, Baggy appeared on the scene.

"Been taking a bath with your bags on?" asked Lowther, eyeing the Fourth Former as he came up.

"Groogh!" said Trimble pathetically. "I—I say, you don't mind if I sit down here, do you? I've been treated most awfully!"

"So somebody's treated you at last!" said Manners. "Who was the fathead?"

"I don't mean that. It was that awful rotter St. Leger!" said Trimble. "He knocked me into the river!"

"I suppose you were cadging or something," remarked Tom Merry.

"I just spoke to him," said Trimble indignantly—"just in a friendly way, you know. He was looking quite white and sick, and I really wanted to cheer him up. My belief is that St. Leger has been up to something this afternoon."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, I do. Looked just as if he'd been caught at it. I hope he was, the beast!"



A tall, angular gentleman stepped into view, and stopped dead at the sight of the gamblers under the trees. St. Leger sat frozen. He recognised Major Stringer, a governor of St. Jim's!

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. There was little doubt now that Major Stringer had dropped on the reckless Fifth Former, and that Cutts' pal was booked for serious trouble. But they had no intention of confiding to the Paul Pry of the Fourth anything that they knew on the subject.

"He knocked me right over," said Baggy. "I dropped into a foot of water. I'm wet!"

"Better cut off and get changed," suggested Tom Merry.

"The fact is I'm too fatigued. I'm hungry, you know."

Tom Merry passed the sandwiches to Baggy Trimble.

"Well, as you're so pressing, I'll join you," said Trimble affably. "I thought I might fall in with you chaps. Of course, I wasn't looking for you."

"Of course not," said Tom Merry.

"Ahem! These are jolly good sandwiches! I'll have some more. Is that ginger-beer for me, Lowther?"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Lowther.

"Thanks, old chap!"

"If you call me 'old chap,' I'll brain you with a ginger-beer bottle!"

"Ahem! Did you ask me to try the cake, Tom Merry?"

"No!"

"Well, I will, as you make a point of it. I say, this is a jolly good cake. Is this the only cake you've got?"

"Yes."

"Then what are you fellows going to have?"

"Oh, don't mind us!" said Tom, with heavy sarcasm. "It's a distinct pleasure to see you bolting our food! Pile in!"

"Thanks! That's awfully decent of you, Merry; I will. I'll stand you fellows a ripping spread in my study when D'Arcy settles up that quid he owes me," said Trimble, with his mouth full.

"Have you finished with that cake, Trimble?" asked Lowther.

"Not quite. But I can finish it. That's all right."

Lowther jerked away what was left of the cake. "These are rather good biscuits," said Trimble calmly. "You don't mind if I sample them? Any more ginger-beer going?"

"Shall I open a bottle for you?" asked Monty Lowther politely.

"Yes, do!"

Lowther did.

There was a sudden spurt of ginger-beer, and it caught Baggy Trimble under his fat chin.

"Yaroooh!"

Trimble rolled over backwards, choking with the cake that stuffed his mouth to its fullest capacity.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yowwwooooogh!"

Wild and weird sounds proceeded from Baggy Trimble. His face was as red as a newly boiled beetroot, and he gasped and spluttered, as if on the verge of an explosion.

Lowther jumped up.

"My hat! He's choking! Pat him on the back!"

"Gurrrgggh!"

Lowther grasped Trimble by the collar, and rolled him over, and began to pat him on the back. He patted him as if he was beating a carpet.

"Gurgh! Yow-ow! Stoppit!" shrieked Trimble.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! You rotter! Stoppit! Chuck it! Help!"

"That enough?" gasped Lowther.

"Yow-ow! Yes!"

"Feel better?"

"Groogh! Yes."

Trimble struggled out of Lowther's grasp, and glared at him.

"You silly idiot!" he roared. "You've jolly nearly dislocated my shoulder! Yow-ow! Yah, you rotter!"

"Hysterical!" said Lowther. "He wants some more."

Trimble backed away hastily.

"No, I don't! Gerroff! I don't want any more!" he roared.

"Yes, you do."

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crumbs! Rotter! Yah! Gerroogh!"

Baggy Trimble twisted himself away and fled. He paused at a safe distance to shake a fat fist at the yelling juniors, and vanished.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said Lowther. "He's gone. We shall be deprived of the pleasure of Baggy's company now. Luckily, there's still some of the grub left."

The Terrible Three finished without the assistance of Baggy Trimble. That fat youth was in a discontented frame of mind. He had scooped the lion's share of the feed, but he was far from satisfied.

"Rotters!" he grunted. "I believe they wanted to get rid of me! I wonder where that beast D'Arcy is, and that beast Blake, and those beasts Herries and Dig. Br-r-r-r!"



"Nick Forrest felt the Kestrel beginning to overturn, then the Alfa-Romeo's tail smashed down on it...!"

"WHIZZING WHEELS"

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And Baggy Trimble rolled away along the towing-path, with a very keen eye open for further victims.

CHAPTER 5.

Trimble Comes in Useful!

"**B**AI Jove! There's that boundah Twimble!" "Lucky we've finished," remarked Jack Blake.

The chums of Study No. 6 were camped under the trees on the bank of the Rhyl.

The boat was moored to an old willow. Fortunately, Study No. 6 had disposed of the spread by the time the boulder of the Fourth discovered them.

Baggy Trimble came up with an ingratiating grin.

"Fancy meeting you!" he exclaimed.

"Bai Jove! Weren't you lookin' for us?" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Not at all. I've been picnicking with some Shell chaps," said Trimble. "I really want to make myself useful. That's my way. Where's the grub?"

The Fourth Formers grinned. The grub had been disposed of, and, as the chums of Study No. 6 had healthy appetites, not even a crumb had been left. Baggy Trimble's unerring instinct had led him to the feed; but he had arrived a little too late.

Herries pointed along the towing-path.

"Cut off!" he said.

"Ahem!" Trimble sat down in the grass. "Ripping weather, isn't it?"

Blake closed one eye at his comrades.

"If Trimble's come to join us, we're highly honoured," he remarked. "Are you going to be one of us this afternoon, Trimble?"

"Well, as you're so pressing, certainly," said Trimble eagerly. "I say, can I unpack the grub for you?"

"The grub's been unpacked, and packed again," said Blake calmly. "You can't get at it now without surgical operations."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we're glad of your company," said Blake blandly. "You're just the fellow we want, in fact. Get those crocks into the boat!"

"Eh?"

"You haven't come here to slack, you know. Pack those crocks into the basket, and shove it into the boat."

"Oh, I say—"

"I give you two minutes!" said Blake.

"Of course, I—I'll do anything to oblige you, Blake."

"You'd better!"

Baggy Trimble, with a very dismayed face, packed the crocks in the basket, and placed it in the boat. The chums of the Fourth followed him in, and Blake cast off the painter.

"We're going to give you a lift back to the school, Baggy," he said genially.

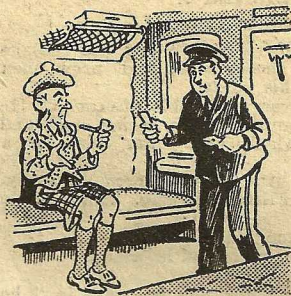
"Well, that's better than nothing, I suppose," said Trimble, with a grunt.

"And you're going to take two oars," said Blake. "I've heard you say that you're a ripping oarsman."

"Look here, you know—"

Blake picked up a boathook. His grinning chums settled down in the boat. Baggy Trimble had turned up in time to pull them back to St. Jim's.

Baggy Trimble eyed the boathook; he eyed Blake; he eyed the oars. Then he sat down with a groan, and took two oars.



Guard: "But this is a platform ticket."
 Scot's man: "Aye. Ah want tae get to anither platform!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Fritchett, 142, Westway, Hammoersmith, London, W.12.

"I—I say, I—I'm not feeling quite up to rowing this afternoon, you know," he said, in dismay.

"Then you shouldn't join a boating party."

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Besides, you've told us how you wove on the lake at Twimble Hall, Twimble. We know what a wippin' oarsman you are. Go it!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Trimble.

The fat slacker of the Fourth bent to the oars. There was no help for it.

Trimble never took any exercise if he could help it; and a pull on the river was a good thing for him. But he did not enjoy it. He slaved at the oars, with the perspiration running down his unhealthy face, and at every pull he emitted a deep groan.

"You're making a lot of row," said Blake.

"Yow! I'm exhausted! Yow!"

"Next time you yow, I'll give you something to yow for!"

"Yow!"

"There you are!"

Trimble uttered a fiendish yell as the boathook caught him in his plump ribs.

"Yoooooop!"

"Where that came from there's plenty more," said Blake affably. "Go ahead, and don't make a row!"

Trimble suppressed his groans. The boat proceeded towards the school at a snail's pace. But the picnickers were not in a hurry. By the time the boat arrived at the landing-raft Trimble was bathed in perspiration, and his fat face was red and glowing. He staggered out of the boat on to the raft.

"Feel that it's done you good?" asked Blake.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Don't you feel evah so much better, deah boy?"

"Groo-hooh!"

"We'll always give you some healthy exercise like that when you come out with us, Trimble," grinned Dig.

"Wow-wow!"

"Hallo, Trimble, been rowing?" exclaimed Julian of the Fourth, who had just landed with Kerruish and Hammond. "Taking up rowing, Trimble, what?"

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"He's rowed us home," said Blake. "Walked a couple of miles to meet us on purpose to row us home! Ripping of Trimble, wasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble limped away. He had had enough exercise to last him for weeks. He fairly crawled into the study and collapsed into the armchair.

CHAPTER 6.

Rogues in Council!

CUTTS of the Fifth came along the passage with a very cheery look, and threw open the door of his study.

Cutts had had a very agreeable afternoon. He had spent it in company with racing men and billiard-sharpers, which was Cutts' idea of a good time.

But he started a little as he entered the study.

St. Leger of the Fifth was there, with a white and haggard face.

Cutts closed the door quickly.

"Hallo! Anything wrong?" he asked.

St. Leger nodded.

"I've been waiting for you to come in!" he muttered. "You've been a long time, Cutts!"

"Yes. Keeping it up with the boys," grinned Cutts. "How did you get on? I needn't ask you, though. I suppose Griggs cleared you out?"

"That isn't it! I've been nailed!"

Cutts whistled.

"You don't mean to say the Head—or Railton—"

"It was that meddling old fool Stringer!"

"My hat!" Cutts whistled again. "Major Stringer? You must have been an ass! Has he been to the Head?"

"He's going to-morrow morning."

"Then you're booked!"

St. Leger made a savage gesture.

"Don't be a dashed Job's comforter, you ass! I want you to help me out."

"Well, I'll do my best," said Cutts, sitting down and lighting a cigarette. "You were an ass not to come with me, as I advised you!"

"Lot of good saying 'I told you so' now, isn't it?" snarled St. Leger.

"Don't get ratty! I'll help you if I can. Tell me just what's happened."

St. Leger explained the scene by the river, and Cutts listened attentively, blowing out little clouds of smoke.

"Well, you're in a dickens of a fix!" he said at last. "The major is a blessed old ramrod; he'll keep his word! The Head will know all about it in the morning!"

"I know that! What am I to do?" said St. Leger helplessly. "Hang it, can't you advise a chap? You really got me into this sort of thing, Cutts—"

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't be a whining cad!" he said. "If my time ever comes to face the music, I shan't whine!"

"You're not in this scrape. What am I to do? I've thought of going to the Head and making a clean breast of it!" said St. Leger miserably.

"And explaining that you were led astray in the first place by a bad fellow, and that really you're a plaster saint and a very estimable sneak, and not a desperate plunger at all?" said Cutts unpleasantly.

St. Leger flushed.

"I'm not thinking of giving you away, if that's what you mean, Cutts. It wouldn't do me any good, for one thing."

"You're right; it wouldn't!"

"I—I thought of seeing the major, too, and—making an appeal to him!" muttered St. Leger. "I suppose that wouldn't be any use, Cutts?"

"Not a scrap! The old fellow is as hard as

nails. He thinks a lot of the good name of the school, too, as he would put it. As for the Head, it's not much use making a clean breast of it after you're found out. Better leave the Head out of it as long as possible."

"But he'll know everything to-morrow morning."

Cutts' brow contracted in an effort of thought.

"You say you didn't give him your name?"

"No. But he knows me by sight; he's been here often enough, and he's seen me more than once."

"Still, he doesn't know you personally," said Cutts thoughtfully. "He's just seen you about the school, that's all. It mayn't be impossible to prove an alibi."

"An alibi!" ejaculated St. Leger.

Cutts nodded coolly.

"Yes. What time was it the major saw you?"

"Just four o'clock. I heard it strike from the village just before he came up," said St. Leger.

"Four," said Cutts. "Well, suppose you can prove that you were somewhere else at four o'clock this afternoon?"

"But the major knows—"

"He might be mistaken. It's only his word against yours, anyway if you deny it. And if you've got good witnesses to prove that you were somewhere else, the Head would have to conclude that he was mistaken. After all, he can't say that he knows you well. He's just seen you about, that's all. If they refer to Griggs, Griggs will bear witness that the fellow with him was a chap named Smith or Jones, and nothing to do with the school. I can get a tip to Griggs this evening on that point."

"But they won't ask Griggs; they know he'd lie to help me out."

"Yes; but in case they do, I'll give Griggs the tip. Now, let's see! Cutts' brow wrinkled. "Did anybody else see you about that time?"

"Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther saw me. They came on me while I was playing nap with Griggs. They were going on a picnic or something."

"That's unlucky. But those kids are not sneaks; they're cheeky young bounders, but they won't chip in in a thing of this sort to give you a shove when you're down. They'll hold their tongues," said Cutts. "Only, of course, they're no use for an alibi; they won't tell—ahem!—whoppers, and it's a particularly big and stunning whopper we want. Nobody else saw you?"

"I met young Trimble about ten minutes after—on the towing-path."

"Trimble of the Fourth? Well, he's a born liar and sponger!" said Cutts. "He would swear to anything!"

"But—but I knocked him down," said St. Leger.

"Well, you ass!"

"The fat little beast worried me, and I knocked him over. I was in a temper. He pitched into the river, I think."

"Of course, you had to make matters worse!" said Cutts, with a frown. "Still, Trimble's our man! He's a born liar—I've noticed him—and he lies till he half-believes his own lies! If we could make use of his interest to believe that he saw you there at four o'clock instead of quarter-past, he'd more than half-believe it—he would swear to it, anyway!"

"But he's a tattling idiot!" said St. Leger uneasily. "If you gave him money the fellows

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

“Laundry Research Costs £60,000.” And they still haven’t found the Eton collar I sent them last term.

Film now being made is called “The Card.” It should get a good “hand.”

Reflection: Some town councils are making go-ahead attempts to solve traffic problems. Others prefer roundabout methods.

Mr. Linton states that wasps have no conscious purpose in life. However, even the cleverest of us may find we have been stung.

Remember, a good conversationalist is a chap who talks to you about yourself.

The average life of a pound note is about six months, says an authority. The snag is we can’t keep one long enough to prove it.

With apologies to Kerr, I cannot refrain from mentioning the Scotsman who washed his potatoes in sea water to save putting salt with them when they were cooked.

would notice it—he never has any money. And he wet jaw.”

Cutts made an impatient gesture.

“Yes, yes. I know all that. I’ve got to think it out. Suppose—suppose we could make out—” He paused, his brows wrinkling. “You say that Trimble was knocked into the water? Then he was wet?”

“I s’pose he was. But what does that matter?”

“It may matter a lot. Did anybody see you come in?”

“No. Everybody was out when I got back.”

“Then you might have been wet?”

St. Leger stared at him.

“What in thunder are you driving at, Cutts?”

