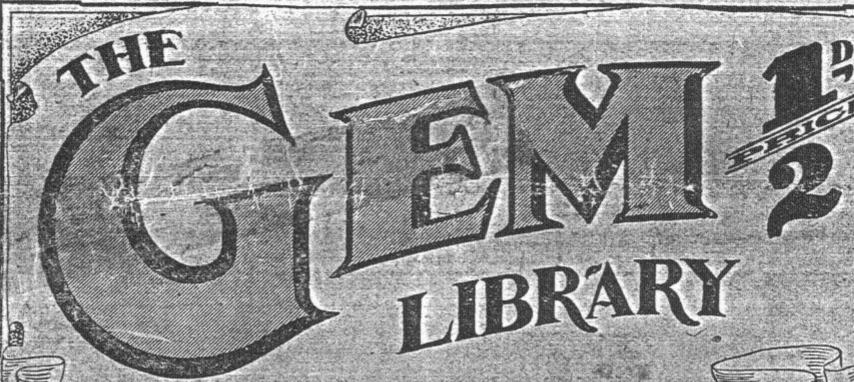
GRAND, COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE.



THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY.

MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE CREAT MEETING!

NO. 21. G

TO COME INTO
THE MEETING,
TOM MEWWY, UNLESS YOU WITHDRAW YOUR EXTWEMELY WUDE
WEMARK! SAID
ARPHUR AUGUSTUS.

VOL 1.

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CHAPTER 1

A Mysterious Meeting.

HERE was something on in the School House at St.

In the corridor upon which the studies belonging to the boys of the Shell opened, a little crowd of juniors

were collected, just outside Tom Merry's door.

Tom Merry's door was evidently the centre of attraction, and the juniors, just as evidently, were very curious to know what was going on inside that door. But it remained closed, and one bold youth who had ventured to try the handle, discovered that the door was locked. This discovery added to the intense curiosity that reigned in the

"There's a little game of some kind on," said Gore.

"What is Tom Merry up to this time?"

There was no reply to that question.

The juniors stared at the door, but the solid oak panels told them nothing. From within came a faint murmaz of voices, but the words were indistinguishable. Something was certainly "on," but what it was the juniors had no

The mystery had started when Tom Merry and his chum Manners, known in the School House as the Terrible Two, had been seen whispering together in the Shell class-room. Some brilliant idea was undoubtedly being discussed by the Terrible Two, and the others naturally wanted to know what it was about. But not a word of explanation could

Gore, who was not above listening when his curiosity was excited, had caught the words "triple alliance," uttered by Tom Merry; but as to what they could possibly mean he was completely in the dark.

It was not likely that Tom Merry and Manners were discussing European politics in whispers in the class-room at

St. Jim's, but Gore was sure that he had caught the words "triple alliance." It was a very deep mystery

When the Terrible Two, after school, were seen to walk off to their study with rapt faces and most mysterious expressions, the curiosity as to what it all meant became

Quite a little crowd of juniors were in the corridor, staring at Tom Merry's door as if they could, by the intensity of their gaze, read the secret in the oak panels, when Jack Blake came along the corridor.

Blake stared at the youngsters, and stopped at Tom Merry's door, and krocked.

"Who's there?" came a voice from within.

"Blake."

The door was opened, and Blake entered. It was in-

stantly shut again.

What on earth's the giddy game?" ejaculated Gore. suppose Tom Merry and Manners ain't furning Nihilists or Anarchists, or Suffragists, or anything of that sort? Blake and Tom Merry are always on the warpath against one another, and now they let him into the study as if he was a giddy Anarchist going to a blessed meeting of cranks."

'Hallo, here's another!" exclaimed Jimson. Herries, Blake's chum, was coming along.

He stopped and knocked at the door, just as Blake had done, and the voice from within asked the question again.

Who's there?"

"Herries." The door was opened. Herries passed into the study, and the door closed, and the click of the key was heard. During the moment that it had been open, the juniors had craned their necks to look in; but they saw nothing but the table littered with papers and books, and the rather worn patch of carpet. So far as they could see the interior of Tom Merry's study wore its accustomed aspect. What was all the mystery about, then?"

"Hallo," said Long, "here's another!"

The third of the chums of Study No. 6 was coming along

the passage.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and the crease in his trousers, and the beautiful hues of his waistcoat, showed that he had changed his clothes after school, doubtless for the purpose of coming to the meeting in Tom Merry's study

D'Arcy came solemnly up the passage, surveyed the excited juniors with a languid stare through his eyeglass, and then knocked on the door.

"Who's there?" came the now familiar question

"It is I, deah boy.".
"Is it D'Arcy?"—

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why can't you say so, then, fathead? Come in!"

The door opened.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not enter.

Come in, fathead!

"I wefuse to entah, Tom Mewwy, unless you withdwaw those extwemely obnoxious expwessions," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am—aw—not accustomed to being tweated with such extweme diswespect."

"Come in, 'unatic! Enter, fathead! Get inside, cuckoo!

Buck up, image !"

Tom Merry was evidently growing impatient.

But to these polite invitations Arthur Augustus made no response. He stood frigidly waiting for the apology to which he considered himself entitled.

"Are you coming in?"

"I am not comin' in, Tom Mewwy, until you have with-

dwawn-

"You are extwemely wude. I stwongly object to being addwessed in such a mannah."

"Blake, that thing belongs to you, so I leave you to deal

"Right-ho!" the voice of Blake was heard to exclaim

beartily.

Blake came out of the study.

He fastened a gentle grip upon the right ear of

Augustus. Come in, ducky." "Blake, you are hurtin' my ear, and I stwongly

object-"In you go!"

Blake propelled the swell of the School House into the study, and the door closed again, and cut off the objection's of Arthur Augustus from the ears of the grinning juniors

"Now they're all in!" exclaimed Jimson. "No, by Jove,

here's another."

Figgins of the New House at St. Jim's, had come up the stairs, and along the corridor, and now he stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study.

If the spectators had been amazed to see the chums of Study No. 6 enter Tom Merry's quarters as they had done, they were simply astounded to see Figgins about to do the same. For the juniors of the New House were generally at warfare with the School House boys, and while Blake and Tom Merry disputed the leadership of their side, Figgins reigned undisputed chief of the New House youngsters.

To see him come into the School House at all was rare; but to see him march up to the door of Tom Merry's study and knock for admittance, with the evident expectation of

a friendly welcome, was amazing,

If Tom Merry had been giving a feed, the fellows could have understood it.

Tom was a generous fellow, and would invite his rivals of the New House to partake of his hospitality at times, as well as his rivals nearer home in Study No. 6.

But that was not the case now. There were no signs of a feed in the study; besides, a feed would not have been

observed with such mysterious secrecy.

Knock! "Who's there?"

"Figgins."

The door opened, and Figgins went in, and it closed again. Gore stared at Jimson, and Jimson stared at Gore,

and the others stared at both of them.
"Figgins is in it, too," said Gore. "My only maiden aunt, Matilda Mary Jane! What on earth is the wheeze?"

"Ask me another," said Jimson. Gore strode towards the study. "I'm going to see!" he exclaimed. He knocked at the door. "Who's there?"

"Gore!"

"Gore? Gore, eh?"

"Yes, Gore."

"Go back to Colney Hatch, Gore!"

And the door did not move.

Gore rejoined his companions, and his colour was heightened as he saw them grinning. His attempt had failed. "Well, we're not going to leave it at that," said Jimson.

"I'll have a try. He rapped on the door with his knuckles. "Who's there?"

"Jimson."

"Go and eat coke, Jimson!"

And Jimson retired unsuccessful.
"It's no so," said Gore. "But I'll tell you what. Wherever Figgins goes, you're pretty certain to find Kerr and Wynn. Figgins & Co. are always together. The Co. will be along soon, for a dead cert, and when they go in we'll rush the door along with them, and see what Tom Merry is up to in there, anyway."

"Good idea," said Jimson.
"Jolly good," said the rest.

And they stood ready for the rush. Sure enough, before ten minutes had elapsed, two youthful forms came along the passage and stopped at Tom Merry's door.

They were Kerr, the canny Scotsman, and Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of St. Jim's, the true and tried chums of the great Figgins—the three generally going by the name of

Here's the Co.," whispered Gore. "Stand ready." Kerr and Wynn knocked at the door simultaneously.

"Who's there?" "Kerr and Wynn."

The door opened. Kerr and Wynn walked in, and at the same moment Gore, Jimson, and the crowd of juniors made a rush to follow them.

But someone inside had his foot against the door, and it had opened only just wide enough to admit the two juniors from the New House, and it did not budge in the slightest when Gore hurled himself upon it

Gore was flung back against Jimson, and Jimson stag-gered away, and went over, and several of the juniors, eagerly rushing on, fell over him. and piled themselves on nım. A hand from within gave Gore a shove which added him to the heap, and then the door was closed quickly, and the key turned in the lock.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry's Great Idea—The Triple Alliance.

OM MERRY looked round his study. "Now we're all here," he remarked, "the meeting is opened."

"And the door shut," said Blake.
"Don't be frivolous, Blake. This is a serious, solemn, and important occasion."

"Then I vote," said Figgins, "that we all proceed to be serious, solemn, and important. Blake, how dare you

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "Gussy, how dare I smile?

"Weally, Blake-"
"Silence, kids," said Tom Merry, waving his hand,

He was interrupted by a question propounded simul-

taneously by Blake and Figgins. "Who are you calling kids?"

"I withdraw the expression," said Tom Merry. "I forgot for the moment that we were not on the warpath. I should have said, young gentleman of the School House and the Monkey House—I mean the New House."

Blake was appeased, but Figgins looked rather warlike. "While you are on the subject of apologies, Tom Mewwy, you had bettah expwess wegwet in a gentlemanly mannah for the wude expwessions you used—"

"Dry up, Gussy!"..." I wefuse to dwy up..."

"Kill him, somebody! When Gussy starts talking I always get that tired feeling," said Manners plaintively. "In the interests of humanity, I think Gussy ought to be painlessly slain."

"No, you don't; you haven't the necessary apparatus,"

While D'Arcy was turning this over in his mind, trying to comprehend what Manners meant, Tom Merry resumed the broken thread of his discourse.

"Gentlemen of the School House and the Monk-New House," he said. "As you are all here, I conclude that you

have all received the little notes I sent you-

"My dear chap," said Blake admiringly, "it's easy to see why you get on so well with that detective chap Locke. That deduction you have just made is worthy of the late lamented Sherlock Holmes."

"Blake, you are called to order. Don't interrupt!"

"Oh, get on!"

"I explained in those notes that I wanted a general meeting called to discuss a certain matter, and you've all kindly come ---

"Do you mean to insinuate that I haven't any bwains, Mannahs?" demanded Arthur Augustus; the meaning of Manners's little joke having by this time dawned upon him.

"Shut up, Gussy!" "I wefuse I distinctly wefuse! Mannahs has passed a wude wemark, and I wefuse to be shut up unless Mannahs

"Back-pedal!". "Ring off!"
"Pry up!"
"I wefuse

Blake laid a gentle grip upon D'Arcy's collar.

Are you going to shut up, Aubrey, or shall I sit on your neck?" he inquired pleasantly.

"You are soilin' my collah."
"Will you dry up?"

"Y-a-a-a-as, wathah!" gurgled D'Arcy, as Blake began to shake him.

"You can get on with the washing, Tom Merry," said the chief of Study No. 6. "Whenever D'Arcy opens his mouth I am going to shake him."
"Weally, Blake—"

Shake ! "I pwotest-"

D'Arcy subsided into silence. "Some of the Sixth Form," said Tom Merry, "have got up a dramatic society, and they're going in for Shakespeare, and so on-

"They boned the idea from us," said Figgins. "The New House Amateur Dramatic Society was the first at St.

Jim's." "My idea," said Tom Merry, "is to form a dramatic society of our own—a better one than the seniors' one—".

"I tell you, the New "Your idea?" hooted Figgins.

"I know all that, Figgins-

"Amateur Dramatic-

"Let me speak!"

"Society was the first at St. Jim's."
"You'd better shake Figgins. too, Blake," said Tom
Merry, "He's worse than Gussy."

"Somebody had better try to shake me," said Figgins.
"Do you think I couldn't?" asked Blake, in an inquiring, friendly tone.
"Yes," said Figgins. "I think you couldn't—I think—
"Order, order!" said Manners.

"If you kids are going to fight," said Tom Merry, in a tone of resignation.

"Pax, old Figgy!" grinned Blake. "Shut up, and listen to the oracle! You don't seem to get on very fast explaining your idea, Tom Merry."

How the dickens can I explain my idea when you keep on interrupting?'

"He hasn't any ideas," said Figgins, "The New House Amateur Dramatic Society was the first-"."

"Blow the New House Amateur Dramatic Society!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What I mean is, to form a society embracing juniors of both houses for the purpose of—"." Any ladies in the society?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Ladies? No!" "Oh, that's all right! I don't want to be embraced

by You don't understand. I mean including juniors of both houses."

"Anyway, the lady would have to have a jolly long reach to embrace you, Fatty," said Blake, with a glance at Wynn's

"Look here, Blake..."
"Don't interrupt! Get on with the washing, Tom
Merry!"

"You look as if you could do with some, some of you School House kids," said Kerr.

If you want a dot on the boko, Kerr

"For goodness' sake," said Tom Merry, "shut up, some of you! How am I ever to get to the point?"
"Well, you don't seem to be very likely to get to it, any-

way. You're a jolly lot too long-winded, Tom Merry."

"Look here! Listen, you noisy kids—I mean young gentlemen of the Fourth Form and the Shell. My idea was to form a triple alliance." A what?"

The big words duly impressed the assembled juniors, and even Arthur Augustus forgot his crumpled collar and looked

at Tom with interest.

"A triple alliance," said Tom, pleased with the impression he had made. "The School House and the New House are always having rows, and here in the School House this study and Study No. 6 are generally at loggerheads. My idea was an alliance of the three parties, and that's the triple alliance. See?"

The juniors admitted that they saw.
"In the interests of art," said Tom Merry, "all small matters of personal strife should be forgotten; minor disputes should sink into insignificance before the all-important,

affembracing interests of art." The juniors gasped for a moment.

"He's been looking out those words in a dictionary," said

Blake, with conviction. "I haven't; I—"

"I know where he got 'em!" cried Figgins suddenly. "They're out of an essay on Ruskin or somebody, on one of the old Sixth Form examination-papers.

Tom Merry turned red. "Let's get to business!" he exclaimed hastily. "We've wasted enough time in talk. The seniors are making a lot of fuss about their acting business, and I believe we could give them the kybosh if we put our beef into it.

I think we can get ahead of the seniors in most things,"

said Manners, looking round. "Rather!" cried five voices. And another voice added

emphatically: "Yaas, wathah!" Then, is it a good idea?" asked Tom Merry. "I've asked you all to come here and discuss it, and you've all

been good enough to come." "I thought there was a feed on," said Fatty Wynn.
"Good old Fatty," said Blake; "always on the scent of

the grub!" "What do you say, chaps?" asked Tom Merry. "As for the feed, I am thinking of giving a feed to celebrate the inauguration of the triple alliance." "So you ought!" gasped Blake. "We want a pick-me-up

after having words like those fired at us.

Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Figgins; but whether he was referring to the triple alliance or the feed, was not quite

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Figgy. You-" "Of course, you'll admit that it wasn't your idea? The New House Amateur Dramatic Society was the first

"Oh, I know all that, Figgy! The triple alliance business is my idea. Let us stick together, and we'll cut out the seniors."

"We will!" exclaimed the juniors heartily.

There was one point upon which New House and School House, Shell, and Fourth Form, were agreed, and that was in asserting the dignity of their position against the Upper Form fellows. Some of the Sixth-Formers went about, as Tom Merry complained, looking as if they had never heard of the existence of the Fourth Form or the Shell. Which, of course, was not to be tamely endured by the heroes of the lower school.

"Let's put it to the vote," said Manners.
"Hands up for the triple alliance!" said Tom Merry. He started the voting by putting his own hand up. Six more hands followed suit. Only one good right hand remained down, and that belonged to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House.

'Hallo, Gussy! .What objection have you got?"

"Before I join any twiple alliance, or anything of the sort, Tom Mewwy, I must insist upon your withdwawing the wude expressions you used before I entaked this study.

Tom Merry breathed hard.
"Blake, if I had that thing in this study I should kill it, and bury it under the floor!" he exclaimed.

"I am compelled to considah my dig.," said D'Arcy. "I am not accustomed to being tweated with wudeness, and I weally insist-

Blake caught him by the collar.

Blake, I have asked you before not to be so extwemely wuff. I am afraid that our fwiendship will have to

"Put his hand up, Herries!"
Herries caught D'Arcy's right wrist and dragged his hand "I pwotest into the air.

"He's voted, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Blake.