“Your alibi,” said Cutts coolly. “What we want is a thumping lie, and that’s what I’m thinking of. It’s no good for a born liar like Trimble to say he saw you at such and such a time to get you out of the scrape, and at the same time to be spending money; it would be a bit too palpable. Only you’ve got to get hold of a born liar to swear to something that isn’t true, you see, so Trimble’s our man! But—but suppose you tumbled into the river this afternoon—”

“Eh?”

“And Trimble pulled you out?”

“Trimble pulled me out!” said St. Leger dazedly.

A Wayland septuagenarian attributes his long life to breathing deeply. And fairly regularly, no doubt.

One thing, however bad trade may be, a sweep can always manage to brush along.

Story: Mr. Ratcliff aimed a terrific stroke at the ball on Wayland Golf Course, missed it completely, and scattered the turf right and left. “What have I hit, caddy?” he exclaimed. “Sussex, sir!” replied the caddy briefly.

I hear pickpockets in the Balkans are to have their hands dyed red. No doubt to make it casier for the police to catch them red-handed.

“Steeplechasers Too Lazy,” runs a headline. They will have to learn to jump to it.

Then there was the fellow who rushed out into the road to retrieve his hat, and caught a bonnet. Bam!

Herries says he would not mind acting as a crooner and drummer in a dance band. Rather a hum-drum job!

“Yes, Grundy,” said Tom Merry, “I think you are quite the best centre-forward in the junior school. I shall stand down in your favour in the next match, and you can pick the team yourself.” Just then the rising bell clanged out, and Grundy woke up.

Try this: Officer (during field manoeuvres): “Do you realise that you are standing in the imaginary line of fire of the enemy, 500 yards away?” Private: “I’m quite safe, sir. I’m standing behind an imaginary rock thirty feet high.”

Rise and shine, chaps!

“Yes; that would account for Trimble being wet. And once you put such an idea into the head of the fat, gassing young idiot he’d swank all over the school about it—and there’s your alibi!”

“My hat!”

“Once Trimble gets such a wheeze into his silly head, and knows that you’ll back him up in the yarn, nothing will hold him in. The whole school will know it. And in a couple of hours Trimble will believe it himself—he’s that kind of bragging idiot. I know him, you see! Of course, we shall have to be careful. You’ll have to play your part, of course. Get to the dorm and drench your clothes with water and hang ’em out to dry. Go to bed early and sneeze—a bit of pepper will make that easy enough. You’re going to have a narrow escape of catching a bad cold. Leave Trimble to me!”

Cutts’ eyes were glistening now. A deep and tortuous scheme was just after Cutts’ own heart, and he was as keen on the cunning scheme itself as upon saving his pal from the consequences of his blackguardly folly.

St. Leger stared at him helplessly.

His brain was not quite so quick and acute as Gerald Cutts’. He was scared, rather than reassured, by the cobweb of falsehoods Cutts was planning.

"But—but it's too thick, Cutts!" he exclaimed.

"It's too thick! It will come out!"

"If it comes out you're no worse off than you were before. As the matter stands, you're booked for the sack!"

"Yes, that's so."

"I think it will work. It's a chance, anyway, and it's the only chance you've got, St. Leger. Lucky Trimble was there and can't be proved to have been somewhere else. Get to the dorm and do as I've told you before the fellows come in. I'll go to see Trimble."

Cutts rose to his feet.

"Leave it in my hands and I'll pull you through."

"I—I suppose it's the only chance," muttered St. Leger, with dry lips.

"It jolly well is! Do as I tell you!"

"I—I'll try it!"

Cutts nodded and hurried out of the study. It was necessary to see Trimble as quickly as possible.

St. Leger, more slowly, made his way to the Fifth Form dormitory to carry out his part of the scheme. If that precious scheme was a success it would prove that Major Stringer was mistaken in supposing that he had seen St. Leger of the Fifth gambling with Mr. Griggs, of Wayland. If it was not a success—but St. Leger did not dare to think of what would happen in that case!

CHAPTER 7.

The Cunning of Cutts!

"OH dear! Ow!"

The mumbling voice of Baggy Trimble could be heard as Cutts came along to his study.

The fat Fourth Former had not yet recovered from his pull on the river.

Cutts looked in.

Baggy was sprawling in the armchair, and he was alone in the study.

Levison, Mellish, and Lumley-Lumley were still out of doors in the bright weather.

Baggy was mumbling over his sufferings and hoping that somebody would come in to tea—when there would be tea for Baggy.

He looked up hopefully as Cutts came in, then grunted as he recognised the dandy of the Fifth.

"Hallo!" said Cutts genially.

"Hallo!" grunted Trimble.

"Feeling tired?"

"Yow! Yes!"

Trimble blinked at the Fifth Former in astonishment. Why Cutts should care whether he was tired or not was a mystery.

"Changed your things?" asked Cutts.

"N-no!"

"You'd better. You're likely to catch cold if you hang about in wet things."

"Well, my hat!" said Trimble.

His astonishment was almost too great for words. He stared at Cutts open-mouthed.

Cutts came into the study and closed the door. He sat elegantly on the corner of the table, looking at Trimble with the genial expression that surprised the fat junior so much.

"I'm afraid the fellows haven't done you justice, Trimble," he remarked. "You're a plucky kid!"

Trimble's mouth was wide open with amazement. He bore a curious resemblance to a codfish at that moment. For the dandy of the Fifth to come to his study and praise him like this was astounding.

"It was you, of course?" said Cutts suddenly.

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"Eh? What was me?" muttered Trimble.

"It was you went in for St. Leger?"

"Went in for him?"

"Yes. St. Leger would have drowned if a chap hadn't pulled him out of the river," said Cutts. "He was so knocked over that he hardly noticed who it was, but he told me he thought it was Trimble of the Fourth."

"My—my—my hat!" gasped Trimble.

He began to understand. St. Leger had fallen into the river; someone had rescued him, and he, Baggy Trimble, was supposed to be the heroic rescuer.

Trimble did not tell Cutts that a mistake had been made. That was Trimble's way. Cutts had judged his character quite correctly. The fat bouncer of the Fourth had no objection whatever to appropriating honour and glory that did not belong to him.

"It was a splendid thing to do!" said Cutts enthusiastically. "I really ask your pardon, Trimble, for having been rather down on you sometimes. I didn't know, you see, what a really plucky chap you were!"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

"St. Leger told me exactly how it happened," went on Cutts. It was necessary for Trimble to know the details of the "whopper" he was to tell; but it did not even occur to Baggy's obtuse mind that Cutts was intentionally giving him those details. "He was strolling along the Rhyll, when he stumbled on the bank near the Pool and went in. A kid rushed down the bank, plunged in after him, and held him till he was able to get hold of a willow and pull himself out. I must say, Trimble, that I was surprised when I heard that it was you!"

"Oh!"

"I should like to shake hands with you, Trimble. I've misjudged you, and I'm sorry," said Cutts, holding out his hand very frankly.

Trimble shook hands with him. He was already beginning to swell with importance. He wondered dazedly who had rescued St. Leger and whether it was a St. Jim's chap.

But as St. Leger apparently believed that it was he—Trimble—who had done it, there was no danger of another claimant depriving him of his laurels.

The idea of swanking before the fellows as a hero was very attractive to Baggy, as he was well known to be a funk. The fellows would have to alter their opinions of him now.

"After this," went on Cutts, "I'm your friend, and so is St. Leger. If you ever want to ask any little favour don't hesitate."

"I—I won't!" gasped Trimble.

"After what you've done you've got a claim on both of us," said Cutts. "I shall see that all the fellows know how splendidly you acted, too!"

"Oh!"

"By the way, you'd better change your things," said Cutts. "It's nearly six now, though it's two hours since you pulled St. Leger out of the water."

"Is—is—is it?" stammered Trimble.

"Yes. It was about a quarter to four, wasn't it?"

"I—I—I think so."

"I remember St. Leger mentioning that it was striking four as he got back to the school," said Cutts.

"I—I—yes, just so!" gasped Trimble.

"He ran most of the way to keep from catching cold," said Cutts. "Of course, you didn't get wet all over, as you only went in up to your waist."

"Ex-ex-exactly!"



"Shall I open a bottle of ginger-beer for you?" asked Monty Lowther. "Yes, do!" said Trimble. Lowther did, and there was a sudden spurt of ginger-beer, which caught Baggie under the chin. "Yaroooh!" he yelled, rolling over backwards.

"Let me see, did you say it was a quarter to four, or ten to four, when you fished him out?"

"A quarter to four exactly, I—I think," said Trimble. "I remember I heard the three-quarters chime from the village just—just before I saw him tumble in!"

Cutts suppressed a grin.

"Just so," he assented. "You ought to have come back and changed after that, Trimble. Where did you go?"

"Oh, I went and picnicked with Tom Merry."

"That was after four o'clock, wasn't it?"

"Yes; about a quarter past," said Trimble. "After that I rowed Blake and some chaps home to the school."

"You must be made of iron," said Cutts admiringly. "Most fellows would have been knocked up by what you did for St. Leger."

"I—I—I'm rather an athletic chap, you know!" said Trimble.

"You must be St. Leger asked me to tell you to excuse him for not coming to thank you personally just now. He's taken rather a cold, and he's gone to the dorm," said Cutts. "He'll see you to-morrow. He told me to say he's ever so much obliged and that he'll never forget you."

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth came into the study as Cutts was speaking. He looked surprised to find the Fifth Former there.

"Well, I'll cut off," said the dandy of the Fifth,

slipping off the table. "I hope you won't feel any ill effects, Trimble. Are you liable to take cold?"

"N-no!"

"That's good! But I shouldn't like you to be ill after doing such a plucky thing!"

Lumley-Lumley jumped.

"Trimble been doing a plucky thing?" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"A jolly plucky thing!" said Cutts heartily. "He went into the Pool for St. Leger, who had fallen in. They might both have been carried away by the current and drowned. You know what a dangerous spot it is. A chap was drowned there once. Trimble plunged in, held on to a branch of a willow, and held on to St. Leger and saved him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It was all the more risky as Trimble is a poor swimmer," said Cutts. "If he'd lost his hold it would have been all up for St. Leger. Well, good-bye, Trimble; mind you don't catch cold."

"I—I say, Cutts!" gasped Trimble, as the Fifth Former was leaving the study.

Cutts turned round genially.

"Yes, kid?"

"C-can you lend me five bob?"

Trimble eyed Cutts warily as he made that request. If he was a hero, if he had risked his

life to save St. Leger, and if Cutts was awfully admiring and grateful, there was no reason why Cutts shouldn't make him a little loan. That was how Trimble looked at it; but as he knew perfectly well that he hadn't rescued St. Leger, he was doubtful.

But his doubts were speedily set at rest. Cutts' hand went to his pocket at once.

"Certainly!" he said cheerily.

Five shillings clinked into Trimble's fat hand.

Trimble blinked at them as Cutts, with a friendly nod, quitted the study.

But there were the five shillings in solid cash! Cutts' gratitude was worth something. St. Leger's, surely, would also have a cash value.

Trimble realised that he was in for a good thing, and if he had had any doubts about playing the role of heroic rescuer those doubts would have been banished now.

"Well, my hat!" said Lumley-Lumley. "How on earth did you come to do it, Trimble? Blessed if I thought it of you!"

Trimble sniffed.

"Some chaps are plucky, and some aren't," he said. "I happen to be one of those who are, that's all!"

"You've shown precious few signs of it before, but if you've done a decent thing for once, Trimble, I'll give you a word of advice—don't spoil it by cadging."

"You mind your own business!" said Trimble. "I suppose I can borrow from a friend if I like. St. Leger's my friend, and so is Cutts."

Lumley-Lumley grinned.

"If you start palling with chaps in the Fifth they'll soon get fed-up," he said warningly. "Especially such swanking bounders as St. Leger and Cutts. I guess you'd better go easy!"

"You're jealous!" said Trimble loftily. "You haven't any friends in the senior Forms—I have. I intend to see a good deal of Cutts and St. Leger. I get on well with them; they're chaps to my own taste. I dare say I shall be often in and out of Cutts' study."

"You'll get the order of the boot on your second visit, if not on your first!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh rats!"

Trimble rolled out of the study, and strutted down the passage.

Baggy Trimble was somebody now. He had performed a plucky action—at all events, it appeared to be believed that he had—and by this time Baggy, with his remarkable powers of imagination, half believed it himself. And so it was Baggy Trimble's turn to strike the stars with his sublime head.

CHAPTER 8.

Trimble the Hero!

"**W**EMARKABLE!"

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's verdict.

Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth had told the story in the junior Common-room.

It was listened to in amazement and incredulity.

"Gammon!" said Kangaroo.

"Piffle!" said Blake.

"The silly ass is pulling our leg!"

"I guess I only know what Cutts said," said Lumley-Lumley. "I don't see why Cutts should romance about it!"

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"Is it honest Injun?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I guess so!"

"Wemarkable!"

"Blessed if I can catch on!" said Manners.

"Trimble never struck me as a chap to go in for a fellow in a dangerous place. But you never know!"

"Bai Jove, you know, who'd have thought it? We haven't weally done Twimble justice!" said Arthur Augustus. "He's no swimmah, eithah!"

"Well, he must be plucky to go into the Pool, whether he had hold of a willow or not," said Talbot. "It's a dangerous place."

"Hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Levison.

Baggy Trimble came into the Common-room. He was strutting. There was a shiny look on his face, and a smear of jam.

Cutts' five shillings had already gone the way of most of Baggy's pocket-money—at the tuckshop. All eyes were turned on Trimble.

"Here comes the giddy hero!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Behold the conquering hero comes! Were you asleep, Trimble?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us how it happened intirely!" said Reilly.

"Oh, I don't care to talk about it!" said Trimble airily. "I'm not a fellow to brag!"

"Ye gods!" said Monty Lowther. "When did this sudden change take place, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you know, don't you run a fellow down just because he's done a plucky thing!" said Trimble warmly. "Some of you chaps would have thought twice before plunging into the Pool—I know that! It's jolly dangerous!"

"I should have said you'd have thought three times!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "How did you come to do it?"

"Well, I suppose I couldn't leave the chap to drown!" said Trimble. "I wasn't going to mention it, but Cutts seems to think a lot of it. I'm not the kind of fellow to want to get into the limelight. Never was!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, it beats me!" said Blake.

Trimble snorted.

"If you'd known what I'd done, perhaps you wouldn't have made me fag at rowing that boat home!" he said loftily. "Of course, I wasn't going to tell you!"

"That's what I can't understand," said Blake. "It would be more like Trimble to spout it all out at once—with trimmings!"

"Weally, Blake, you are wathah unjust to Twimble! He did not bwag at all of what he had done!"

"No; that's what beats me hollow!"

"Wats! Twimble, deah boy, I beg your pardon. I have always warged you as a fat, wotten boundah, and a spongin' worm, you know, and I should nevah have believed that you could do such a plucky thing. I weally ask your pardon!"

"Granted!" said Trimble loftily.

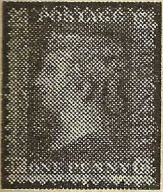
"Blessed if I believe it now!" said Gore. "Where's St. Leger? Let's ask St. Leger how it happened!"

"Yes; that's a good idea!"

Trimble's act of heroism had excited great interest—in fact, it had made quite a sensation. It was so utterly unlike Trimble that it could not fail to do so.

Quite a little army of juniors marched away to Cutts' study to see St. Leger.

Watch Your Stamp Edges!



This stamp is the "goods" when it is a Perf. 16!

Two stamps may be exactly the same in design, colour, and postal value, yet one can be worth fifty times as much as the other!



Here's a hefty roulette—8½—in one of Nicaragua's first specimens.