Tom grinned.

"Good! The voting is now unanimous, gentlemen; the objections of the single dissentient having been overcome.'

"After voting, any further objections cannot be considered. It is too late to say anything more, Gussy. You had better shut up."

The voting being now unanimous, the juniors proceeded

to the discussion of details.

"So far," said Tom Merry, "we've kept the business a dead secret. There are a lot of curious kids in the passage out there who want to know all about it, but we're not going to let it get out till matters are ripe."

Hear, hear!'

"We are going to select a play," went on Tom, "and rehearse our parts. We are going to get it all ready, and then ask the Head's permission to use the lecture-hall for the performance."

Hear, hear!"

I believe you kids—I mean you young gentlemen of the Fourth Form—gave a sort of a kind of an entertainment a short time before I came to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "It ended in a bust-up, I think."

Figgins grinned. It was an old story of the concert which which had been planned by the New House juniors, and which the School House boys had got wind of, and forestalled their tivals by giving, on the evening previous to that fixed by Figgins. But Figgins & Co. had had their revenge by turning off the gas at the meter in the middle of the performance, and the concert had ended, as Tom Merry put it, in a general "bust-up."

"That's so," said Blake. "It was rather a ghastly frost,

"Never mind what it was owing to," said Tom Merry, fearing recriminations which would detract from the harmony of the newly-formed triple alliance. "I suppose it was due to a row between School House and New House. As we're allied now, that can't happen again, and so the performance we give is bound to be a success."

Hear, hear! "There are eight of us here, which is just a good number for a cast," said Tom Merry. "We are all pretty clever fellows-

"Hear, hear!"

"And Kerr, especially, is a jolly good actor, having taken us all in when he made up as the German master that

Kerr placed his hand on his heart and bowed.

"Kerr's father is an actor, I believe-"That's so."

"And so I propose making Kerr Chief of the Wardrobe and Grease Paint Department," said Tom Merry. "The funds will be placed in his hands, the accessories that are necessary."

"Hear, hear!"

"You couldn't find a better fellow for the job," exclaimed Figgins, much gratified by Tom Merry's tribute to one of

the "Co."
"I'll do my best," said Kerr modestly.
"But what about the play?" asked Blake.

"Ah, that's the question!" "The play's the thing," observed Fatty Wynn. Figgins & Co., the shining lights of the New House Amateur Dramatic Society, had been rehearsing "Hamlet," and Fatty Wynn was simply bristling with quotations from the great bard. "The play's the thing, and—"

"Exactly! Now, what ideas have you chaps got on the

"' Hamlet," said Figgins & Co. in one voice.

"'Merchant of Venice," said Blake and Herries.
"'The Woad to Wuin," said D'Arcy.
"'Dick Turpin," said Manners.

Tom Merry looked rather worried.
"We don't seem to be unanimous on that point," he remarked. "We must discuss—"

Crash!

Tom Merry was interrupted by a fearful concussion on the door, which seemed to shake the whole study. lock gave way and the door flew open.

CHAPTER 3.

The Play's the Thing,

OM MERRY gave a jump. "What the who the "'
"It's those kids!" shouted Blake. "Sock it to them."

It was indeed the "kids."

Jimson and Gore had brought a form out of one of the class-rooms, and used it by way of a battering-ram on the door of Tom Merry's study.

Excitement and curiosity in the corridor had risen to fever heat, and this desperate expedient was the result.

The crash of the form on the door smashed the lock, and the door flew open with a bang, and the form fell in the doorway.

"Come on!" howled Gore.

He led a valiant rush into the room. Jimson and the rest followed him.

The members of the Triple Alliance lined up to resist the invasion.

"Sock it to them!" roared Blake. "Hurrah! Kick them out!"

The eight juniors rushed into the fray with hearty good-

Where Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins led, victory was certain to follow, unless the odds were very great indeed. Gore received a thump on the nose which laid him on his back, and Jimson was soon laid across him; and then the rush of the invaders was stopped, and they were driven

back into the passage. Blake was rushing on in wrathful pursuit, but Tom Merry

pulled him back.

"Come in, Blake! We've no time to waste. Help me to chuck these cheeky bounders out."

"Right-ho!"

Blake and Tom Merry seized Gore by the feet and shoulders. Gore wriggled.

"Lemme alone!"

"You're going out."

"What are you kids up to in here?"

"Don't you worry about that."
"What's the giddy secret?"

"One that we're going to keep."
"Look here, I tell you—"

"Out you go!"

Gore went, landing with a thump in the passage. Herries and Manners were helping Jimson out in the same way. The door was slammed shut.

There was a crash on it from without.

Gore had returned promptly to the attack. But Tom Merry had his foot against the door.

"Give me that chair, Manners."

Manners brought the chair, and Tom jammed the back of it under the broken lock. This held the door shut as fast as the lock itself could have done.

"Now we're rid of them!" said Tom Merry, a little flushed from his exertions. "It's surprising how curious some kids are about things that don't concern them."
"Amazing!" said Blake. "Now to get to business."

"Let me see, where were we?"

"You were on the table, and I was sitting on the locker." What were we discussing? "I don't mean that.

yes, the play!"
""The play's the thing," said Fatty Wynn, ""wherein

we'll catch the—'" said Fatty Wynn, "'wherein "Just so. Now, I think you New House chaps said 'Hamlet'?"

" Yes."

"'Hamlet' is a jolly good play," said Tom Merry;
"I'm not saying anything against 'Hamlet.' I admire
Shakespeare, and I think he was an awfully clever chap;
but I hardly think that 'Hamlet' is suitable."
"Why not?" demanded Figgins & Co.

"Well, you see-" "It's splendid?" said Figgins indignantly. "There's the lines-have you ever heard anything grander?-lemme "To be or not to be. That is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to shuffle-

"Suffer," said Kerr, who was stage-manager, prompter, and general providence to the New House Amateur Dramatic Society. Figgins nodded.

Suffer Suffer The stings and arrows of outrageous fortune

"Slings and arrows," said Kerr.
"I can't see much difference," said Figgins; "stings are as poetical as slings, any day in the week. But have it your way.

"The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of bubbles-

"Troubles," said Kerr.

Figgins gave a snort. Look here, Kerr, you're talking rot! A sea of bubbles is a sensible thing, but a sea of troubles is rot. I'm pretty certain it's bubbles."

"It's troubles, fathead!" "Bubbles:"

"Troubles."

"Oh, blow your bubbles and troubles!" said Tom Merry.
"We'll take the rest of the quotation for granted.

"That isn't the best thing in 'Hamlet,'" said Fatty Wynn. "There's my speech as Polonius—

"Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice; Take each man's measure, but reserve-

"Censure," said Kerr.

"Censure? What do you mean by censure?"

"It's censure, not measure, fathead."

"I don't believe it!" said Fatty Wynn obstinately. "Take each man's measure and reserve thy judgment' good enough for me.

"Costly thy rabbits as thy purse can buy-

"Habit."

"Ass! It means that Laertes was going to buy some

white rabbits, of course."

"It doesn't. It means his togs, you ass!"

"Rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "I learned up the lines once, and though I forget some of them, I'm pretty certain about that. What do you say, Figgy?"

"Well, I know Kerr is strong on Shakespeare," said Figgy, "but I really think Fatty is right this time, Kerr, and it's rabbits."

Kerr snorted.

"Look here," said Manners, "we're not rehearsing Hamlet' now. Chuck it!"

"Right!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "As I was saying, I don't think 'Hamlet's' quite up to the mark. We should want a girl to play Ophelia, and we haven't any girls in the school, unless you think Mary, the housemaid, could

"I don't see why we couldn't leave Ophelia out." "Might as well leave out the Prince of Denmark."

"Well, if we don't have 'Hamlet,' what are you chaps thinking of?" demanded Figgins. "We don't want to be unreasonable. Let's hear your views."
"'Merchant of Venice,'" said Blake and Herries once

more. "That's a jolly good play," said Tom Merry. "I'm not

saying anything against it as a play, but—"
"My dear chap," said Blake, "I've been through it, and
I know it's just the thing. Why, think of the very opening

"In sooth, I know not why I am so bad, It wearies me-

"It isn't bad," said Kerr, "it's sad." "Perhaps you know more about it than I do?" said

Blake, with a withering look. "'It wearies me; you say it wearies you,

But how I caught it, found it, came by it, I am to learn. And such a-such a-such a-such a-"

"You've forgotten it!" said Herries. that isn't half up to my lines as Salario-"And, anyway,

"'Your mind is tossing on the ocean, There, where your argosies with portly sail, Like signiors and rich burglars on the flood-

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Kerr. "Burghers, ass, not

burglars."
"Oh, give us a rest, all of you!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't got much forrarder yet. The 'Merchant of Venice' is no good, for the same reason; we haven't a girl for Portia, and the 'Merchant of Venice' without Portia

would be like-like a sandwich with the ham left out. I really think we shall have to bar Shakespeare. He was an awfully clever chap, as I've said, and you'll agree; but he won't do.