THOUGH many stamp-collectors give little heed to their stamps' perforations, contending that they make matters far too complex for the everyday philatelist, perforations, nevertheless, can well repay attention.

On many occasions it is nothing more than a difference of perforation which lifts quite a common-or-garden stamp into the better-quality class. Our English "Penny Red," successor to the "Penny Black," is a notable instance. The bulk of these stamps when watermarked with the "large crown" were Perf. 14, and are fairly common in consequence. A small proportion, however, were Perf. 16. Result: the latter stamps are worth nearly fifty times as much as the Perf. 14's.

THE MEASURING METHOD.

But what does Perf. 14 and Perf. 16 mean? I can imagine you asking. Let me explain.

Some years after stamp-collecting had obtained a firm footing in popular favour the varying sizes of perforations had been pretty exhaustively studied, and a celebrated French collector, Serrane by name, devised a very sound method of measuring them.

Being a Continental, he chose a common metric standard of length—two centimetres—and counted the exact number of whole or half perforation holes in that length. From Serrane's system, which was universally adopted, developed the familiar perforation gauge, which does away with all the tedious trouble of counting the perforation holes every time you want to measure a stamp's perfs.

They found Cutts alone there, and he looked at them inquiringly.

"Where's St. Leger?" asked Tom Merry. "We hear that he fell into the river, and Trimble pulled him out."

"That's correct," said Cutts calmly.

"Then it's true!" exclaimed Kerruish.

"Quite true! Trimble is a plucky kid. You'd hardly think it to look at him, but actions speak louder than words," said Cutts.

"But where's St. Leger?"

"He caught a bit of a cold, and he's gone to bed."

"Well, my hat! I suppose we can see him?"

"Oh, yes; I don't suppose he's asleep."

The inquiring juniors made their way to the Fifth Form dormitory.

St. Leger was in bed there, reading.

"Feeling bad?" asked Lowther.

"Well, rather seedy," said St. Leger. "Atchoo! Atchoo! I'm afraid I'm booked for a cold, but I'm trying to keep it off—atchoo!"

"I say, did Trimble really pull you out of the river?" exclaimed Gore.

A gauge (if you lack one, you can easily buy one at your local stamp-dealer's for a few coppers) consists of rows of dots with numbers against them. You simply slide your stamp up and down the dots until the perf. holes exactly fit over the dots beneath them.

And here let me say that a perforation size is the number of holes or half-holes in a length of two centimetres, and not, as many people imagine, merely the number of holes in the length of a stamp's side or top.

TWO TYPES OF PERFORATION.

There are two very important different types of perforation, the perforation proper and rouletting. If you pierce a piece of paper with a series of pin-pricks you make it possible to sever one section of the paper from the other, but you do not remove any of the paper itself in the pricking. This is the essence of rouletting. Sets of needle-points pierce holes between the stamps, and so make it very easy to detach them.

When, however, you come to perforation proper, such as has been used on most of our own country's stamps, you find that, on account of the thickness of the perforating pins, tiny pieces of paper are removed from the stamp sheet in the process.

And here lies the difference between the two processes. The stamp paper is intact in rouletting. In ordinary perforation it is cut away.

Roulettes (named after the spiked roulette tracing wheel, which, worked by hand, was the first method of "perfin" stamps) can be measured quite as easily as normal perforations, though, of course, they are not so clear cut.

"Yes—plucky little beggar!" said St. Leger. "If he'd lost hold of the willow we should both have been drowned!"

"Well, wonders will never cease!" said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I should have thought it!"

"Well, I shouldn't!" said St. Leger. "But he did, and I know he saved my life!"

"Well, my hat!"

There could be no further doubt now. The juniors left the dormitory, discussing the matter in wondering tones.

Tom Merry clapped Trimble on the back when they returned to the Common-room.

"Good for you!" he said. "We're going to have a bit of a supper in my study," said Tom. "Will you come?"

"Yes, rather!" said Baggy promptly.

And he did, and disposed of the lion's share, as usual; but for once he was more than welcome.

Baggy Trimble was a hero in the eyes of the St. Jim's juniors now, and it looked like being an excellent thing for Baggy.

CHAPTER 9.

Not Quite so Heroic!

"IT'S jolly queer!"

Monty Lowther made that remark.

The Terrible Three had finished their preparation and supper, and Baggy Trimble, after supper, had gone along to Study No. 6. Baggy intended to make the most of his new popularity, and he hoped that there was something going in Study No. 6.

"What's queer?" asked Manners. "Queer that Trimble should have acted decently? I agree with you."

"Not only that," said Lowther thoughtfully. "But—I can't quite catch on. You remember Trimble planting himself on us this afternoon."

"What about it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, that must have been after he fished St. Leger out of the river. Trimble says that happened before four o'clock."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, isn't it queer?" said Lowther. "Trimble never said a word of the heroic rescue, and all that. But he told us that St. Leger had knocked him over, and he'd fallen into the water."

"By Jove, I'd forgotten that!"

"That is jolly queer!" said Manners, with a nod. "Trimble's tale was that St. Leger had been bullying him, not that he had been rescuing St. Leger. Of course, both things might have happened."

"And then," said Lowther, "you remember what the time was when we came on St. Leger and Griggs in the wood."

"I didn't notice," said Tom.

"I didn't, either; but I heard four strike from the village clock very soon afterwards."

"Yes, I remember that now," said Manners.

"So the time when Baggy did his rescuing must have been very close to the time when we saw St. Leger playing cards with Griggs. He wasn't wet then, so it must have been after that."

"I suppose so."

"But if it was after that, it was after four. According to Baggy Trimble, it was before four—ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

"Baggy's mistaken the time, I suppose," said Tom Merry. "It must have been after four that he fished St. Leger out. It couldn't have been earlier, or St. Leger would have been wet when we saw him in the wood."

"But if it was after four, that's queer, too, for it wasn't long after four that Baggy joined us and scooped our grub."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"What are you getting at, Monty?" he asked.

"Well, according to the time the thing must have happened, it really looks to me as if it didn't happen at all!" said Lowther, with a grin.

Tom started.

"But it must have happened! Trimble is a regular prevaricator, I know; but why should St. Leger make out that he is grateful to him for saving his life if it never happened at all?"

Monty Lowther shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't want to be suspicious," he said, "but it looks to me as if it can't have happened. There's some little game on!"

"But why?"

"Oh, I give it up! But I asked Trimble, and he remembers distinctly hearing four strike from Rylcombe after he had rescued St. Leger. Now, we know that St. Leger was high and dry, play-

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ing cards with Griggs, right up to four o'clock, at least—afterwards, very likely, unless old Stringer spotted him." Monty Lowther gave a sudden jump. "Stringer, by gum!"

"Well, what about Stringer?"

Lowther gave a yell.

"It's an alibi, of course! We knew that old Stringer must have spotted St. Leger. He's put up Trimble to this yarn to make out that he wasn't there with Griggs."

"My hat!"

"If he was in the Pool, nearly a mile away, being fished out by Trimble, he couldn't have been in the wood gambling with Griggs!" grinned Lowther. "That explains. It's a giddy alibi for St. Leger."

Manners and Tom Merry stared at Lowther. A few minutes' reflection was sufficient to show them that Monty Lowther had worked it out correctly.

"Well, of all the rotten spoofers!" said Tom, in utter disgust. "It was a queer yarn from the start! That settles it!"

"And that fat rotter is swanking around as a giddy hero!" growled Manners.

"He ought to be shown up!"

"Easy does it," said Lowther. "We've tumbled, but we've no right to give St. Leger away. It's the sack for him if he doesn't make out his case."

"Serve him right!" grunted Manners.

"True but: we don't want to have a hand in it. It would be sneaking. It's up to us to keep our heads shut."

"Yes, that's so. But let's go and see Trimble," said Tom Merry. "He's as much a fool as a rogue, and, now we suspect, we can soon see whether he's spoofing."

The Terrible Three went along to Study No. 6. Baggy Trimble was there, seated in the arm-chair, holding forth; and Blake & Co. were listening to him with unusual patience and politeness.

"You see, I didn't really stop to think. As for the danger, I didn't care for that. I saw St. Leger in the water, and heard him cry for help, and just rushed in."

"It was jolly plucky, deah boy!" said D'Arcy.

"Well, I am plucky, you know," said Trimble modestly. "That always was my strong point. Any more tarts?"

"Here you are," said Digby.

"Thanks! They're rather good! St. Leger was awfully grateful, so was Cutts. He lent me five bob."

"Weally, Twimble, it is wathah wotten to spoil the effect by bowwowin' money on the stwength of it."

"Of course, I'm going to settle up with Cutts to-morrow, when Julian settles up the quid I lent him."

"In the cires, Twimble, I do not want to speak wudely. But I do not believe for one moment that you lent Julian a pound."

"Ahem! I meant Tom Merry. Tom was hard-up this afternoon, and, as he was going on a picnic, I couldn't refuse him."

"Couldn't you, you spoofer?" roared Tom Merry, stepping into the study.

Trimble jumped up with a start.

"Oh, I—I didn't see you, Merry!"

"So you lent me a pound this afternoon, did you?" demanded Tom.

"No, no! I—I meant to say Lowther!"

"Me!" exclaimed Lowther, following Tom Merry in.

"N-no! Manners, of course!" gasped Trimble.

"It was Manners! He came to me almost in tears, begging for a loan, and—"

"I did?" roared Manners, striding in wrath-fully

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble blinked at Manners.

"Not at all, Manners," he said feebly. "I wasn't referring to you. I—I—I meant Manners minor, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Twimble, you are a feahful fibbah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"So you lent my minor a quid?" said Manners, seizing Trimble by the collar and jerking him out of the armchair. "Lend me a stump, somebody!"

"Yaroo!" roared Trimble. "Leggo! It—it wasn't Manners minor! It was D'Arcy minor—young Wally, you know—"

"Gweat Scott! You feahful pwevawicatah, Twimble!"

"Don't lick him!" said Blake. "After all, he's done a plucky thing."

Bump!

The fat person of Baggy Trimble was hurled back into the armchair with a concussion that knocked all the breath out of Baggy.

"It's a lie, like all the rest!" said Manners. "He didn't fish St. Leger out of the river at all!"

"What!"

"Weally, Mannahs, you are on the w'ong twack," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vevy wemarkable, but Twimble has weally shown pluck for once!"

"Dash it all, give him his due!" said Blake. "It's clear enough that Trimble did that, Manners."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Trimble. "I'm used to jealousy, but I really don't think that Manners ought to run a chap down just because he's jealous."

"What time did you get St. Leger out of the river, Baggy?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Just before four—ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour."

"We saw St. Leger a few minutes before four," said Tom, "and he was certainly dry and hadn't been in the river."

"Bai Jove!"

"Are you sure?" exclaimed Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"I—I might have mistaken the time," stammered Trimble. "It—it may have been a quarter-past four."

"You were scoffing our feed before that."

"Was—was I? I—I mean, it happened at exactly four o'clock. Now I come to think of it, I heard four striking just as I dragged St. Leger out of the river at the risk of my life."

"And that happened at the Pool, below the bridge?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"That's a mile from where we saw St. Leger at a few minutes to four."

"Oh!"

"St. Leger must have gone over the ground awfully quickly to drop into the river for you to pull him out," said Tom, laughing. "And after the giddy rescue, you reached us by about a quarter-past four, did you? You did over a mile in fifteen minutes?"

"I—I—I'm a good walker!" groaned Baggy.

"And when you joined us you told us that St. Leger had been bullying you, and knocked you into the river."

"D-did I?"

"Yes, you did."

"That—that was only a figure of speech!" gasped Trimble. "What I intended to say was that St. Leger fell into the river and I pulled him out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then it's all lies from beginning to end!" exclaimed Blake.

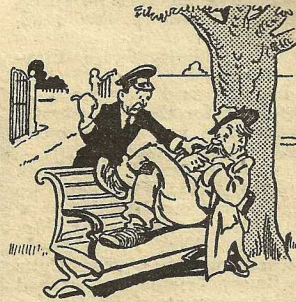
"Like all Trimble's yarns," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove!"

"But what's the little game?" asked Herries.

"Trimble would lie rather than tell the truth any time. But what are Cutts and St. Leger lying about?"

"They've got a reason," said Tom Merry, "and a jolly good reason. It's necessary for St."



"Hi, you! I'm going to close the gates." "All right. Don't slam 'em, there's a good chap!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to:

F. Wood, 133, Grove Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

Leger to prove that he was somewhere where he wasn't this afternoon."

"Oh!" Blake whistled. "I tumble!"

"Of course, it's no business of ours to give the rotters away," said the captain of the Shell. "But we're not called upon to listen to that fat rotter lying and bragging."

"Bai Jove, no!" said Arthur Augustus in disgust. "Twimble, you wank outsiders, I wequest you to step out of this study."

"Look here," said Trimble feebly, "it's true, you know. Cutts said so—I mean, Cutts will say so. I first heard it from Cutts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, I meant to say, Cutts knew all about it. St. Leger caught a cold. That shows he was in the river. He's gone to bed early, and Railton's been up to see him, and asked him if he'd like to see a doctor. He's told Railton about it, and Railton shook hands with me. That settles it, doesn't it?"

"So you've been spoofing Railton, too?" exclaimed Digby.

"Look here, you know, it isn't spoof. Railton shook hands with me, and told me he thought much more of me than he'd ever done before."

Jack Blake took Trimble by the ear and led him to the door.

"You can go and tell your lies in your own study," he said. "You're bowled out here, you know."

Trimble snorted.

"I might have expected this jealousy!" he said bitterly. "Of course, you would run a fellow down!"

"What?"

"I despise you!" said Trimble

And he rolled away before Blake could recover himself sufficiently to reply.

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CHAPTER 10.

Accused!

"STRINGER, by Jove!"

The Terrible Three were chatting in the quadrangle after morning lessons the next day, when the tall, angular figure of Major Stringer was seen crossing from the gates.

The juniors exchanged glances.

The major's visit to the school did not need explaining. Certainly, the major, who lived in the neighbourhood, was not an uncommon visitor there. But Tom Merry & Co. could guess that he had called this time in connection with St. Leger's escapade of the day before.

There was a grim expression on the old military gentleman's face, and it was easy to guess that he had come upon an unpleasant errand.

He nodded kindly enough to the Terrible Three, however, as they "capped" him in the quadrangle.

They watched the tall, soldierly figure disappear into the School House.

"Trouble for St. Leger!" said Lowther.

"Can't help feeling sorry for the poor beast," said Manners. "I know he's not such a rotter as Cutts. I shan't say anything about him."

"No business of ours, anyway," said Tom. "We've nothing to do with the Fifth, and we don't want to sit in judgment on them."

And the Terrible Three strolled away, not quite easy in their minds. They had a pretty accurate idea of the scheme worked between Cutts and St. Leger, since Baggy Trimble's spoof had been revealed. But the exposure of Baggy was known only to a few fellows, and they, of course, had no intention of sneaking.

So the precious alibi might work, all the same. But if the major found his accusation denied, and a witness brought against him, it was possible that the Terrible Three might be called upon.

The major had met them very near the spot where Griggs and St. Leger had been gambling, and if he reflected, it would occur to him that the juniors had probably seen something of it. If they were called upon to state whether they knew the facts, the position would be serious and awkward.

They did not want to sneak, and they shrank from the idea of exposing the network of falsehoods which Cutts had cunningly woven, for that meant serious punishment for the spoofers. But it was quite certain that if they were called before the Head they would not join in the lying. St. Leger had a right to their silence, but he had no right to expect that; and if he did expect it, he would be disappointed.

Major Stringer had been shown into the Head's study. In a few words the old soldier acquainted Dr. Holmes with the purport of his visit.

The Head's face was shocked and sombre as he listened.

"This is a painful duty to me," the major added; "but I could not leave you in ignorance of the matter, sir."

"Quite so! And I thank you!" said the Head. "You are sure that there is no mistake?"

"Quite assured."

"Yet you do not know the boy's name?"

"No; and he refused to give it. He is a senior."

"That makes the matter more serious. But as you are not personally acquainted with the lad, there is a possibility—"

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Major Stringer shook his head decidedly.

"I have seen him about the school several times," he said. "I will pick him out in a very few minutes."

The Head touched the bell, and sent Toby for Mr. Railton.

The School House master came into the study, and the Head explained the matter to him.

Mr. Railton listened with a grave brow.

"Will you have the senior boys called together in Hall, Mr. Railton? Major Stringer will see them there."

"Certainly, sir."

There was considerable surprise among the Fifth and Sixth when the order went forth.



"Let me see your face, please!" rapped out Major Stringer.
"Thought so!" said the major satirically.

Kildare, Darrell, and Langton hurried about collecting the seniors from various directions. As the summons had not been expected it took some time.

Kildare found Cutts and St. Leger in their study.

St. Leger was sneezing into his handkerchief when the captain of St. Jim's came in. His face was very pale. He had seen the major from the study window.

"You're wanted in Hall," said Kildare.

Cutts yawned.

"Anything on?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose so. I don't know what it's about," said Kildare, "but all the Fifth and Sixth are wanted."

"What a bore! Come on, St. Leger."

"You've got a cold?" said Kildare, glancing at St. Leger.

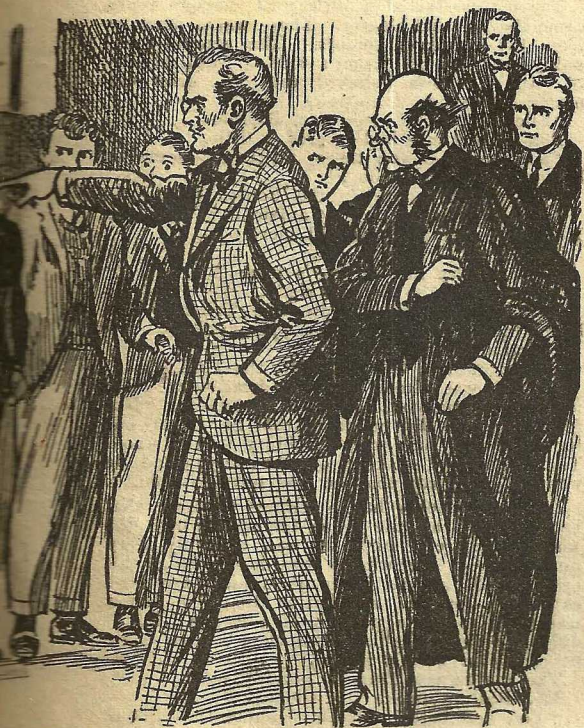
"Yes, a bit of one. I fell in the river yesterday—"

"Yes, I've heard about that," said Kildare. "That fat little boulder Trimble pulled you out. Plucky of him."

"Yes, wasn't it? I—I suppose I'm bound to go into Hall?" asked St. Leger. "That rotten, draughty place won't do my cold any good."

"Well, Mr. Railton said all the Fifth and Sixth. I think it's important from the way he looked. You'd better come."

And Kildare went along the passage to the other studies.



St. Leger started and removed the handkerchief. "It was you I saw gambling!"

"Better come," said Cutts. "You don't want to be specially remarked on, you know, as you would be if you stayed out. Keep on sniffing and sniffing, and keep your handkerchief to your nose. The old beast mayn't spot you."

"He will!" groaned St. Leger.

"Well, there's the alibi."

"I—I've got to see it through," St. Leger muttered. "What a dashed fool I've been. If I get out of this it's the last mug's game for me."

Cutts grinned. He had an idea that St. Leger's reformation would last exactly as long as his danger and no longer.

The two Fifth Formers went down to the Hall together.

There was a buzz of voices in the Big Hall. Most of the fellows had been called in, and they

were not pleased at having their time taken up in this way.

The buzz died away, however, as the Head entered the Hall by the upper door, accompanied by Major Stringer.

All eyes were turned on Dr. Holmes and the major.

The Head's voice as he spoke was listened to with deep attention. He explained briefly that a senior boy of St. Jim's had been seen gambling with a bad character from Wayland, and had been reported by Major Stringer, a governor of the school.

The Head called upon the delinquent to come forward.

No one came forward.

Some of the fellows looked indignant. The major was doing his duty, doubtless, but it wasn't pleasant for the high and mighty members of the Sixth to be hauled over the coals in this way like a set of mischievous fags.

Monteith was heard to murmur that the major had better have minded his own business.

Kildare did not look at all pleased.

Cutts smiled in a sneering way and confided to the Fifth Formers his opinion that the old duffer had made a bloomer.

"If the boy does not come forward of his own accord, Major Stringer will identify him," said the Head after a long pause.

Silence.

"Very well," said Dr. Holmes, compressing his lips a little. "Major Stringer, will you have the kindness to point out the lad you refer to?"

"Huh! Certainly, sir."

The major strode down the Hall, his quick, steely eyes glittering at the seniors from under his shaggy grey brows.

Grim looks from the St. Jim's seniors met him. They weren't at all pleased by the inspection, and they didn't pretend to be.

Lefevre of the Fifth made it a point to shrug his shoulders, and Cutts chatted to Gilmore, in apparent ignorance of the fact that the major was there at all.

But the grim old major was not deterred by dark looks. He stopped before the ranks of the Fifth, and his eyes fixed on St. Leger.

The latter had his handkerchief to his nose, and was sniffing.

"Let me see your face, please!" rapped out the major.

St. Leger started, and removed the handkerchief.

"I thought so!" said Major Stringer satirically. "It was you I saw gambling!"

"St. Leger!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the Fifth, who was there with his Form.

"Is that his name? That is the boy I saw."

"Kindly step out, St. Leger."

"Buck up!" murmured Cutts inaudibly.

But St. Leger was pale as he stepped out before the Fifth. He was detected, and only Cutts' scheme stood between him and disgrace and punishment.

St. Leger meant to play the game out, but his heart was heavy. His supposed cold, however, accounted for his pale and decomposed looks, to the eyes of his Form-fellows.

"Come here, St. Leger," said the Head quietly.

St. Leger advanced up the Hall, with all eyes upon him. The major followed with his military tread.

"That is the boy, Major Stringer?"

"Yes, sir."

"You recognise him?"

"Undoubtedly."

"What have you to say, St. Leger?"

St. Leger pulled himself together.

"What am I accused of, sir?"

"You have heard what I said, St. Leger. Yesterday afternoon Major Stringer found you engaged in gambling with a disreputable character from Wayland."

"Major Stringer is mistaken, sir."

"What!" thundered the major.

The Head drew a deep breath.

"You deny Major Stringer's accusation, St. Leger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boy!" thundered the incensed major. "This effrontery—"

Dr. Holmes made a gesture.

"St. Leger must be heard in his defence," he said. "It is now a question of proof. You may have been mistaken, major."

"I was not mistaken, sir!"

"At all events, if St. Leger can account satisfactorily for his time yesterday afternoon the matter must be considered as settled in his favour. If St. Leger was innocently occupied at that time he can prove it."

The major grunted.

"That will certainly settle it," he said ungraciously. "I have done my duty as a governor of the school in coming here to expose this young rascal. I did not expect him to have the effrontery to lie about it. Let him prove where he was at the time."

There was a buzz in the Hall.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand, and there was silence. All eyes were fixed upon St. Leger.

CHAPTER 11.

The Witness for the Defence!

ST. LEGER stood quiet and calm. He had pulled himself together now. He realised what was at stake, and that he was fairly committed to the path of falsehood.

He had left himself no escape from that.

Dr. Holmes' manner was not in the least harsh or condemnatory. He sincerely hoped that the Fifth Former would be able to clear himself.

"You deny, St. Leger, that you were engaged as the major supposes?" he asked.

"Absolutely, sir."

"In that case, Major Stringer must have been mistaken."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Where were you yesterday afternoon?"

"I went down the river with a book, sir. Mr. Ratcliff had found fault with my work in the morning, and I took my Horace out to read in a quiet place."

"You were alone?" asked the Head, a slight shade coming over his brow.

"Not all the time, sir. I did not go out till three o'clock."

"Was it after three, major——"

Major Stringer broke in.

"It was at four o'clock that I found this boy gambling with a low blackguard in the wood," he said. "I am aware of the precise time, because I heard it chime and strike from Rylcombe Church."

"Where were you at four o'clock, St. Leger? You had not come in."

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"I was in by about twenty past four, sir," said St. Leger.

"Naturally you came back directly," said the major.

"But at four o'clock, St. Leger——" said the Head.

"At that time, sir, I was by the river near the Pool, below the bridge——"

"Is that the locality, major——"

"It is not the locality, sir," said Major Stringer. "I saw this boy in the wood above the bridge, at least a mile from the Pool, at four o'clock."

"Did anyone see you near the Pool, St. Leger?"

"Yes, sir!"

The major started a little. St. Leger's reply came sharply and clearly. There was a murmur from the crowd of seniors. The general sympathy was on St. Leger's side. Most of the St. Jim's fellows believed that the grim old major had made a mistake.

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Railton.

The Head's face had cleared a little.

"Someone saw you there, St. Leger—someone belonging to the school?"

"Yes, sir—a junior in the Fourth Form."

"Ah, not one of your own friends!" said the Head, his face clearing still more.

"No, sir."

"Please give me the boy's name."

"Trimble of the Fourth, sir."

"Kildare will you kindly find Trimble, and bring him here as quickly as possible?"

"Certainly, sir!"

The captain of St. Jim's left the Hall.

Interest was almost at fever heat now. The major was gnawing his grey moustache. Not for an instant did he doubt that St. Leger was the fellow he had seen gambling in the wood. The major had a keen eye for faces, and he was quite assured that he was not mistaken.

But if St. Leger had a witness to prove that he had been a mile from the spot where the major had seen him, it was certainly very puzzling. If the witness had been one of his own friends in the Fifth, it would have been explicable, on the supposition that the fellow was lying to get a pal out of a scrape. But it did not seem probable that such a scheme could be concocted with a junior.

The major was frankly puzzled.

Mr. Railton broke the silence.

"You had better tell Dr. Holmes the circumstances, St. Leger, in connection with your meeting with Trimble yesterday afternoon."

"Ah! You are aware of this, Mr. Railton?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir. A considerable amount of attention has been drawn to the matter, as it happens."

"Trimble of the Fourth pulled me out of the river, sir," said St. Leger. "I was walking along the river, sir, reading, and stumbled down the bank, and went into deep water. Trimble rushed in after me, and caught hold of me, and held on to a branch of a willow-tree. That's how I caught my cold, sir."

"Bless my soul, I knew nothing of this! And this, you say, happened at four o'clock yesterday afternoon?"

"About that, sir. I know I reached the school about twenty past four, hurrying all the way."

"Trimble, of course, will bear out your statement!"

"I suppose so, sir. I believe he told most of the fellows yesterday about pulling me out of the river. He ran a good deal of risk, and the juniors have been making quite a hero of him about it."

"This lets in a somewhat new light on the matter," said the Head, with a glance at Major Stringer.

"It does not shake my conviction for one moment, sir," said the major grimly.

"Well, we shall see what the junior says."

"The matter appears clear to my mind, sir," said Mr. Railton. "I was aware last night of Trimble's action. I think most of the House knew of it. It remains to be established whether this action took place at the time stated by St. Leger."

"We shall learn that from Trimble."

Kildare came back into the Hall with Trimble of the Fourth.

The worthy Baggy had been a little scared at first, till he learned that he was to give an account of his heroic rescue. Now he was swelling with importance. By this time Trimble almost believed that he had rescued St. Leger. Nobody else had come forward to claim the distinction, and Trimble was sticking to it, and he was not at all averse to spreading himself in public on the subject.

His fat, consequential air as he followed Eric Kildare up the Hall made the seniors grin.

"Trimble!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Baggy confidently.

"I learn that yesterday afternoon you saw St. Leger fall into the river, and entered the water to help him?"

"Just so, sir. I didn't stop to think of the risk—"

"What?"

"I just plunged in after him, sir," said Baggy. "All the fellows say it was jolly plucky."

The Head suppressed a smile.

"Very good—very good! Do you remember what time yesterday you rescued St. Leger from the river, Trimble?"

"Certainly, sir," said Trimble, remembering what Gerald Cutts had told him. "It happened at a little before four, sir—about a quarter to four, I should say."

"You are sure of that time?"

"Yes, sir. I heard four strike soon afterwards."

"You are absolutely certain that it happened before four o'clock?"

"Oh, quite sure, sir! St. Leger knows."

"Never mind St. Leger now, Trimble. It is very important to establish exactly when this happened."

"Cutts knows, too, sir. He told me—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I told him, sir," said Trimble hastily. "We had a jaw about it in my study afterwards, sir. Cutts said he wouldn't have thought it of me, and he was very grateful to me for saving his pal's life. He lent me five shillings—"

"Never mind that now!" said the Head hastily.

"One moment, sir!" broke in the major. "It appears to me that that incident has a bearing on the matter. Trimble, did Cutts—whoever Cutts is—give you five shillings to tell this story?"

"Really, major!" murmured the Head.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Trimble cheerfully. "Cutts didn't know that the Head would ask me about it at all, really; I'm too modest, sir. Lumley-

Lumley heard Cutts talking to me about it, and he told the fellows. I asked Cutts to lend me the five bob. I thought that wasn't much, considering that I had saved his pal's life."

"Then Cutts did not offer you the money?"

"Oh, no, sir! He was going out of the study when I asked him. It occurred to me that I was short of tin, owing to lending Figgins of the New House my last pound; and as Cutts has plenty of tin, I thought—"

"Where did this affair happen, Trimble?" asked the Head.

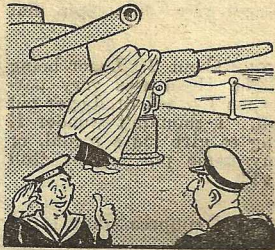
"At the Pool, sir—a very dangerous place. But I couldn't see St. Leger drown, though he had refused to let me join in the picnic."

St. Leger's colour was returning now. The worthy Baggy was giving first-class evidence in his favour.

"Trimble supposed that I was going on a picnic when I went out, sir," he explained. "He wanted to come, and I—I cuffed him for his cheek. I'm sorry I cuffed him now, considering what he did afterwards!"

"It was rotten of you!" said Trimble. "Still, I don't bear malice. Perhaps you'll let me come next time!"

"Then you are not on good terms with St. Leger, Trimble?" asked the major, eyeing the fat Baggy suspiciously.



"He was a photographer before he joined the Navy, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Horner, 17, Freville Street, West Hartlepool, Durham.

"Oh, yes, sir, now!" said Trimble. "I wasn't yesterday; St. Leger was rather a beast. But that's all over now!"

The major was silent. If Trimble hadn't been on good terms with St. Leger the day before, there seemed no reason why he should lie in his favour.

Dr. Holmes glanced at him.

"You are satisfied now, major?"

"I am not satisfied, sir. I am perfectly well aware that St. Leger is the boy I saw gambling with that blackguard Griggs in the wood! But if you are satisfied, I have, of course, nothing further to say!"

"I cannot but be satisfied," said the Head. "Trimble recollects clearly that he was helping St. Leger out of the river at four o'clock yesterday afternoon. At the same time, you saw someone unknown at a mile's distance from the spot. The person may have resembled St. Leger, but clearly cannot have been St. Leger. To my mind, St. Leger emerges from the inquiry without a stain on his honour!"

"Thank you, sir!" said St. Leger.