"Well, what's the next idea?" asked Blake resignedly. "I suggested the 'Woad to Wuin,'" said Arthur

"The Road to Ruin'?" said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "That sounds a little too much like—well, rather lurid. We mustn't get up anything to shock the innocent ears of

masters and prefects. "It's awfully good, I believe," said D'Arcy. "I've never seen it or wead it, you know, and I don't weally know anythin' about it, deah boys, but my cousin told me a fellah said it was awfully good, you know."

"Well, that's such an exceedingly strong recommendation

that I really think we ought to have it;" said Blake.

Tom Merry grinned. Roads to ruin are barred. Now, Manners said Dick Turpin.'"

"I did," said Manners. "Dick Turpin was a jolly good sort," said Tom Merry. "He used to buzz round on a black horse, and have a high old time. There's the ride to York, you know, we could make a lot of that."

"Have you got the play?" asked Blake.
"No," said Manners. "My idea was to write it our-" No,'

selves."
"By Jove," said Blake, "that's a good idea! Shakespeare and those chaps are awfully clever, you know, but they're a bit out of date. I've no doubt we could knock up something between us that would be a good deal better for our purpose than 'Hamlet,' or the Merchant of Venice,'

though it might not be quite so good as those in itself."

"I was thinking of 'Little Red Riding-Hood," said Tom Merry.

"Figgins could play the Wolf so well with his face..."

face-

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You let my face alone!" said Figgins.
"I meant that as a compliment. Then Fatty Wynn would have done for Little Red Riding-hood herself, because his face is smooth, you see, and the clothes would cover up his plumpness. Never mind, 'Dick Turpin' will be all right."

"Of course," said Blake casually, "I shall be Turpin."

"Of course you won't," said Figgins. "That's the part that's just cut out for me!" "Well, I was thinking of being Dick Turpin myself," said

Manners. "How singular!" Herries remarked. "It struck me at

once that Turpin was a part I should do rippingly!"
"It is weally stwange," said D'Arcy, "but I have been thinking that Dick Turpin is just the chawacter I should be able to wepwesent in a weally wipping mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Tom Merry. "And I had ear-marked that part for myself, too. And I dare say Kerr and Wynn both thought it was a very suitable part for them-

Just so," said the Co. "We shall have to give and take," said Tom Merry. "One has to make up one's mind for a little self-sacrifice in these matters, and a chap ought to be willing to give in to the rest for the good of the cause, so I think I had better play Turpin."

Is that what you call giving in for the good of the cause?" "You don't understand. It's you others who are to give in for the good of the cause," Tom explained patiently. "Well, of all the cheek!"

"Put it to the vote," said Manners.
"That's right," said Tom. "Each of you sing out the name of the chap who is to play Turpin."

It was done. But it did not improve matters, for each of the histrionic aspirants sang out his own name.

"We haven't got much forrader," said Tom Merry. "I'll set the example of giving in, and I cast my vote for Manners, as the originator of the idea."

That settled the matter. Manners was cast for Dick urpin. Turpin.

"And after giving in like that," said Tom, "I think I ought to be awarded the part of Tom King, especially as I

have the same name as that chap."
"Hear, hear!" said Manners.
The same difficulty arose as before, each of the juniors considering that he was especially entitled to play the part of Tom King. But Manners voted for Tom Merry, and that settled it.

"That's all very well," said Blake. "It seems to me that this study is getting all the cream of the thing. You two chaps vote for each other."

"There's some more ripping parts," said Tom Merry.
"We had better bring in Jonathan Wild, I think."
"Right," said Blake. "I'll be satisfied with that."

Order next Thursday's copy of "The Gem Library" in advance. A grand complete tale of Tom Merry's schooldays, "No, Blake; we must be fair." "Fair! What do you mean?"

"Two principal parts have been awarded to the School House, and it's time the New House had a look in."

'Rather!" exclaimed Figgins emphatically.

"So I propose Figgins for Jonathan Wild."
"Oh, all right!" said Blake. "You chaps are awfully generous after you've looked out for yourselves. Let Figgy have it."

"Blake can be the landlord of the inn," said Figgins.

"All right. How do you like that, Blake?"

"Good enough," said Blake. "Consider me a giddy land-

dord."

"Let me see, I suppose there are some more characters?" said Tom thoughtfully. "It's a bit difficult settling the parts before the play is written. Never mind. We shall want an ostler, and that will suit Kerr."

"Good!" said Kerr. "Then a couple of tipstaves," said Tom Merry. "How

do you like that, Horries and Wynn?"

"All right," said Herries.

"I'd rather be Dick Turpin," said Fatty. "Still, I don't want to make trouble. I'll be a tipstave, if you make it a speaking part."

"Well, of course you won't have much to say-"Sha'n't I? We're going to write the play ourselves, aren't we?"?"

" Yes."

"Then each of us had better write up his own part, and then he'll be sure of getting a look-in," said Fatty Wynn.

"Good wheeze?" exclaimed Kerr.

"We'll settle that afterwards," said Tom Merry hastily. "There's one more part wanted, and that's for D'Arcy."

"I propose D'Arcy for Black Bess," said Figgins solemnly.

"Oh, weally, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus.

"We want a girl at the inn," said Manners."

"Yes; that's the part for Gussy," said Tom Merry.
"He'll make a nice girl of the inn, if we make him up for the part, and take his eyeglass away."

"Then it's all settled," said Blake. "But what about the horse? We can't have Dick Turpin without Black Bess.

Besides, if he's going to ride to York, he can't ride on foot, "I've thought of that," said Tom. "We are going to

have Taggles's pony.

"Taggles's pony? But he's a grey-blue-pink-sandy sort of "Easy enough to paint him black." He'll make a

"And I've ridden him," said Manners. "But what will Taggles say?"

"He's agreed to let us have the pony for the occasion for a half-sov.," said Manners, "and a bob each time for rehearsals."

"Well, that's reasonable. But have you got the doctor's permission to have the pony on the stage in the lecture-hall?"

"We sha'n't mention the pony when we ask for the hall for the evening," said Tem. "No need to go into details. The pony will come as a pleasant surprise after the audience are all seated, and then it will be too late for the Head to put his foot down."

"That's jolly deep of you, Tom Merry. We shall have to keep the secret awfully close, or it will leak out."
"Of course! Mum's the word!"

"Those kids will be asking a lot of questions when we go out."

"Let 'em ask."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"It's high time for tea!" he exclaimed. "We've got a pretty good supply of tommy in the study, as it happens.

Will you chaps stay to tea?" "Thanks, awfully!" said the chaps.

Order next Thursday's copy of "The Gem Library" in advance.

They stayed to tea. Further details of the plan were discussed over tea, and the idea which had originated with the Terrible Two began to develop itself. Meanwhile, Gore was looking through the keyhole. He rose with an expression of extreme disgust.

"It's only a feed, after all!" he exclaimed. "They were jolly mystericus about it, but that's all it is—just a feed!' "We've been taken in!" said Jimson wrathfully.

And the juniors bestowed a shower of kicks on the door and marched off in a state of extreme indignation.

CHAPTER 4.

The Triple Alliance Gets to Business.

THE triple alliance seemed to be a great success—at first,

An unaccustomed calm came over St. Jim's. The sounds of warfare were no longer heard in the quad or the gym., and Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co., and the Terrible Two would meet without chipping each other, or passing any kind of rude remarks.

The other fellows in both houses were amazed at first Surely the world must be coming to an end when the leaders in the rival houses ceased from troubling, and the School

House and the New House were at rest.

Questions were showered upon Figgins & Co. in the New House, but Figgins said there was a truce, and that was all there was about it.

"But ain't we going for those School House kids any more, then?" demanded Pratt wrathfully.
"Go for 'em if you like," said Figgins. "Who's prevent

ing you?"
"But ain't you going to lead us?"

"Then we'll jolly well elect another leader,!"

"Go and elect him, then!"

" But-Go and elect him, or go and eat cokernuts, or anything you like, but get out of this study and don't bother me," said Figgins.
"Look here, Figgy-

"Oh, travel!"