"I have nothing more to say, sir," said the major dryly. "I have done my duty—a very disagreeable duty. I can do no more!"

And, with a nod, the major strode from the Hall. His opinion was not shaken in the slightest

degree, but he realised that there was nothing more to be done.

"The matter closes here," said the Head. "St. Leger, you have proved your innocence to my complete satisfaction. I am sorry you have been accused. You may go! Dismiss!"

And Big Hall cleared.

CHAPTER 12.

Trimble Sticks!

TRIMBLE was surrounded by a crowd of juniors when he came out of the School House.

The worthy Trimble was strutting.

"What did the Head want?" asked Gore.

"What's the row?" inquired Lumley.

"Oh, the Head wanted to know about my splendid rescue!" said Trimble airily. "It was a sort of gathering to thank me for what I did. 'Tain't every chap who has a governor of the school recognising his bravery in public!"

"Gammon!" said Reilly.

"Yes, gammon!" said Levison of the Fourth.

"I know what was on. St. Leger has been accused of playing the giddy ox, and Trimble proved that he wasn't where Major Stringer saw him. I heard it under the window!"

"So that's your little game," grinned Mellish. "How much did St. Leger give you to spin that yarn, Trimble?"

Trimble sniffed.

"I don't know anything about St. Leger being accused," he said. "The Head was very particular in asking just when I fished St. Leger out of the river, that's all. I shouldn't wonder if Major Stringer is going to give me a medal, or something, or have my name put on the Roll of Honour of St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see why not. I suppose what I did was plucky," said Trimble loftily.

"I don't think!" chuckled Gore.

"Well, you wouldn't have done it, anyway!" said Trimble disdainfully.

"And I jolly well don't believe you did it, either!" said Gore. "It's a yarn to get St. Leger out of a scrape. I can see it now!"

"Oh, rot! Hallo! There's my pal Cutts!"

Trimble rushed off to intercept Cutts and St. Leger, who had come out into the quadrangle together.

Cutts was smiling, and St. Leger looking immensely relieved. The alibi had worked like a charm, and St. Leger was out of danger.

The good Baggy had been useful, and he was done with. But on that point Cutts had made a slight mistake. Baggy Trimble had no intention of being done with yet.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Trimble familiarly.

Cutts stared at him.

"Cut off!" he said briefly.

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Trimble indignantly. "Cut off yourself! I want to speak to my pal St. Leger."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said St. Leger. "Cut off!"

"Is that what you call gratitude?" said Trimble bitterly.

"What?" St. Leger had forgotten that he was supposed to owe a debt of gratitude to the heroic Baggy.

"You didn't say cut off yesterday, when I was

risking my life to save you from a watery grave," said Trimble.

"Oh! Well, I say cut off now," growled St. Leger.

"I was going to ask you to lend me a pound," said Trimble. "I've lent my last pound to Thompson of the Shell."

"Then you can go and ask Thompson of the Shell for it!" said St. Leger gruffly. "I've got no pounds to chuck away!"

"Well, you ungrateful rotter!" yelled Baggy wrathfully. "Is that your thanks for having your life saved?"

"Oh, don't be a fool! Cut off!" snapped St. Leger.

"I won't borrow a pound of you," said Trimble. "If you offered it, I should refuse to accept it now. You can be an ungrateful beast if you like. But you owe me money."

"I owe you money?"

"Yes; my trousers were simply ruined by the water when I went in yesterday. They've got to be paid for."

St. Leger glared at Trimble. As Baggy had not been in for him at all, the claim for damages was decidedly cool. But Cutts pressed St. Leger's arm.

"Give him five bob," he murmured. "It was worth it."

St. Leger grunted, and handed out five shillings. Baggy Trimble's fat hand closed on it, but he did not budge.

"Where's the other fifteen?" he asked.

"You'd better cut off!" said St. Leger, breathing hard. "I've stood about enough of your cheek, you young cub!"

"You owe me a pound for my trousers, which were ruined. If you don't pay me, I shall appeal to Mr. Railton. He won't see me swindled."

"Swindled!" gasped St. Leger.

"Yes, swindled!"

Baggy Trimble blinked truculently at the two Fifth Formers.

It was not at all pleasant to Baggy to be thrown over like this as soon as he was no longer of any use. He had decided to pal with Cutts and St. Leger—already he had been bragging without limit of his pals in the Fifth Form. In his mind's eye, he had seen himself extracting loan after loan from the grateful Fifth Formers. And he was not likely to part with those golden dreams all at once if he could help it.

"Besides saving your life, I've got you out of a scrape!" he said warmly. "If I hadn't fished you out of the river at four o'clock, the Head would have known where you really were at the time—"

"Shut up, you ass!" said Cutts hurriedly.

"You see, I know all about it!" grinned Trimble. "You needn't scowl at me, St. Leger. I'm not afraid of you!"

St. Leger clenched his hand hard. But he unclenched it again. He realised that he could not afford to quarrel with Baggy Trimble.

Trimble had borne false witness in his favour, and that had placed him under the thumb of the young scoundrel.

He felt in his pockets, and added fifteen shillings to the five that reposed in Baggy's fat palm.

"Now clear off, you blackmailing little scoundrel!" he muttered.

"Look here, you know—"

"Cut off, I tell you!" shouted St. Leger furiously.

Trimble cut off towards the tuckshop. He was

in clover now, and he intended to remain in clover.

Cutts and St. Leger looked at one another grimly.

"Well, this is a pretty go!" said St. Leger savagely. "This is what your precious scheme has landed me in! I'm under that fat bouncer's thumb now!"

"Better than being sacked from the school, I suppose," said Cutts tartly.

St. Leger grunted, and swung away. It was, as Cutts said, better than being expelled, but it was not pleasant. He had a foreboding that he was not done with Baggy Trimble yet.

His foreboding was realised. That evening Trimble looked into the Fifth Former's study, with an impudent grin on his fat face.

"I say, St. Leger, old chap," he said familiarly, "could you possibly lend me half a quid?"

"No!" roared St. Leger furiously.

"Not after I've saved your life?"

"Look here, you young scoundrel!" said St. Leger, in concentrated tones. "You didn't save my life. It's a lie from beginning to end!"

"Then who jolly well did?" demanded Trimble.

"Nobody did, you young cad!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Trimble. "You weren't drowned, were you?"

"I wasn't in the river at all, and you know it!" said St. Leger savagely. "And if you think you are going to keep on getting money out of me for your lies, you're mistaken! Get out of my study!"

"You mean to say that I didn't save your life?" ejaculated Trimble.

"You know you didn't!" yelled St. Leger.

"Oh, very well!" said Trimble, with dignity. "If I didn't, all right! If I've made a mistake, best thing I can do is to own up. I can't allow fellows to go on believing that I saved your life if I didn't. It's getting credit under false pretences, and that won't do for an honourable chap like me. I'm going to tell Kildare it was all a mistake. He will explain to Mr. Railton."

St. Leger licked his lips dry.

"You'll get licked for telling the Head lies!" he muttered.

"Not so much as you will for gambling with Griggs!" chuckled Baggy Trimble. "You see, I know all about it. Levison knows, too."

"I—I think I could spare you ten shillings," said St. Leger huskily. "It clears me right out."

"Never mind. I'll lend you some when Tom Merry squares up the quid I lent him," said Trimble comfortingly.



St. Leger had completely lost his temper. He lashed and lashed at Baggy Trimble with the cricket stump, and the fat junior's roars rang through the House. There was a step in the passage and Mr. Railton strode into the study. "St. Leger! Release Trimble at once!" he exclaimed.

Baggy Trimble left the study with ten shillings jingling in his pocket, and a satisfied grin wreathing his face.

St. Leger sat with his hands driven deep in his pockets, and a deep wrinkle in his brow. He had escaped the major, to fall into the clutches of Trimble; it was out of the frying-pan into the fire. And St. Leger was beginning to think that his last state was worse than his first.

CHAPTER 13.

The Game is Up!

TOM MERRY tapped Trimble on the shoulder a few days later in the quad.

Baggy Trimble had come from the Fifth Form passage, and he was scudding across the quad to the school shop, when the captain of the Shell stopped him.

Trimble gave him an impatient look.

"I'm in a hurry!" he snapped.

"So am I," said Tom. "We want to speak to you, Trimble."

"No time now," said Trimble. "The fact is, I'm hungry, and I'm going to the tuckshop. I'm in funds!"

"Yes. I know where your funds come from!"

"No business of yours!" said Trimble loftily.

"If a pal of mine likes to lend me a few bob occasionally, after I've saved his life— Leggo! Yow-ow! Look here, I've got no time to waste on you!"

"You're coming, all the same," said Tom cheerily.

Baggy Trimble had no choice about that; a grip of iron was on his fat shoulder.

Tom Merry led him across the quad, and stopped under the elms.

Lowther and Manners and the chums of Study No. 6 were waiting there.

The fat Fourth Former looked alarmed as he found himself the centre of a frowning circle.

"I—I say, look here, you know," he said feebly. "I'm not going to lend you anything."

"You uttah wottah, Twimble—"

"You're brought up for judgment," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't be funny, you know," said Trimble.

"If you think I'm going to lend you anything, you're jolly well mistaken. And I don't want any of your jaw, either. I've got friends in the Fifth, and, to be quite plain, I don't want to have anything to do with you fellows!"

"Oh, squash him!" said Blake.

"Yah! Leggo!" roared Trimble.

Bump!

Baggy Trimble sat on the ground with a heavy concussion. He sat there and blinked furiously and breathlessly at the juniors.

"Yow-ow-ow! Groogh! You rotters! Yow-ow!"

"Now lend me your ears," said Tom Merry calmly. "You've been rolling in money the last few days, Trimble."

"My pater sends me whacking big remittances, you know."

"Your pater does nothing of the sort!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, I suppose I ought to know! Whenever I'm short of money, I just drop a line to Trimble Hall—"

"Don't lie! You've been screwing the money out of St. Leger," said Tom Merry. "You told a pack of lies for him the other day, and you've

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been screwing money out of him ever since. Every fellow in the Lower School knows it, and it's becoming a regular scandal. You're going to stop it!"

"Look here, you know—"

"St. Leger is a rotter, but you're not going to blackmail him!" said Tom. "The whole thing was rotten, but what you're doing is called blackmail, and people are sent to prison for it!"

"I suppose St. Leger can make me a loan, if he likes, after I risked my life to pull him out of the river."

"He was never in the river, and you know that!"

"Wathah not! You are a disgrace to the Fourth Form, and a disgrace to the School House, Twimble! The New House boundahs have heard about it, and they have been chippin' us! You are not a hewo at all; you are a blackmailin' scoundwel!"

"If you're jealous of a fellow's pluck—"

"Bai Jova!"

"Nuff said!" said Tom Merry. "You're going to chuck it! It will come to Railton's ears sooner or later, with all the fellows talking about it. Every time you're found to have got money from St. Leger, you're going to be bumped hard—see?"

"Why, you cheeky beast—"

"And now for a beginning! Collar him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yawwooh! Help! Yow-ow-wooooooo!" roared Trimble.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

"That's for a start!" said Tom Merry, shaking a warning finger at Trimble as he sprawled breathlessly on the ground. "Let it be a warning to you!"

"Grooooooogh!"

Tom Merry & Co. walked away, justice being done.

Baggy Trimble sat up breathlessly, trying to get his second wind.

Mellish of the Fourth came up, with a grin. He had been an interested spectator of the scene.

"Serves you jolly well right!" said Mellish.

"It's too thick, Trimble! Everybody knows you're getting money out of St. Leger; you've been pestering him lots of times! You ought to be punished! Can you lend me five bob?"

"No, I can't!" spluttered Trimble indignantly. "How much did you stick St. Leger for this time?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, all right!" said Mellish quietly. "I'm disgusted with you, Trimble! I'm going to mention the matter to Kildare!"

"Here, I say," gasped Trimble, "don't be a sneak, you know! Perhaps I could lend you a bob or so."

"I want five!"

"Look here, St. Leger only gave me five!" said Trimble. "You're a blackmailing rotter, Mellish!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's good from you! Well, halves, then!"

Baggy Trimble with an angry snort, handed over half-a-crown and Mellish grinned and walked away with it.

The glory of Trimble, the hero, had departed; the facts were known far and wide now, and Trimble's unaccustomed access of wealth was a plain indication that he was getting money from St. Leger for keeping his secret. Indeed, Trimble generally asked St. Leger for a "loan" in the

presence of other fellows, so that the unhappy victim could not possibly refuse or resort to violence.

St Leger's life for the past week had not been a happy one, and many times he had from his heart anathematised that cunning scheme of Cutts' which had delivered him into the hands of the pitiless Baggy.

Worst of all, the secret was not likely to be kept in the peculiar circumstances

Baggy Trimble was as much a duffer as a rascal, and he seemed almost to be asking to be found out

St. Leger had to borrow money right and left to satisfy his demands and he had to be civil to the unspeakable Baggy; and sooner or later, he felt, the stupidity of the amateur blackmailer would bring the whole matter to light.

St. Leger wished sincerely that he had faced the music without screening himself behind that elaborate network of falsehoods.

The music had to be faced, after all, and the falsehoods had to be answered for also when the hour came.

Piggott of the Third joined Baggy Trimble as he was making for the tuckshop.

"Halves!" he said.

Trimble glared at him.

"What do you mean?" he snapped.

"I was outside St. Leger's study," said Piggott coolly. "He handed you five bob. I want halves!"

"I'll jolly well punch your nose!" said Trimble. "St. Leger made me a small loan, as I saved his life—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Piggott. "You've screwed five bob out of St. Leger, and you've got to hand me half-a-crown, or I'll go to Railton. Better square up!"

"You rotter! Mellish has had half-a-crown already!" growled the unhappy Baggy.

The business of a blackmailer did not seem to be thriving, owing to his want of caution.

"Well, give me the other," said Piggott coolly. "I'm hard-up. You can screw some more out of St. Leger!"

"I won't!" howled Trimble.

"All serene! Look out for Railton!"

Piggott turned away.

"Hold on!" muttered Trimble. "You can have the half-crown! I—I dare say St. Leger can make me another loan."

Piggott grinned, and pocketed the half-a-crown, and Trimble returned disconsolately to the School House and sought St. Leger's study.

He felt that it was hard lines. He had been bumped by Tom Merry & Co. for screwing that five shillings out of St. Leger, and now it was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

He was in a bad temper as he rolled into the Fifth Former's study

St. Leger was pacing to and fro, with his hands in his pockets. He turned a furious look upon Trimble.

"What do you want, you young hound?" he said, between his teeth.

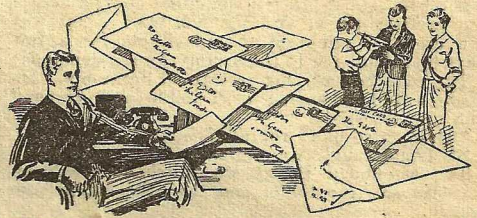
"Ahem! I should like a little loan," said Trimble. "Dash it all, it isn't much, after I risked my life to rescue you, you know!"

"I gave you five shillings ten minutes ago!"

"Mellish and Piggott have had that. They wanted halves," said Trimble sullenly.

St. Leger panted. What was the use of it? All the juniors knew by this time that Trimble

(Continued on next page.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR.

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letter: The Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! It's some time since we had a St. Jim's story featuring George Herries, and I was reminded of this fact the other day by a reader who is an admirer of the stolid, plain-speaking Fourth Former. Next week, however, Herries comes into the limelight with a vengeance, but for once Towser plays no big part. Herries has other interests besides his bulldog, not the least of which is his cornet-playing! The story is an unusual one, as the title suggests:

"THE SCHOOLBOY BAND CONDUCTOR!"

Herries gets the bright idea of running an orchestra—much to the annoyance of his chums, who like his cornet-playing as much as they like his bulldog! But that doesn't worry Herries any. He advertises for musicians in the "local rag"—and then his troubles start. The response to that advert leaves a lot to be desired, for it's a weird crew of ill-assorted people who turn up at St. Jim's. The outcome is a free fight in the school—and the exit of the would-be musicians. But, in spite of this setback, Herries goes ahead building up his band until the great moment comes for the first public performance. What happens I will leave Martin Clifford to tell you, in his own inimitable style, next Wednesday.

"THE REMOVE GOES GAY!"

All is excitement in the Greyfriars Remove over the coming fancy-dress dance at Cliff House. The juniors' welcome of the newcomers to the girls' school has certainly had a happy result. But if all the juniors are as elephantine in their dancing as Bob Cherry has shown himself to be in this week's chapters, the girls at Cliff House won't feel so happy about it!

The Remove turn up in force at the dance—Bunter and all. And do they go gay? You bet! The big laugh of the evening, however, is on Ionides, the bully of the Sixth, who butts into the dance uninvited. He hopes to create an impression among the girls—but his hopes are rudely shattered!

To complete this ripping number, George Alfred Gruady makes his appearance before the "mike" in "In Town To-day," and is his usual asinine self. Monty Lowther will be in his place again with some more jokes, and our stamp expert contributes another helpful article.

One last word, chums. I shall have some grand news soon of a wonderful scheme whereby you'll all have a chance of winning splendid prizes!

THE EDITOR.

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was blackmailing him; it would not be long before the prefects knew, and the masters. What was the use of staving off the inevitable for a few days by submitting to this young rascal's demands?

The rage he had long restrained broke out. He made a sudden spring at Trimble and dragged him into the study.

"Here, hold on!" roared Trimble.

St. Leger caught up a cricket stump.

The astounded Baggy was pitched face-downwards across the table, and then the stump rose and fell.

Baggy roared.

St. Leger was handling the stump as if he were beating a carpet.

The unhappy Baggy writhed and roared and shrieked as the blows rained on him.

Never had Trimble experienced so terrific a thrashing. For once in his life Baggy Trimble was getting what he deserved, and a little over.

Lash, lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Murder! Yoop! Yah!"

St. Leger had completely lost his temper. He lashed and lashed away, while Baggy Trimble's roars rang through the House.

There was a step in the passage, and Mr. Railton strode into the study.

"St. Leger! What! Release Trimble at once! How dare you!"

St. Leger obeyed. He dropped the stump, and Baggy rolled off the table in tears.

The Housemaster eyed the Fifth Former sternly.

"How dare you use a junior like this, St. Leger? The boy, too, who saved your life only last week!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" yelled Trimble. "I'll tell them now, you rotter! Yow-ow! I didn't save his life! He wasn't in the river at all. Yow-ow! He was playing cards with Griggs! Wow-ow-ow! Yah!"

Mr. Railton's brow became thunderous.

"Trimble, do you dare to say that you were deceiving the Head, that you bore false witness?" exclaimed the Housemaster in a terrific voice.

"Yow-ow! Cutts told me to say it!" groaned Trimble. "I—I mean, Cutts thought I was the chap who had done it. It was a dodge to get St. Leger off, the beast! And this is his gratitude. Yow-ow!"

Cutts of the Fifth looked into the study with an alarmed face.

He turned pale as he heard Trimble's words. His cunning device had come home to roost now with a vengeance!

"St. Leger, is Trimble's statement correct?" asked the Housemaster grimly.

St. Leger hung his head.

"Yes, sir. I—I am sorry I didn't own up. That little beast has been blackmailing me ever since. That's why I thrashed him. Cutts wasn't to blame. I—I told him, and—and he believed me. It was my fault."

Cutts drew a deep breath.

"You will come with me to the Head," said Mr. Railton curtly. "You, St. Leger, and Cutts and Trimble."

"I—I say, sir, I wasn't to blame, you know. I—I—"

"Silence, Trimble! You appear to have been the worst!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Not a word more! Follow me!"

The Housemaster strode from the study. In grim silence the three delinquents followed him.

The game was up now; there was no mistake about that.

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"Bai Jove, deah boys, there's goin' to be a woy!"

That was Arthur Augustus' opinion, and it was well-founded. There was a buzz of excitement in the School House when it was known that Baggy Trimble and the two Fifth Formers were shut up in the Head's study with the Head and Mr. Railton.

"It's the sack for St. Leger!" said Lowther. "Let's hope it's the sack for that awful rotter Trimble, too!"

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a crowd of fellows had gathered to see the delinquents when they came out of the Head's study.

When they appeared Gerald Cutts was as cool as ever, and St. Leger looked relieved rather than otherwise.

Baggy Trimble was shivering like a very fat jelly.

The two Fifth Formers strode away without a word; but Baggy was surrounded by an inquiring crowd. He blinked pathetically at the juniors.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Unjust, you know. Now, look here, candidly, do you fellows think I've been to blame in any way?"

The fellows could only stare.

"The Head was waxy for some reason," said Trimble, "and he seemed more waxy with me than with those rotters. Blessed if I know why! He said I had been getting credit for courage under false pretences. Of course, as a matter of absolute fact, I didn't pull St. Leger out of the river. But if he'd been in it, and I'd been there, I should have rushed to his rescue, you know, so it practically comes to the same thing, doesn't it?"

"Bai Jove! Does it?" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Of course it does! But the Head couldn't see it," said Baggy, aggrieved. "He said I was the worst. He said I had been blackmailing St. Leger. I suppose he was referring to some little loans St. Leger made me of his own accord. Beastly way of putting it, wasn't it?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Cutts is let off with a caution, because the Head thinks he was led into playing that trick by friendship for a fellow in a scrape," said Baggy. "He's gated for six half-holidays. St. Leger would have been sacked, but his mother is ill, and the Head wouldn't let her have such rotten news at the time, and so he's to be flogged. And—and the worst of it is, that I'm going to be flogged, too! Me, you know! Blessed if I can see that I've done anything to be flogged for."

"Oh deah!"

"Well, that chap takes the cake!" said Tom Merry, as Baggy Trimble rolled away in great indignation. "Blessed if I know whether he ought to be in a reformatory or a lunatic asylum!"

Next morning there was an impressive scene in Big Hall when St. Leger and Baggy Trimble went through it.

And for the following half-dozen half-holidays Gerald Cutts' little excursions had to be given up. And so the astute dandy of the Fifth had ample leisure to meditate upon his sins and to regret that he had been a party to providing a false witness to save a pal from disgrace.

(Next Wednesday: "THE SCHOOLBOY BAND-CONDUCTOR!" Look out for this sparkling long yarn, featuring Herries and his orchestra. Order your GEM now.)



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PEN PALS COUPON

23-4-38

THE GREYFRIARS CHUMS MEET THE GIRLS OF THE NEW SCHOOL—AND
ARE THEIR FACES RED?

The Remove Welcome!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

The Welcomers!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here comes Nugent!"

Bob Cherry uttered the words as Frank Nugent came scorching up the road on his bicycle.

It was a bright April afternoon. Nearly a dozen juniors belonging to Greyfriars School were gathered in a group on the road that lay between Greyfriars and the sea, winding round the rugged slopes of the Black Pike. They were all looking anxiously down the road towards the village of Friardale, when the speeding cyclist came in sight.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, who was seated on the grass by the roadside, read in the latest number of the "Magnet," jumped up at once. The group of juniors all belonged to the Remove—the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars. Their expectant looks showed that they were out that sunny half-holiday upon an important mission.

Nugent raced up on his machine and jumped to the ground.

"They're coming!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Have you seen them?"

"Yes; saw 'em come out of the station!" gasped Nugent, who had evidently been acting the part of a scout. "They are coming along with Miss Penelope."

"Good!"

"They'll be in sight in a few minutes," said Nugent, leaning his machine against a tree.

"There's no time to waste!"

"Well, we've got it all cut and dried," said Bob Cherry. "Stand ready, there, and look as orderly as you can!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Don't all of you start blushing when they come in sight," went on Bob Cherry; "that will spoil the effect."

"Faith, and it's yerself that's blushing already!" said Micky Desmond.

"And don't you begin to argue, Micky Desmond, when we've no time to waste in jaw," said Bob hastily. "They'll be coming round the corner in a minute—"

"And we must be ready," said Harry Wharton. "No, don't you talk, Bunter; there's no time to listen to you now. Raise your caps, and don't look self-conscious."

"I'm not looking self-conscious!" grinned Hazeldene.

"You've got a sister among them!" growled Trevor. "That makes a difference."

"I say, Wharton—"

"Will you shut up, Bunter?"

"But it just occurred to me—"

"You can tell us afterwards. Now, look here, as soon as they round the corner, turn on your sweetest smiles, so as to be ready, and prepare to raise your caps."

"The raisefulness will be terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

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"Is—is my necktie straight, Nugent?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No," said Nugent, looking at it. "It never is!"

"You might give it a pull."

"Certainly!"

"You—you ass! I didn't tell you to yank the thing right out!" exclaimed Bob excitedly. "Now I shall have to tie it again!"

"I say, Wharton, it's occurred to me—"

"Something will occur to your nose if you don't dry up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Cheese it!"

Wharton rapped out orders, and the Greyfriars juniors obeyed. In spite of repeated warnings, most of them were blushing now.

It was an important and really unprecedented occasion.

The Greyfriars juniors had received with mingled feelings the news that a girls' school was to be opened at Cliff House, almost within a stone's throw of Greyfriars. Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, had declared his intention of making things unpleasant for the new neighbours of Greyfriars, but the greater part of the Lower Fourth followed Wharton's lead, feeling that they were called upon, at least, to be civil to the newcomers.

The discovery that Hazeldene's sister was one of the pupils of Miss Penelope Primrose made a difference, too. Marjorie was very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.

After much discussion the leaders of the Remove had agreed to give a public welcome to the girls' school.

Bulstrode and his friends had scoffed, but scoffing made no difference to Harry Wharton. As it fortunately happened that Miss Penelope and her pupils were to arrive on Wednesday, the half-holiday, Wharton had a good opportunity of carrying out his scheme.

Hence the party of blushing juniors waiting on the Friardale road.

Nearly all the Remove had joined in the scheme, but on Wednesday afternoon many of them found their courage fail.

There was really no danger, as Wharton patiently pointed out. They knew Marjorie Hazeldene, and the other girls were probably quite harmless. But the bashfulness of some of the fellows was too strong. From over thirty adherents, Wharton's party dwindled to less than a dozen by the time he took up his stand on the Friardale road.

Before them the road made a sweeping curve towards the village. Up the road and round the corner, the girls for the new school were to come, walking from the station to their new home.

"That's right," said Harry Wharton, who was the coolest there, though there was a slight colour in his cheeks. "Keep steady! There's nothing to be afraid of!"

Bob Cherry was performing mysterious evolutions with his necktie. He wanted to have it

THERE ARE LAUGHS GALORE IN THIS GRAND YARN OF HARRY WHARTON & CO. AND THE FAIR PUPILS OF CLIFF HOUSE.

straight for once, but his fingers seemed all thumbs just now. The necktie always seemed to be obstinate, but never had it been so obstinate as now.

"Wharton, old chap, just set this for me!" said Bob Cherry.

"Right-ho!" laughed Harry.

He adjusted the refractory tie at last. Bob Cherry heaved a sigh of relief. Wharton turned back to his row of red-faced followers. A place in the ranks was empty, and there was a rustling in the bushes by the road.

"Come back, Micky!" shouted Wharton wrathfully.

But Micky Desmond did not reply. He was gone. Several other juniors were strongly inclined to follow his example, but, under Wharton's eye, they did not care to make a movement of retreat.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Well, what is it, Bunter?" said Harry, who had his followers in readiness now, and felt that he could spare a moment. "Buck up!"

"It's occurred to me what Bulstrode wanted the fireworks for."

"Bulstrode—fireworks! What are you talking about?"

"Bulstrode made Mrs. Mible look over her old stock she had left over from the last Fifth," explained Bunter. "I was in the tuckshop, and I saw him. He bought a lot—as many as if it were the Fifth of November to-day, I should think. I wondered what he wanted them for at the time."

Wharton looked thoughtful. He remembered the threat of the Remove bully that he would give the Cliff House girls a surprise on their arrival.

"The—the cad!" he muttered. "He can't mean to—"

"By Jove, he does!" exclaimed Nugent. "Bulstrode was among the trees up the road when I came by a couple of minutes ago. I saw him there!"

In a moment Wharton divined Bulstrode's scheme; and whether the girls were frightened or not by the fireworks, it would be an act of rudeness that would very likely lead to strained relations from the start between Greyfriars and Cliff House.

At any moment now they expected to see Miss Penelope Primrose and her pupils appear round the bend in the road. It was there that Nugent had seen Bulstrode in the trees by the roadside.

There was not a second to lose.

"Stay here, you chaps!" exclaimed Wharton quickly. "Don't shift. I'll just buzz along and see Bulstrode. If I'm not back by the time they arrive, you can take my place, Nugent!"

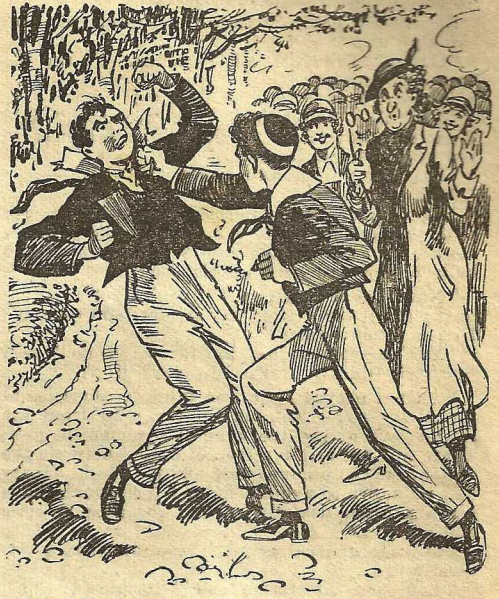
"I—I— Oh, all right!" said Nugent. "But—but perhaps I'd better come and show you where Bulstrode is."

"Right! You can take my place, Bob!"

Bob Cherry was too dismayed to reply. Wharton and Nugent raced down the road and ran into the trees at the bend. There was a sharp exclamation, and Bulstrode started up before them.

Coming to Blows!

BULSTRODE was startled as he looked at Wharton and Nugent. He had been kneeling on the ground, and the reason was apparent at a glance. An oil-lamp was lighted there, hidden in the grass among the trees, and



Miss Penelope Primrose put up her glasses and looked at the fighting juniors as though she could scarcely believe her eyes. Wharton and Bulstrode were too engrossed in the fight to notice the new spectators. "Boys!" exclaimed Miss Penelope.

beside it was a cardboard box crammed with fireworks. The lamp was evidently placed in readiness for lighting the fuses, so that there should be no delay over matches when the time for action came.

"What—what do you want?" stuttered Bulstrode.

"What are you going to do with those fireworks?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Mind your own business!"

"You're going to throw them into the road to explode when Miss Primrose comes by, and frighten the girls."

"Well, suppose I am?"

"Well, you're a rotten cad to think of such a thing, that's all" said Wharton, between his teeth, "and you shan't do it!"

"Who'll stop me?" demanded Bulstrode fiercely.

"I will!"

"Look here, you can mind your own business! If I choose to jape the girls' school, it's no affair of yours! I'm not asking you to join in. What are you doing?" roared Bulstrode.

The question was somewhat superfluous. Harry Wharton had brought his foot down on the lighted lamp, extinguishing it at once.

"That's for a start!" said Wharton. "Pick up those fireworks, will you, Frank?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll knock you flying if you touch them!" shouted Bulstrode.