And Pratt travelled.

Such was the satisfaction Figgins & Co. afforded to in-

But inquiring souls in the School House met with similar disappointments.

"I say, Tom Merry," remarked Jimson one day, "those

Fourth Form bounders are getting awfully cocky; it's time we took 'em down a peg or two."
"Is it?" said Tom cheerfully. "Go and take 'em down a

peg or two, then."

Ain't you going to help?"

" Nix!"

"Why not?" "I'm busy."

"What are you busy about?"? "Minding my own business."

And that was all the information Jimson could get.

Mellish looked into Study No. 6 in an inquiring frame of mind, and found Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy so busily occupied that they did not notice him. He stood there looking in and listening in amazement.

Blake had a big white apron tied round his waist, and was in his shirt-sleeves. He held a large inkpot in his right

"Ale good brown ale!" he exclaimed. "My good brown ale is what you want, gentlemen, after your hard ride in the heat o' the sun!" "Aha, good landlord!" said Herries. "Hast seen a couple

of horsemen ride by in haste? By my halidom-"

"Look here, Herries, a tipstave wouldn't say by my halidom. You're not a giddy Crusader."

"It sounds jolly well!"

"But it's out of place. What is a halidom?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Well, don't you start bringing things into the play that you don't know anything about. "Well, I can't say by Jove, or my hat!"

"No; that would sound too modern. Say-lemme see-by my sword!"
"Eh?" said Herries, who was rather dense.

"By my sword."
"I've got one."

"Got one what?" A sword."

"Well, of course you have. What are you getting at?" "I don't want to buy your sword-"

"Ass! I said by my sword; not buy my sword,

Blake. " Eh ?" "B-Y. by; not B-U-Y, buy!" roared Blake.

enough?" "Yes, that's plain enough. I can't see why you can't ex-

plain what you mean at the start."

"Oh, get on with the washing!"
"By my sword," said Herries, "there I behold the rascals drinking in thy garden! Aha, Dick Turpin and Tom Merry—I mean Dick Turpin and Tom King! I must e'en away and tell this to Figgins—I mean to Jonathan Wild." Now, then, Gussy!"

"These gallant widers shall not fall victims to the hate of A grand complete tale of Tom Merry's schooldays.

their cwuel foes if I can save them," said D'Arcy. "I will warn them of their pewil."

"Good old Gussy! Hallo, Mellish, what do you want?"
"I want to know whether I've got into Colney Hatch by mistake," said Mellish. "What are you thundering idiots

"Oh, talking. Get out!"

"I've come to speak to you—
"Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Look here, Blake; what's the game? Those bounders in the Shell want taking down a peg-

"Scat I" "They're putting on airs-".

"Bunk!

"They say Study No. 6 is played out, and the Fourth Form-

"Travel!"

"Some of them say we're going to fag for them, as if they were seniors-

"We ain't-"March!"

Blake lifted the inkpot high into the air, and Mellish fled,

slamming the door.

"Those kids in Study No. 6 are off their rockers," Mellish confided to Jimson of the Shell. "They were talking a lot of piffle about Dick Turpin, and Blake had an apron on and an inkpot in his hand. Herries said there was somebody drinking in the garden, and I know jolly well there wasn't.

Jimson scratched his head.

"I suppose they're a bit barmy in the crumpet," he remarked. "Tom Merry and Manners seem to be off their rockers, too. Manners was cavorting about on Taggles's pony to-day, and saying that he was going to ride to York. Why, Taggles's pony would fall down dead before he got a tenth part of the way, and, besides, he wouldn't be allowed

"Of course he wouldn't," said Gore, joining them. "But Manners isn't half so barmy as Tom Merry. What do you

think I heard Tom Merry say to-day?"
Give it up."

He said—I was passing his study door—'Slain! Slain! And by the hand of my dearest comrade. Fly, Dick, fly!"

"Great Scott!" "I buzzed into his study like one o'clock," said Gore. "I thought he was hurt or something, though I didn't see what he wanted to call Manners 'Dick' for. It isn't his name."

"And what did you see?"

"Nothing. Tom Merry chucked a dictionary at me and told me to scoot. I scooted."

'Mad as giddy hatters!" said Jimson. "That's the only explanation. Mad or sane, the triple alliance went on its way serenely.

The juniors rehearsed their parts in their own studies, and sometimes met together in a secluded spot for a general The play was gradually written, mended, re-mended, im-

proved, added to, subtracted from, till it began to assume a really business-like shape.

Fatty Wynn's brilliant suggestion that each character should write up his own part, to make sure of getting a fair share of the "fat," was partially adopted.

There was a certain difficulty in giving an ostler or a tipstave as big a speaking part as a principal character, but as the ostler and tipstave said, why should they be left out in the cold?

Meanwhile Kerr lad carried out his part of the bargain, and the necessary funds being placed in his hands, he had obtained the supplies needed for the representation of the thrilling drama, "Dashing Dick Turpin."

The triple alliance had gone into the thing with keen

Even cricket was somewhat neglected in these days, and the junior house-match itself ceased to wholly occupy the thoughts of the eight juniors. Careless of the comments of outsiders, the enthusiastic eight went on their way.

Tom Merry had asked for the use of the lecture-hall on a

certain Saturday evening, and it had been granted.

He had carefully refrained from mentioning the part

Taggles's pony was to take in the representation.

The date of the performance having been fixed, the juniors threw themselves into the work of rehearsing more keenly than ever.

Naturally enough, the natter was in their minds at times which were supposed to be devoted to study. The masters of the Shell and the Fourth Form were sometimes puzzled, and sometimes exasperated, in consequence.
"Merry," exclaimed Mr. Linton in the Shell class-room

one morning. "Merry, what were you whispering to Man-

Tom gave a jump.
"Whispering, sir?"

"Yes. Do you deny that you were whispering?"
"N-no, sir," said Tom, who whatever his faults might be,

never told an untruth.

"Then what were you saying?"

"Nothing of any consequence, sir." "I insist upon repeating whatever it was aloud. Private matters should not be discussed in the class-room. whole Form," said Mr. Linton severely, "are entitled to hear everything that is said in this room." "Yes, sir."

"Therefore kindly repeat aloud what you were saying to

Yes, sir."

"I am waiting, Merry."

"'Shoot! shoot! and I will risk it!" said Tom.

"Shoot! shoot! and I will risk it! sir." "Are you mad, Merry?"

"No, sir."

"Then what do you mean by such an utterly meaningless reply to me?" shouted Mr. Linton.
"You asked me what I said to Manners, sir."

"Is that what you said to Manners?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why did you say such a thing?" "It's-it's a line from a play, sir."

"Oh, indeed! And what play, pray, contains such a line as that?"
"'Dashing Dick Turpin,' sir,"
"What? There is no such play!"

"Yes, there is, sir; we've written it ourselves."
Oh! I perceive. That is what is taking up your attention to the exclusion of your studies," said Mr. Linton witheringly.

"Yes, sir," said Tom in his cheerful way

"Then you will write out a hundred lines from the 'Æneid,' Merry, as a reminder that there is a time for all things," said Mr. Linton.
"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Lathom, in the Fourth Form, had his worries, too. Figgins and Co. and Study No. 6 all belonged to the Fourth. and they would compare notes in class, and sometimes make absent-minded answers.

"Urbs antiqua fuit," Herrice started construing one more ing, "An ancient city there was, York—"." What!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

Herries turned red.

I mean Carthage, sir."

"You may go on.

"Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe ostia-

"You may construe, Herries."
"Fronting Italy," said Herries, "and the mouth of the Thames-

The what?"

"The Tiber, sir. And-and-"

"You may go on, Blake,"

Blake came out of a brown study.
"'Ale, good brown ale!" he exclaimed. "'What you want is my good brown als, gentlemen, after your ride in the heat of the sun." "Blake!"

Blake's countenance assumed a charming crimson hue. "I-I-mean, sir, 'Ostia, dives opum, studiisque asperrima belli-

"You will take fifty lines. Figgins, go on where Blake left off."

"'Give us deep tankards of thine ale, landlord," said Figgins. "'Truly we have ridden far and hard, and with good reason. Ha, ha!"

"Figgifis!" "Yes, sir."

"What is that rubbish you are talking?"

"I-I-you-you told me to go on where Blake left off, sir," stammered Figgins.

"I was referring to Virgil, Figgins. You are evidently thinking of something else. Take fifty lines. D'Arcy, continue."