"I'll see about that! Frank, take them!"

Nugent stooped and picked up the fireworks. Bulstrode, red with rage, jumped to strike him,

but he found Wharton in his way. Harry seized the bully by the shoulders, swung him round, and hurled him bodily into the thickets.

Bulstrode, badly scratched, stared at him blankly.

"Cut off, Frank!" said Wharton. "Take the fireworks with you!"

"They're mine!" howled Bulstrode.

"You shall have them back presently," said Wharton disdainfully. "They'll be returned to you at Greyfriars later."

"I'm going to have them now!"

"Off you go!"

Nugent nodded, and hurried away with the box of fireworks under his arm. Bulstrode made a motion to follow him, and Wharton faced the bully of the Remove with clenched fists.

"Now," he said quietly, "if you've got anything to say about the matter, say it now, and quickly! I've no time to waste!"

"You've—you've gone too far this time!" said Bulstrode thickly. "Put up your fists!"

Wharton obeyed. He was thinking uneasily of the girls' school walking up the road from the station, and due on the scene at any moment now. There was but a thin screen of bushes between the spot where the juniors stood and the road. Harry had no desire to avoid a fight, but he would have given a great deal to leave it for another time and place.

Bulstrode guessed as much, too, and hence was determined.

"You—you interfering cad!" he hissed. "I'll give you a licking, at least, and you'll have a swelled nose to show Marjorie Hazeldene when she comes along!"

"Come on!" said Wharton quietly.

And Bulstrode came on, and under the trees, fresh in their spring green, the two juniors were soon at it hammer-and-tongs.

Frank Nugent had hurried back to the rest, and he tossed the box of fireworks on the ground, where it lay beside the large cardboard box containing the bouquet Harry Wharton was to present to Miss Penelope, with a neat little speech.

The bouquet was one of the finest that could be obtained at the Friardale florist's, and the speech had been composed by all the Remove putting their heads together over it. Wharton, with his musical voice, was just the fellow to deliver the speech effectively.

Unfortunately, Wharton was off the scene now.

"Where's Harry?" asked Bob Cherry.

Nugent jerked his thumb towards the thicket at the bend of the road.

"Talking to Bulstrode."

"I—I hope he'll be back for—for——"

"Well, if he isn't, you can take his place. You know the speech by heart."

"I—I think you had better take his place, Nugent!" stammered Bob. "You—you are much better at that sort of thing."

"Not at all, Bob. Your elocution is better than mine."

"Well, suppose Trevor does it."

"No fear!" said Trevor

"Russell is jolly good at delivering a speech," said Nugent persuasively

"You're not going to get me addressing a giddy schoolmistress, though" said Russell.

"Look here——"

"I'll look as long as you like, Cherry, but you're

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not going to shove it off on to me! Wharton left it to you."

There was a sudden exclamation from Bunter.

"I say you fellows, look there!"

There was no need for Bunter to speak. The fellows were looking. Down the road two figures, struggling desperately, had reeled out from the trees, and Wharton and Bulstrode were fighting like tigers in full view in the middle of the road.

"My only hat!" gasped Nugent. "Look! There come the girls!"

They were only a hundred yards or so from the bend of the road, and all was plain in their sight. Round the curve came the future pupils of Cliff House.

Very fresh and pretty they looked, too. There was something pleasant, though severe, in the features of Miss Penelope Primrose, the headmistress of Cliff House, who walked at the head of the party, talking to Marjorie Hazeldene and a stoutly built girl of German features.

But Miss Penelope broke off, with a gasp, at the sight of the two fighting juniors in the road.

"Goodness gracious!"

The Cliff House pupils came to a halt and stared at Harry Wharton and Bulstrode.

The Reception!

MISS PENELOPE put up her glasses and looked at the fighting juniors as though she could scarcely believe her eyes. Wharton and Bulstrode, too deeply engrossed in the fight to notice anything else, remained unconscious of the new spectators for some moments.

"Boys!" said Miss Penelope in an awful voice. Wharton started, and suddenly dropped his hands.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Stop!"

"I don't care for the old cat!" said Bulstrode savagely. "I'll stop if you give me best, not otherwise!"

"I don't—!"

"Then come on!"

Wharton gritted his teeth hard. To fight before the horrified lady and the girls was impossible.

"Very well, Bulstrode; I give you best."

"Good!"

Bulstrode stepped back. Wharton faced Miss Penelope. There was a cut on his cheek, and a trickle of red from the corner of his mouth.

"Boy," said Miss Primrose, "how—how can you fight in this savage fashion!"

"I am sorry, madam!"

"I am glad," said Miss Primrose, "that you are sorry! It is dreadful—disgusting!"

Wharton turned crimson. Bulstrode, grinning, shoved his hands into his pockets, and whistled as he strode away through the trees, to show that he, at least, did not care for the opinion of Miss Primrose.

Wharton would gladly have escaped, but he could not walk away rudely while Miss Penelope was talking to him.

"My dear little boy," went on Miss Penelope, apparently unconscious of the fact that Harry was not a little boy, but a sturdy fellow, "how can you fight in this dreadful way? What would your mother say?"

As Harry Wharton did not remember his mother, who had died when he was a baby, he could not very well answer the question.

"What would your teacher say?" resumed Miss Penelope, who evidently felt herself called upon

to improve the shining hour by administering a little moral instruction to the culprit.

Wharton was crimson. He would have given a term's pocket-money for the earth to open and swallow him up.

"Let dogs," said Miss Penelope, "delight to bark and bite, my dear boy! But you—Repeat those touching lines, Clara, and they may have a softening effect upon this unfortunate boy!"

The young lady addressed as Clara was a golden-haired, blue-eyed, rather mischievous-looking young person. There was a glimmer of fun in her eyes as she recited the lines in a sing-song voice for the edification of the unhappy Removite.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
It is their nature to;
Let bears and lions growl at night—"

"And fight, my dear," corrected Miss Penelope.

"Let bears and lions growl at night and fight," went on Miss Clara demurely. "They've nothing else to do."

There was a slight sound of laughter among the pupils of Cliff House as Clara concluded her somewhat original version, but a glance from Miss Penelope restored an almost preternatural gravity.

"Remember those little lines, little boy," said Miss Penelope, patting Wharton on the head. Wharton wriggled. "When you are tempted to raise your hand in anger, remember those lines. Marjorie, I am surprised at you smiling at such a moment!"

"I—I'm sorry!" stammered Marjorie. "I hope so. Remember my words, little boy. And now run away!"

Wharton stood aside for the girls to pass. He looked as if the whole of the blood in his body had been pumped into his face. Marjorie gave him a compassionate glance, but most of the other girls were smiling.

The girls walked on. Meanwhile, the Greyfriars juniors were waiting up the road. The reception planned by Harry Wharton would probably have gone off very well if he had been there; but, with the bashful Bob at the head of it, there were certain to be troubles.

"They're coming, Nugent!" whispered Bob, in great anguish. "Take the bouquet ready—"

"You're to take it!"

"But you're going to make the speech."

"I can't; I've forgotten the words!"

"I say, you fellows, suppose we cut as Wharton isn't here—"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "I—I don't think it's a good idea to go on—without Wharton, you know. Let's—"

"Rats!" said Trevor. "They've seen us."

"Yes, but—"

"Lot of idiots we should look, running off like a lot of startled rabbits!"

"Here they are, Bob! Buck up!"

"I—I—"

"It's all right—easy as anything!"

And Nugent pushed the crimson junior forward as Miss Penelope majestically halted.

Under the eyes of the Cliff House procession the juniors felt less at their ease than ever.

The girls looked surprised and amused. The blushes in the juniors' faces were a confession of weakness, and the weaker the position of the

boys, the stronger, of course, the position of the girls. The fair pupils felt themselves on a vantage ground, surveying the blushing juniors, as it were, from a superior standpoint. They smiled, and their smiling was the last straw. The Removites stood dumb and crimson, their eyes fixed on the ground.

Bob Cherry hardly dared even look at Miss Penelope as he advanced hesitatingly towards her.

He raised his cap, and all the other juniors raised their caps as if by clockwork.

"Goodness gracious!" said Miss Penelope.

"If you please, ma'am," stammered Bob Cherry, trying to recollect the speech. He knew it by heart, when he was self-possessed. Now the words seemed to escape him. "If you please, ma'am, we are grey juniors—"

"Juniors of Greyfriars!" whispered Nugent.

"I—I mean, juniors of Greyfriars, ma'am. As our school—I mean your school—is being opened to-day, we—we thought—What on earth did we think, Nugent, you beast?" whispered Bob Cherry.

"Thought we ought to give 'em a welcome."

"We—we thought we ought to give you a welcome, ma'am, and your pupils," said Bob Cherry. "The opening of a girls' school in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars is a most suspicious circumstance—"

"Auspicious occasion, you ass!" muttered Trevor.

"I—I mean a most auspicious occasion, ma'am, and I beg to present you with a girls' school—I—I mean, a bouquet—"

Words failed Bob Cherry, and he held out the box. The bouquet ought to have been taken out to be presented, but Bob was too confused to think of it. Nugent tried to whisper that he had picked up the wrong box, but Bob was deaf to everything.

"Goodness gracious!" said Miss Penelope, putting up her glasses, and surveying the fireworks that Bob Cherry was generously offering her. "I—I am amazed! What use can I possibly have for—for Roman candles and crackers?"

"My—my hat!" gasped the unhappy Bob.

He dropped the box to the ground. He was evidently at the end of his resources, and Nugent had to rush to the rescue. He picked up the bouquet.

"If you please, ma'am, will you accept this bouquet with the kind regards of the juniors of Greyfriars?"

Miss Penelope beamed.

"Yes, certainly! I think this is very charming of these dear little boys—so different from the brutal exhibition we have just witnessed, girls."

"Oh, yes, Miss Primrose," said the girls.

"I thank you most sincerely!" said Miss Penelope. "I accept the bouquet with pleasure—in the spirit in which it is presented. I am glad to see so much really proper feeling among you dear little boys. If those unhappy boys who were fighting are schoolmates of yours, I hope you will point out gently, but firmly, the error of their ways."

"Yes, certainly!" gasped Nugent.

"Thank you! We will now proceed, girls!"

They proceeded.

Hazeldene grinned at his sister, but the rest of the Removites stood, cap in hand, with blushing faces while the procession walked on.

Bob Cherry drew a deep breath as the last of the smiling girls vanished round a turn in the road.

"My—my hat! This is the last time I shall be chiselled into presenting bouquets to a girls' school! Br-r-r!"

A Shock for Bulstrode!

HARRY WHARTON had not waited to see the presentation. He was at Greyfriars, bathing the bruises on his face under a tap in a bath-room, when the juniors came in. He turned a glowing countenance, streaming with water, towards Bob Cherry and Nugent as they looked in at the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry. "It was rotten bad luck for you."

"Yes," growled Wharton. "I had a lecture from Miss Primrose—nice, after interfering with that cad to save her from a shock!"

"We've promised to remonstrate with you," said Bob.

"Th?"

"And point out the error of your ways."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"We're only keeping our word to Miss Primrose. Beloved youth, think upon the error of your ways! Turn from the downward path while yet there is time! O my 'earers— Oh!"

Bob Cherry broke off as a cake of soap caught him in the mouth.

"Ow! Beast!"

"Will you have the sponge next?" asked Wharton.

"Ow! Pax! I suppose we've remonstrated enough to redeem our promise. I wonder what Marjorie thought of you, fighting in the high road?"

Wharton flushed.

"I shall explain to Marjorie when I see her."

"Of course. You might explain to Miss Primrose, too, if you get a chance. She must have had quite a wrong impression of you," grinned Bob Cherry. "I hope you gave Bulstrode a good hiding."

"I don't know; we both seemed to have some hard knocks. Did the presentation go off all right?"

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry confidently. "I made the speech pretty well."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"What are you cackling at, you ass?"

"I'm thinking of the way you made the speech."

"Oh, rats! Miss Primrose seemed pleased, anyway. By the way, I've told Bunter to take those fireworks back to Bulstrode, Harry."

"That's right!"

Wharton dried his face, and the chums of the Remove strolled away together. Billy Bunter met them, with the cardboard box full of fireworks in his hands. The fat junior blinked at them.

"I can't find Bulstrode, you fellows. He hasn't come in yet."

"Shove 'em into his study, then."

"Can't you shove 'em in?" said Bunter aggressively. "You know I don't like going upstairs when I can avoid it."

"How can I take them when I've got my hands in my pockets?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Besides, it will bring down your fat—a little exercise," said Bob kindly. "Run upstairs at top speed, and—"

"I'm not going to do anything of the sort! I think—I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't walk away while I'm talking! Blessed if I'm

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going up to Bulstrode's study!" murmured Billy Bunter, as he found himself alone. "Here, I say, Wun Lung, will you take these fireworks up to Bulstrode's room?"

Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, paused with a sleepy smile.

"You're a lighter weight than I am," said Bunter persuasively. "Look here, I'm expecting a postal order this evening. I'll stand you a bit of a feed when it comes. Will you take this to Bulstrode's study?"

"Me takee!"

And the little Celestial cheerfully took the box and went upstairs with it. He was some little time in Bulstrode's study, and when he came out of the study he seemed to be amused at something. But Wun Lung became suddenly grave as a burly form came along the passage, and Bulstrode scowled at him.

Wun Lung scuttled off. It was not safe for him to get within reach of the bully of the Remove. There were two fellows at Greyfriars with whom Wun Lung was always at daggers drawn—Bulstrode of the Remove, and Ionides of the Sixth.

Bulstrode went into his study. He was feeling somewhat sore from his encounter with Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove was a hard hitter. But there was great satisfaction in the thought that he had forced Wharton to give him best. If Harry renewed the contest, it would end differently, and Bulstrode knew that. Still, for the present there was satisfaction in the thought.

Bulstrode growled as he saw that his fire was out. Although, as a member of a junior Form, he was not entitled to the services of a fag, the Remove bully usually found some small boy to fag for him, rewarding him with kicks or ha'pence, according to his humour. Bulstrode noticed that the fire was laid ready for him, and the grate had been carefully swept. This discovery caused his face to clear a little, and he felt in his pockets for a match, struck it, and stooped down over the grate.

He lighted the fire. A quaint little face looked in for a moment at the door as he did so, and grinned. But it vanished as Bulstrode rose to his feet.

The paper stuffed in the grate under the sticks flared, and a thick smoke went up the chimney. There was a sound of fizzing in the fire, but Bulstrode did not notice it.

He picked up his kettle to fill it with water for tea. Hazeldene, who shared his study, came to the door at that moment to come in. Bulstrode held out the kettle to him.

"Fill this," he said.

"Oh rats!" said Hazeldene. "I didn't come here to fag."

"Did you come to get a thick ear?" asked Bulstrode unpleasantly. "If you did, you're going the right way to work. I— Oh! What's that? Ow!"

Bulstrode broke off as a terrific explosion came from the fire.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Bang! Bang!

Fiz-z-z-z!

Hazeldene jumped clear of the floor in startled amazement.

"What the—who—how—"

Crack! Bang! Fizz!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The fragments of the fire were hurled in all directions. Exploding crackers jumped about the

room, and squibs and rockets and Roman candles added merrily to the din and confusion.

Bulstrode staggered away from the grate in amazement. With an almost stupefied look he stood with his back against the farthest wall, watching the explosions from the fire.

Hazeldene scuttled out into the passage.

"Fire!" he yelled.

Wun Lung came rushing up. He had one of the fire-buckets from the row at the end of the passage in his hands, and it was full of water.

The Chinese was ready for the alarm.

"Fire!" shouted Bulstrode in the study.

"Me helpee!" panted Wun Lung.