"'These gallant widers,' said D'Arcy, "'shall sot fall victims to the hate of their cwuel foes if I can save them," "Take fifty lines, D'Arcy!" shouted Mr. Lathom. "I

think the class has lost its senses. The next boy who makes an absurd answer will be caned."

And the amateur dramatists woke up to their surroundings at that warning, and no more quotations were made from "Dashing Dick Turpin" for a time.

But little incidents like this, of course, soon put the other fellows on the track.

Gore. "I wonder we didn't tumble to it before."

"I've just found out that Tom Merry has got permission to use the lecture-hall next Saturday for what he calls a dramatic representation," remarked Gore.

They're going to do 'Dick "Yes, that's the secret.

"Oh, now 3 understand!" Jimson exclaimed.

"Understand what?" "I just heard Tom Merry say to Blake, 'In the old barn at five sharp, and tell Figgins.'

"Ahal That means a rehearsal," said Gore. "A rehearsal of the whole lot of them. And that's what Tom Merry meant by the triple alliance."

"That's it." "Well, I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to get 'em an audience," said Gore. "Let's get all the fellows to go and catch 'em spouting their silly piffle."

"Good wheeze. And Gore's idea was instantly taken up, and nearly all the Shell and the Fourth Form joined in the idea.

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble at the Rehearsal.

OM MERRY looked round the old barn.

It was very near to St. Jim's, and easy of access;
and as it was in a ruinous condition and never used for anything, it was very convenient for the rehearsals.

"Manners hasn't "We're here," said Figgins & Co.

come in yet."

"He's gone for Taggles's pony," said Blake.
"He won't be a minute," said Tom Merry. "May as well start. The next rehearsal will be a full-dress one, but this time we'll go through as we are. Manners will be here with Dobbin by the time his call comes. Got your parts, all

of you?" "I haven't," said Herries; "I know mine by heart."

"You've got a rotten memory, though. You know the way you chop up Shakespeare. Never mind; if you're letter perfect, it's all right. Blake, you're the landlord of the inn, standing at your door with an empty tankard in your hand. That's the first scene. D'Arcy is the girl looking out of the window. Dick Turpin and Tom King ride up, or, rather, Dick Turpin rides up. Tom King comes in on foot, having the his horse behind the scenes.

"Where are you going to get the other horse?" asked

Herries.

"There isn't any other horse."

"But you say Tom King leaves it behind the scenes."

"Yes; but he hasn't one, fathead!"
"How can he leave it behind the scenes if he hasn't

"Fathead!" shricked Tom Merry. "The audience suppose that he leaves it behind the scenes."

"They won't suppose anything of the kind! You can't

take in a lot of chaps like that." "I tell you Tom King comes in on foot, and the audience can think what they blessed well like !" said Tom Merry. "I shall be wearing spurs, and so it will look as if I've

just left my horse to an ostler. Manners gets off Black Bess, and gives it to Kerr. "What does he give it to Kerr for?"

"Kerr's the ostler at the inn." "I lead it away," said Kerr. "I hope Dobbin will go quietly- Taggles has taught him to look out for us, you know, and he shies sometimes when we go near him."

"Hallo! Here's Dick Turpin!" Manners came into the barn leading Taggles's pony by

The pony was a plump little animal, but though he was

usually of a quiet nature, he looked a little restive now. "Here we are again!" said Manners. "All ready?"

"Yes; and waiting for you. Get on!"

"Give us a bunk-up, somebody!" Manners received the required bunk, and sat astride of the

"Now, Blake," said Tom Merry, who was stage-manager as well as a highwayman, "get on with the patter! You're standing at the door of the inn."

"Right-ho! 'A fine bright sunny day,'" said Blake. "'Ha, what is that I see? Two horsemen riding in hot haste towards mine inn; and, by my soul, 'tis Dick Turpin

and Tom Merry—'"

"Tom King, Tom King, Tom King!"

"Yes; that was a slip. 'And, by my soul, it is Dick
Turpin and Tom King! Welcome, gentlemen!' You've

got to come in here now, you two." "Come on, Manners!" Manners dug his heels into Dobbin's flanks, and dashed up to the door of the imaginary inn. Blake made a spring to get out of the pony's way. "You'll be over me in a minute!"

Manners dragged on the rein, and succeeded in stopping

"Good landlord-"

"Take care of the beastly pony!" "'Good landlord, we have ridden hard to-day."

"'Ale, good brown ale!' " said Blake. - "' What you want is my brown ale, gentlemen, after your ride in the heat of

"'Give us deep tankards of your ale, landlord," said Tom Merry. "'Truly we have ridden hard, and with good

reason. Ha, ha!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed Herries. "Stop that cackling, Herries! You don't laugh. You're not on in this show at all."

Tom Merry turned to Blake again.
"We will repose ourselves awhile in thy garden, good host," he said. "Take our horses, I prythee, ostler, and

give them good cheer."
"Right-ho!" said Kerr—"I mean, 'I will e'en do so, good gentlemen, for truly I know you are of the right

sort. Manners slid off the back of Dobbin. Dobbin turned to trot out of the barn, and Kerr dragged on the bridle.

"This way, you brute! Come on, you stupid beast!" The pony reluctantly allowed Kerr to lead him to the back

of the barn.
"'Let us drink and rest in this fair garden, Tom King,'"
exclaimed Manners. "'It will not be long ere we shall be forced to ride again, if Jonathan Wild and his myrmidons get on the track. Come on, I prithee."

"Gaily will I drink to the life of the road!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What life so gay as that of a giddy highwayman'—I mean, 'a bold highwayman!"

And the two heroes strolled off arm-in-arm into an imaginary garden. Enter Harris.

"'Aha, good landlord,' said Herries, "hast seen a couple of horsemen ride by in haste? By my sword, there I behold the rascals drinking in the garden! Dick Turpin and Tom King! I must e'en away and tell this to my master, Jonathan Wild!"

Exit Harris.

"Now, Gussy !"

"Yaas, Tom Mewwy, what do you want?"

"I want you to say your part, ass!"
"Oh, I am weally sowwy! 'These gallant widers shall

not fall victims to the hate of their ewuel foes, if I can save them," said Arthur Augustus. "'I will warn them of their pewil.'

"Now then, Blake!" "'Go! Haste, good lass, and warn Dick Turpin and Tom Merry-King that Fig-Jonathan Wild is on the track with his tipstaves!" said Blake.

"'Good mastah, I will fly!'"
"Brave lads are they!'" said Blake. "'They spend their gold right freely, and we will baffle the wiles of the thief-taker.'

"'We will, weally!" said Arthur Augustus. "'If they

were taken it would lie upon my consh!'
"Your what?"

"My consh."

"What the dickens is a consh?"

"Weally, Blake, you are most dense! Conscience, deah

boy!"
"Do you think they talked that silly rot two hundred years ago?" roared Blake. "Make it conscience."

"It is extwemely wude of you to chawactewise my wemarks as wot!" said Arthur Augustus. "It would not be consistent with my dig. to-

I'll dig you if you don't stop playing the giddy goat!"

"Weally, Blake-"We'll cut the word out," said Tom Merry hastily. "Let's change the line to 'If they were taken it would make me suffer great grief."

"I'm not an unweasonable fellah," said D'Arcy. "I am quite weady to adopt your suggestion, Tom Mewwy. 'If they were taken it would make me suff gweat gwief.'

Suffer, ass!" "Suff, deah boy !"

"Oh, change it again!" said Blake. "It's no good talking to Gussy when he gets on the high horse !"

"'If they were taken,'" said Tom Merry reflectively,
"'it would break my heart!"
"'Vewy good!" said D'Arcy. "'If they were taken it
would break my heart!"
"Then warn them at once, good lass, ere it be too late!" will huwwy!""

D'Arcy dashed into the imaginary garden. "'Dangah!'" he cried. "'Good fwiends, you are in



deadly dangah! Jonathan Wild is on the woad with his extwemely wuff followahs—"."

"His rough followers, fathead!"-

"'His wuff followahs, fathead!" said D'Arcy. " Flyfly, good fwiends, ere the wascal can awwive!"

"'My horse-my horse!"" cried Manners. "'Bring me my bonnie Black Bess!"

"'My horse-my horse!" cried Tom Merry. "'Ha, it is too late; the enemy is here!" Enter Figgins.

Enter Figgins.

"'At last, Tem King, I have hunted thee down!" cried Figgins. "'Surrender, villain, to the officer of the law!" "Sha'n't—I mean, 'I defy, thee, base and crawling myrmiden!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "'Ha, would you lay vile hands upon me?" "Rather!" said Figgins.

And he laid his vile hands upon Tom Merry, and they began to struggle.

Meanwhile, Kerr had rushed in leading Taggles's pony, and Manners, not without some difficulty, had clambered upon his back.

A huge, old-fashioned pistol was in Manners's hand. "'Release him, or I shoot!" base spy !' " he shouted.

"Rats! I mean, 'Never-never! Tipstaves, to my aid !' "

Herries and Wynn rushed in.

"'We are here, good Master Wild!""
"'Seize this villain!"

THE STATE OF

"'Shoot-shoot, and I will risk it!" shouted - Tom

"'I fear I shall hit thee, Tom.'" " Shoot-shoot, and I will risk it!"

Click ! Manners had pulled the trigger.

"'Slain-slain, and by the hand of my best comrade!"
cried Tom Merry. "'Fly-fly, Dick!""
"'Horrors!" said Manners. "'I have slain my

comrade, and the base myrmidon has escaped. I will not fly; I will die by his side!"

"'Fly-fly; they are too many for you!""

"Yaas; wathah!" said D'Arcy.

"Ass! You say 'Fly-fly!"

"'Fly-fly,' then," said Arthur Augustus.

"'Yes; I will fly!" said Manners. "'Jonathan Wild, if you would find me, seek me at York!"

"'At York?"

"'At York?''

"'To York-to York!" cried Manners. And he wheeled Taggles's pony, and dashed away. In his excitement he forgot that he was in the barn, and Taggles's pony had a narrow escape of knocking his brains out against the wall. Manners dragged him round towards

There was a yell in the doorway. It was blocked up by

juniors, laughing themselves hoarse and husky.
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "Did you ever see such SWEET BUILDING

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear us smile !" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out of the way!" gasped Manners, trying in vain to pull Dobbin in. "Get out of the way, you silly asses!"

The pony, thoroughly frightened by the uproar, was

The juniors scattered before its rush, and it darted through the wide doorway like an arrow, Manners dragging at the

The rest of the amateur actors rushed after the unfortunate Dick Turpin, and stared after him in dismay, as they saw him streaking across the field, trying in vain to control the

frantic pony.
"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Suppose the brute did that in the lecture-hall on Saturday!"

The pony was making for the gate; to get back to the school. A motor came hooting and snorting down the lane, and that added the finishing touch to the excitement of Dobbin.

THE MERRY HOBBY CLUB." MARTIN CLIFFORD.

He dashed across the lane and into the open gates of St. Jim's, and instead of stopping at Taggles's lodge, he continued on his wild career.

Round the quad he dashed with flying heels, Manners having all his work out out to stick on his back and save

himself from a bad fall.

Tom Merry and the rest of the triple alliance, and Gore and his party, followed fast, fearing an accident; and they looked on in dismay as the pony trampled over the doctor's favourite flower-beds.

"Hi, there!" roared Taggles. "What are you doing with that pony?"

"It's rather, what's the pony doing with him?" murmured Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.
Taggles rushed to secure Dobbin. He usually had no difficulties with the pony; but Dobbin was not now in his usual mood. He reared and bucked away from Taggles, and went off in a new direction, trampling along a gravel path.

Taggles rursued with shouts and gesticulations, which only added to the pony's excitement.

Tom Merry gave a sudden yell.

"Look cut, Herr Schneider!" The German master of St. Jim's was walking slowly along a path, his spectacles on his nose, and a German newspaper held in front of him. He was reading the paper as he walked, a really careless habit.

"Look out, Schneider!"

"Get out of the way!" gasped Manners.

He dragged desperately on the reins.

Herr Schneider looked up over the top of the paper, and stood petrified as he saw the pony rushing full tilt at him.
"Mein Gott!" he gasped.

Not a movement did he make to save himself. There was

no time.

Manners dragged on the rein till his arm seemed to be coming out cf its socket, and at the last moment Dobbin swerved, and missed the German master by about a foot, and rushed on past him.

Herr Schneider tottered.

"Mein Gott!"

he sat down in the gravel, and remained there gasping.

The pony dashed on.

But Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had seen the wild career of Manners, from his study window, and had come out of the School House.

It was quick work for the captain to seize the pony's bridle, and force him to a stop. Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was also coming up. He gave Manners a hand to dismount, and then laid that hand on his collar.

"What does this mean, Manners?" he inquired pleasantly. "The blessed animal bolted, sir," gasped Manners. "What were you doing on Taggles's pony at all?"

"I-I-I-

"Taggles, take your pony."
"Yes, sir."

"What was Manners doing, riding your pony?".
"They was a-re'earsing, sir," said Taggles.

"A what?" "A re'earsing."

"What does he mean, Manners?"

"Rehearsing, sir."

"Oh! And what were you rehearsing?"

Manners was silent. He realised that if he replied to Mr. Railton's question, the secret would be out.
"Did you hear me, Manners?"
"Yes, sir."

"Well, answer me, then. You may take your pony away, Taggles, and I think you had better not lend it to Manners

"I'll take jolly good care of that," muttered Taggles, as he led Dobbin off the scene.

Now, Manners, what were you rehearsing?"

"Mein Gott, I vas started out of mein life und skin after! I have noter been so much startled out of mein skin sometimes before.

"I am sorry, sir," said Manners.
"Ach! But I have been made to joomp after! I have been injured in te nerves by te shock. Mr. Railton, you vill cane tat poy refore."

"Unless you explain to me immediately, Manners, I shall

certainly cane you.

Manners cast a helpless glance at Tom Merry, who had

"Merry, I suppose you know all about this. What was this rehearsing in which Taggles's pony seems to have taken the principal part?" You see, sir—"

"Ah! I hear that you have asked the Head for the hall

on Saturday evening for a play to be produced by the juniors of both houses?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you were rehearsing the play?"
"Ye-e-es."

Tom Merry made the reply reluctantly, but there was no

help for it Then Taggles's pony is intended to take part in the representation on Saturday evening?" asked the housemaster.

"Y-e-e-e-es, sir."
"Indeed! What is the name of your play?"
"Dashing Dick Turpin, sir."

"Oh! And Taggles's pony is Black Bess, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"And if he bolted in the lecture-hall-

"Oh, he wouldn't do that, sir!" "How do you know he would not?" "Well, I-I don't think he would."

"That is hardly convincing enough, Merry. I am afraid it will be necessary for you to change your programme, or else abandon the idea altogether. It will be quite impossible for Taggles's pony to be admitted to the hall."

"Oh, sir! "I am sorry to cause you any disappointment, Merry," said the housemaster, kindly enough, "but the idea was an extremely reckless one, and it is fortunate that I have learned in time what your absurd intention was."

"We could get another horse, air," said Tom eagerly. "I'm not particularly gone on Taggles's pony. It's a sandy-coloured brute, anyway, and we should have to do a lot of painting him. I could get a horse in the village—"
"Merry, understand me once and for all, it is impossible

for any animal to be taken into the lecture-hall." And Mr. Railton, with a warning wag of his forefinger,

walked into the School House.

The members of the triple alliance stood looking at each other in dismay, and they were not comforted by the grin-ning and jeering of Gore, Jimson, and the rest. "Come to my study and talk it over," said Tom Merry

dolefully.

And the triple alliance went into that famous apartment to hold a council of war.

CHAPTER 6.

A Change in the Programme,

OM MERRY sat on the table and wrinkled his boyish brows in deep thought. The triple alliance waited for him to speak. They

were all looking considerably glum. "Well," said Tom, looking round, "this is a bit of a set-

back, and we can't get over it."
"Ya-as, wathah." "Railton says we can't have the pony, or any other quadruped in the lecture-hall. There's no bucking against what Railton says.

"Then what's to be done?" asked Herries.

"I vote that we scrag Manners for giving the show away," suggested Figgins.
"Good idea!" chimed in the Co.

Manners reached out in a casual way for a cricket-stump.

But Tom Merry waved his hand to enjoin peace.
"That wouldn't do any good," he said. "Besides, it wasn't Manners's fault. Gore and those other kids frightened the pony by yelling, and it was really their fault that Dobbin bolted. It was a stroke of bad luck."
"Ya-as, wathah."

"We've got to take things as they are," continued Tom. "It's no good thinking of what might have been. The cat's out of the bag now, and we can't have any Black Bess on the stage. That seems to me to knock 'Dick Turpin' on the head."

"'Dick Turpin' without Black Bess would be a bit off," agreed Blake. VO written play-

"It can't be helped." r

"And learned up our parts-

"I know it's rotten."

"And there's only three days to Saturday."
"Yes, it's fearful bad luck."