He rushed into the room with the bucket of water.

To swamp half of it on the fire was the work of a second, and a thick cloud of smoke rolled round the study. Then, with a swing of the arm, Wun Lung sent the rest of the water over Bulstrode.

The Remove bully gave a roar.

"Me savee you!"

"You—you mad beast!"

"Me savee your life!" beamed Wun Lung. "No trouble to tankee. Me know you jolly glateful."

"You—you heathen beast! I'll—I'll—"

Bulstrode rushed at the Chinese, who dodged out of the study.

The drenched bully of the Remove followed him furiously. In the passage Wun Lung was sprinting along as if on the cinder-path; but Bulstrode's long legs covered the ground rapidly. The little Chinese threw the fire bucket behind him at the psychological moment, and Bulstrode stumbled over it and measured his length on the linoleum. Before he could regain his feet the little Celestial had vanished.

Bulstrode limped back to his study. The fire had gone out, and the grate was swimming with water. Smoke and blacks were everywhere. Bulstrode looked round the study, and then stamped out of it and went down to the Common-room.

Great News!

"HURRAH!"

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh—the Famous Four of the Remove—were seated in their study, finishing their preparation. Billy Bunter was reclining in the easychair, having done his work as well as he ever did it. He had had his tea, and a small loan from Wharton had enabled him to follow it up with a feed in the tuckshop. And so just now the fat junior was feeling especially contented and satisfied with himself generally.

He was just sinking into a pleasant doze when Hazeldene burst into the study excitedly, waving a letter in his hand.

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry dropped three or four blots, and looked round ferociously. Wharton rose to his feet.

"Off your rocker?" he asked.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!" chanted Hazeldene.

"What's the matter?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Look here! I've a jolly good mind to wipe this ink off on your silly chivy!"

"Hurrah!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "What is the causefulness of the esteemed hurrahful rejoicing of our worthy chum?"

"It's simply ripping!" said Hazeldene. "I always said she was a jolly good sort—at least, if I didn't say so, I thought so. Anyway, I think so now."

"I say, you fellows, turn that noisy beast out of the study! I was just getting into such a beautiful doze!"

"No time for dozes now," said Hazeldene. "I've got the best news you've heard for a dog's age. Hurrah!"

"Look here, a little less hurrah and a little more news!" said Wharton. "What's it all about?"

"I've just had this letter——"

"From Marjorie?" asked Bob Cherry eagerly.

"No; from the headmistress of Cliff House—Miss Penelope Primrose."

"Oh!"



Bob Cherry dragged Hurree Singh round violently, dancing what he thought was a waltz. He stamped on Inky's toes, and the Indian junior let up a wail of anguish. "Ow! Oh, my worthy chum——"

"But it's a ripping letter! She says she much appreciates the kindness shown by the juniors of Greyfriars in extending a hearty welcome to the new school."

"Good!" said Wharton. "I'm glad she's pleased, though my part of the performance didn't seem to go down very well."

"Ha, ha, ha! She's thinking, of course, of the graceful way Bob Cherry presented her with the box of fireworks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob, turning red. "Get on with the washing!"

"Very well. Miss Penelope is giving a sort of celebration at the new school to celebrate the opening, you know."

Billy Bunter was upright at once.

"A feed, I suppose?" he asked. "That's a ripping idea. If Miss Primrose wanted any expert advice, I'd go over and help with pleasure."

"I dare say there'll be a feed," assented Hazeldene. "There's generally something to eat at a dance."

"A dance!" exclaimed three or four voices.

Hazeldene nodded.

"That's the wheeze. Miss Primrose is giving a little dance to-morrow night to celebrate the opening of the school, and we're invited."

"Hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Thought you'd say that," grinned Hazeldene. "Of course, lots of us don't dance, but there's bound to be a good feed. That's the thing, you know."

"Yes, rather!" said Billy Bunter, with emphasis. "I suppose I'm on the list, Vaseline?"

"I suppose so," said Hazeldene, with a disparaging look at the fat junior. "Miss Primrose has asked all who were connected with the plan of giving her a public welcome. You were with us?"

"Of course I was! It was really my idea!"

"Oh, cheese it! It was Wharton's idea, and a blessed hard job he had to get us to back him up and carry it out," said Hazeldene. "But it's turned out jolly well. It was worth the trouble. But I haven't told you all. The affair is to be fancy dress, that's the beauty of it. I'm going to wire home for my toga and things."

"Your which?"

"My toga. I've done Brutus, you know, in amateur theatricals. I shall go as Brutus. Bunter had better go as the circus Fat Boy. He won't have to make up, then."

"Oh, really, Vaseline!"

"Miss Primrose has written to me because I'm

Marjorie's brother," explained Hazeldene. "But she says I'm to bring all the fellows who had a hand in the welcome, if they care to come, and any others I think suitable. There's really no limit; but, of course, it's understood that only juniors are going."

The chums of the Remove looked very cheerful. A fancy dress ball was a little out of the common, and was a welcome break in the even tenor of their way.

Dancing, of course, did not appeal to boys so much as it would have appealed to girls; but the idea of going in costume and mask was attractive. And there was the supper for those who cared for it, and their name, of course, would be legion.

Free chocolates and ices for juniors who were mostly out of pocket-money towards the end of the week—there was something very enticing in the mere thought! Billy Bunter was already dreaming dreams of the supper-room.

"We'll all go!" said Wharton. "We're much obliged to Miss Primrose. We must write her a really nice letter in return."

"Yes, rather! She says she's sorry it's such short notice, but she has only just decided to let the celebration take the form of a dance to which gentlemen can be invited," explained Hazeldene. "As a matter of fact, I believe the giddy festival was going to be the usual girls' school affair—weak tea and cake, you know, and no boys or dogs admitted. Then this stunning wheeze about giving 'em a public reception made her think of us. Shows she's a jolly good sort."

"Ripping!"

"Blessed if I know how I shall get on with the dancing," said Bob Cherry dubiously. "I can waltz—"

"Ha, ha! Most of us will be a little bit wanting there, but a fellow's not bound to dance, you know."

"Of course not," said Bunter. "I shall be in the supper-room most of the time."

"Of course, a fellow's expected to dance at a dance," remarked Harry Wharton. "It's rather piggish to go to a dance and lounge about after the refreshments, and leave the ball-room full of wallflowers, as lots of chaps do. It doesn't matter if you don't dance well."

"Yes, that's all very well," grunted Bob Cherry. "You're a good dancer!"

"Yes; but look here—a girl would rather have a bad dancer than a silly chump who doesn't dance at all," said Harry. "We can get a little practice to-day and to-morrow, too, and every chap ought to do his best."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "You'll have to put me through my paces, that's all. Are you going to answer the letter, Vaseline?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Fill it up with best thanks, then, and delighted to come, and so on. Let Miss Primrose see we're grateful. It's really awfully good of her to think of us. When this gets out, all the Remove will want to come."

"Well, I suppose we can take most of the Form," said Hazeldene. "It's a good idea to have more boys than girls. It makes a dance a success, as every girl is asked, then; and the fellows who miss dances don't mind it so much as girls do. We'll take nearly all the Form."

"Yes. After all, they were nearly all in the welcoming business, but they didn't back up to the end," Nugent remarked. "It's only fair; but

FRANK RICHARDS tells of

"THE DOWNFALL OF HARRY WHARTON!"

Harry Wharton has always been on top in the Remove at Greyfriars.

But now comes the time when he reaches the cross-roads—when misunderstandings arouse his proud, headstrong nature, and cause him to fall out with his Form-master and his friends.

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I think we shall have a tussle to keep the seniors out."

"Yes, rather. There's the Upper Fourth—Temple, Dabney & Co. will be ready to tear their hair about it."

"Let 'em tear it!"

"And there's Ionides of the Sixth. He fancies himself awfully in dress clothes. He would live in 'em if he could."

"Sixth Formers are barred, of course. We're not going to take along big chaps who would patronise us, and put us in the shade."

"Rather not!"

"Thought I'd come and tell you first," said Hazeldene. "I'll get along now, and let the others into it. There'll be a rush on the costumier's in Friardale. Most of us who belong to the Operatic Society have some togs already, luckily."

And Hazeldene left the study. Bob Cherry took hold of the table and dragged it back against the wall. The others stared at him in astonishment.

"We're just going to begin," explained Bob.

"We haven't finished our prep yet."

"Blow the prep! I want to get into form for the dance, and you can put me through it for a start, Harry!"

"But the prep—"

"Prep be hanged!"

"Oh, very well!" said Harry, laughing. "Here goes. Get your mouth-organ, Frank, and play us a waltz."

Nugent obliged with the mouth-organ, and Bob Cherry, with a feeling that he was a baby elephant learning tricks, began to practise.

Bob Cherry Waltzes!

THUMP, thump, thump!
Bump, bump!

The study door opened, and a startled face looked in.

"Faith, and is it murtherin' each other ye are intoirly?" asked Micky Desmond excitedly.

"Clear out!"

"But what's the matter intoirly?"

"We're practising to dance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry seized the poker and rushed towards the door. Micky skipped out into the passage and ran, still laughing hysterically.

Bob flung the poker into the grate with a clang.

"Silly ass! Why, you dummies are cackling, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you? I can't see anything funny."

"Of course you can't," said Nugent. "We can, though."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Get on with the washing, old chap. You're progressing a treat. All I want to know is, whether you're doing a waltz or a Highland fling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry cast an eye towards the poker again, but Nugent struck up a waltz tune on the mouth-organ, and Bob Cherry tried to get into step. Harry Wharton gave directions and explanations. Bob had said that he could waltz, but it began to be clear that he had exaggerated.

The bumping of his feet on the carpet made a row that could be heard half over Greyfriars. There was a sound of tramping on the stairs, and Blundell of the Fifth put his head in at the door. Blundell was looking red and furious.

"You howling asses!" he roared. "What is this fiendish row about?"

"Oh, bunk! I'm practising dancing!"

"Dancing! Steam-rolling, you mean!"

"Oh, buzz off, Blundy! Your face worries me!"

"My fist'll worry you if you don't stop that row!"

"Rats! I suppose a chap can waltz in his own study?"

"Take your shoes off, then!" shouted Blundell.

"The row can be heard all over the beastly House!"

"I never thought of that. I've got some light dancing pumps somewhere."

Blundell glared and went out, and Bob Cherry hunted for bi-dancing pumps. He found them and changed his shoes, and then his practice was a little quieter. But only a little. His idea of dancing seemed to be to fling up his feet and bring them down on the floor as heavily as possible, and in that he was successful.

He remonstrated with Nugent for not keeping correct time with the music, though, as a matter of fact, Nugent was quite correct in time. But something was wrong somewhere, and Bob Cherry wasn't inclined to admit that it was his dancing.

"Oh, keep time, do!" he said for the tenth time.

Nugent removed the mouth-organ from his lips.

"Look here, Bob, the fault is your feet! You're only supposed to put in a certain amount of steps at a certain rate—not to stamp on the floor at record speed, as if you wanted to go through it into the Form-room!"

Bob Cherry glared.

"I'm keeping time all right, ass!"

"Yes; that time you're keeping would do all right for a one-step, but it's no good for a waltz!"

And Nugent struck up another waltz.

"Come and be my partner, one of you!" grunted Bob Cherry. "I can't learn the blessed steps without a partner! Of course, as far as that goes, I know the steps all right. I'm a pretty good waltzer. It's only practice I want."

"The wantfulness is terrific!"

"Come on, Inky! I know you're a good dancer. You can take the lady's part," said Bob persuasively. "Gimme your fist!"

The obliging nabob consented. Bunter climbed on the table to get out of the way, and Wharton stood in a corner, and Nugent retreated behind the easychair to blow out the music from a place of safety.

Bob Cherry took the hand of the dusky junior and placed a hand round his waist.

"Not right round!" called out Wharton. "Tackle him in the middle of the back."

"There?" asked Bob, giving the unfortunate nabob a thump in the small of the back to indicate the spot he was referring to.

"Oh!" murmured Hurree Singh. "I—I'm painfully hurt, my worthy chum! The breathfulness is short!"

"No; lower down!" said Wharton, laughing. "That will do. Now begin again, Nugent."

The music started, and Bob Cherry danced.

The Nabob of Bhanipur was light and graceful, and an excellent dancer, and he could take the lady's place with ease and grace. Unfortunately, Bob Cherry was not quite up to faking the gentleman's place.

He dragged Hurree Singh round violently, dancing what he thought was a waltz. He stamped on Inky's toes as a start, and a wail of anguish came from the poor Indian.

"Ow! Oh, my worthy chum——"

"It's all right! Keep step!"

"But——"

"Keep step! Don't put me out now I've once started!"

Hurree Singh was dancing under difficulties on one leg, as the other foot had been too damaged to be risked again near Bob Cherry's feet.

But even on one leg the nabob was able to hop through it and keep time.

Bob Cherry had fairly started now. As a matter of fact, all he really wanted was confidence, and not to think about his feet too much. Once started, he went on doing the thing correctly from instinct till he began to doubt about the steps, and then, of course, all went wrong. Exactly what went wrong no one saw. But Bob Cherry's feet became mixed up with the nabob's, and they rolled on the hearthrug.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites could not help it. Bob Cherry's look, as he sat up on the hearthrug, was too funny for words.

Hurree Singh had rolled under the table. He showed no disposition to come out. Bob staggered to his feet.

"Oh, stop that cackling!" he exclaimed. "I—I think I lost step!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I was really Inky's fault!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, Inky! We got on pretty well that time; let's have another try."

"The getonfulness was great!" groaned the nabob. "But the bumpfulness on the worthy floor was terrific! I fear I cannot dance again!"

"Stuff! Come out!"

"With the esteemed permission of my honourable chum, I will remainfully stay where I am!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"Well, you come, Wharton! You won't be as clumsy as Inky!"

"I'm afraid I might be!" grinned Wharton. "I'll be a wallflower, if you don't mind, Bob. I—I want to sit out this dance."

Bob Cherry grunted. In a ball-room he would doubtless have secured some unhappy partner, but in Study No. 1 there were no takers. But just then the study door opened, and Temple of the Upper Fourth looked in.

"You fellows had better make a little less row," he said. "I——"

"There's your partner, Bob!"

"Good! This way, Temple!"

"What are you up to?" roared the elegant captain of the Upper Fourth, as Bob dragged him into the study. "Leggo!"

"You're my partner for this dance!"

"Are you off your silly rocker? Leggo!"

Nugent struck up the music. Bob Cherry began to waltz, and Temple had to go round with him, whether he liked it or not. He was doing more struggling than dancing, however.

The juniors roared with laughter, and Nugent could hardly keep up the blasts of the mouth-organ. Round the study they went careering. They crashed into the bookcase, and Temple's shoulder went through the glass, and there was a crash. They bumped against the table and sent it reeling, and there was a roar from Billy Bunter as he slid off and bumped on the floor.

Nugent, unable to play any longer, dropped his instrument and shrieked with merriment. But Bob Cherry went on dancing. Chairs went spinning to right and left until, with a final bump, the waltzers went to the floor.

They sat up rather dazedly and looked at one another.

But before they could do more, there was a rush of feet in the passage, and three or four angry Sixth Formers rushed in.

Temple had come as a messenger from the Sixth Form prefects that the noise was to cease, and its growing worse instead of better naturally caused the angry passions of the Sixth to rise. Wingate, North, Carberry, and Ionides rushed into the study.

They didn't waste time in words.

They collared the juniors, careless of remonstrance and resistance, and kicked them out of the study. The Removites scattered in the passage, dodging the angry pursuit of the prefects, and Bob Cherry's dancing practice for that evening was at an end.

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Printed in England and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and Abroad: 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, April 23rd, 1938. LG