"So if we don't give Turpin and Black Bess, I don't see, for one, what we're going to give."

"Give up the ideah," suggested Arthur Augustus.

Every eye was turned witheringly upon him.

"Dry up," said Tom Merry. "After asking for the hall,

what silly asses we should look to go sneaking round and saying that we didn't want it after all." "And how the chaps would chip us," said Blake. "It's

all over the school that we're going to give a dramatic

representation on Saturday evening, and if we don't give one, we shall be chipped to death."

"That's absolutely certain." "We must give something !" exclaimed Figgins. " Dick Turpin' without Black Bess would be rot, so it will have to be something else. The question is, what?"
"The Woad to Wuin," said D'Arcy.
"Rot!" was the general verdict.

"No, weally, a fellah told my cousin that it was-" "Don't make any more suggestions, Gussy. Sit tight and dry up."

I wefuse. I distinctly wefuse "Brain him, somebody. Now, I said all along that Hamlet' was the thing," said Figgins.
"What price 'The Merchant of Venice'?" demanded

Herries.

"Oh, don't start all that again!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've barred all those. We shall have to come back to

my original idea."
"Never knew you had any," said Figgins. "The idea of a dramatic society was boned from us. The New House Amateur Dramatic Society was the first-

"My idea was 'Little Red Riding Hood.'"
I don't think much of that."

"You don't think much at all, in my opinion, Figgins."
"Well, we must decide on something," said Blake, "and I think you'll all agree that we couldn't learn up our parts in 'Hamlet' or 'The Merchant of Venice' in three days."
"N-no, I suppose not."

"We've got to have the thing pat for Saturday."

"That's a dead cert. Whatever we give has got to be given on Saturday, at the time arranged, or else we shall be sniggered at all over St. Jim's, so I suggest 'Little Red Riding Hood.'

"Have you got the thing written out?" asked Figgins.
"I wrote cut a lot of it," said Tom. "We can soon knock

it into shape." What about the parts?"

"Well, Figgins will make a good wolf," said Tom. "His

"I don't want to quarrel with anybody," said Figgins; "but any remarks about my face will lead to a row."

"Well, anyway, you're all right for the wolf. Little Red Riding Hood will be Fatty Wynn, as he's got a smooth

"I'm ready," said Fatty."
You won't make a very slim girl, that's certain," said Tom; "but it can't be helped. I think you chaps might see that he doesn't gorge so much as usual the next few days."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "He sha'n't have any pastry or sweets again till after Saturday.

"Here, what's that?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "No more sweets or pastry till after Saturday." "Catch me !"

"If I catch you eating any, my boy, I'll warm you!" said Figgins. "Do you think we are going to have a Red Riding Hood as fat as a barrel because you must go on eating like a giddy rhinoceros? Not much!"

"That's settled," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Now, I

think I shall do very well for the huntsman. "Good enough."

"Herries will do for the grandmother, because he's got a bad memory, and the old girl won't have to say much. "Oh, I don't care !" said Herries.

"Blake will be Little Red Riding Hood's fiance."

"Her what?" "Her fiance. Her giddy young man, if you like that

She never had one." "How do you know?"

"Well, I've never heard of him."

"There are lots of things you never heard of, Blake. What you don't know would fill a big book."

"Oh, keep your wool on!"

Well, don't criticise, then. We must have eight characters, or some of us will have to be left out. You'll be a fiance, and we'll put it on the programme, and show the Upper Form fellows we know French as well as they do."

"Well, there's something in that. Shall I have to fiance?" "To what?"

"To fiance? I suppose that's what a fiance does?"

"You're not going to fyongs with me, whatever you mean by fyongs!" said Fatty Wynn.
"We'll settle what you're to do afterwards," said Tom Merry. "We're fixing up the parts now. Now, we've got Figgins as the wolf, Herries as the grandmother, Fatty Wynn as the girl, Blake as her fiance, and myself as the huntsman. Kerr, D'Arcy, and Manners will have to be

"That's rather a come-down after Dick Turpin," said

Manners.

"Oh, don't grumble! It's all for the good of the cause."

"I'm not grumbling."

"It's settled, then," said Tom. "Kerr will have to see to the costumes. It's lucky he got the last lot on hire instead of buying them, as we thought at first. You must see to all that by Friday, Kerr.' Trust me!' said Kerr.

And the meeting of the triple alliance broke up. They felt rather proud of themselves for having so quickly re-paired the programme which had been "busted" by the housemaster's decision.

"Talking does make one hungry!" said Fatty Wynn, feeling in his pockets as he went out of the School House.

Figgins looked at him suspiciously.
"Where are you going, Fatty?"
"Only across to the tuck-shop. I'll catch you up."
"That you won't!" said Figgins, catching him by the collar. "You'll come along with us, my pippin!".

"What are you up to, Figgy?"

"You heard what I agreed with Tom Merry about. You're not going to have any more pastry or sweets till after Saturday.

"Oh, rats!" "I'm going to keep my word. We can't have a Little Red Riding Hood weighing half a ton. Come along!"

"I won't!" "Won't you? Take his other arm, Kerr."

Kerr promptly obeyed. Fatty Wynn made a desperate

attempt to escape, but his comrades held him fast, and he was marched into the New House.

Figgy was a man of his word. Not once did they take their eyes off Fatty till the school tuck-shop was closed, and then he was allowed at large again. All his pleadings were in vain, though they were most pathetic.

"I've had a beastly small tea," said Fatty—"only a few eggs, and a cake, and some ham, and a couple of potatoes, and some sardines and bread-and-butter. I'm fearfully

hungry!"
"You must be," said Figgins. "I hope it will do you
"You must be," said Figgins. "I hope it will do you shop's closed."

And he dide

CHAPTER 7

One Good Turn Deserves Another.

THAT have you got there, Blake?" asked Pratt curiously. Pratt was behind Blake in the Fourth Form room, and he had observed that the chief of Study No. 6 had something under his desk that he seemed to take a great interest in. Blake looked round. "Nothing in particular, Pratt."

"I know you've got something there!" the New House junior asserted suspiciously. "Is it toffee?"

"Nix."

"Well, it looked like it."

"Lots of things look like what they're not!" said Blake oracularly. "If it isn't toffee, what is it?"

"Nothing that you need worry about, Pratt."
"Toffee?" said Fatty Wynn, who was next to Pratt-"Toffee? Has Blake got any toffee there?"

"I believe he has, but he doesn't want to hand it round." "I say, Blake, old chap-

"Hallo, Fatty! Fat as ever?" "Have you got any toffee there?"

"My dear kid, you know you're not to have any toffee till after Saturday!"

"Look here, Blake, I'm fearfully hungry! They don't feed you any too well in the New House.

"They don't feed me there at all." mean, I don't get enough to eat.

"Yes, you look as if you don't."
"Appearances are deceptive!" said Fatty Wyng mournfully. "I am always hungry. I've had no breakfast to speak of only a rasher of bacon and a few sausages! That beast Figgins-"Ha, ha!"

"Took a couple of eggs off my plate and said I wasn't to have any. He won't let me go to the school shop.'

"If this keeps on I am going to secede from the company. "Oh, Fatty!" en en management and area

"I shall, indeed. Give me some of that toffee!".
"Don't be greedy, Fatty!"

"Aren't you going to give me some?". "No, I'm not!"

"Then you're a beast!"

THE MERRY HOBBY CLUB."

"Go hon !"

Mr. Lathom, the short-sighted master of the Fourth, was craning his head towards them.

"Who is that talking? Ah, it is you, Figgins! Take fifty lines!"

"I wasn't talking, sir."

"I distinctly heard someone speaking on that form!"

"It wasn't I, sir." "Who was it, then?" Figgins did not reply.

"Well-well, I will not ask that question," said Mr. Lathom. 'I shall cane the next boy that talks. We come

here to work, not to talk!" The lesson proceeded. As soon as the master's attention was turned away, Fatty Wynn leaned over his desk and

"I say, Blake-" he whispered.

"Shut up !"

"I want some of that toffee!"

Rats!"

"You're a pig!"

"You're another, and several sorts of an ass!" "Someone is talking again," said Mr. Lathom. fifty lines, Pratt!"

"Not a word! I am determined to maintain discipline in this class-room. Where were we? Ah, we were landing in

Britain for the second time! Let us go on." State I'm fearfully hungry!" said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "If you don't give me some of that toffee, I'll never speak to you again."

"Go and eat coke!

"I am suffering awfully! Just a little bit!"

"Talking again!" exclaimed the master of the Fourth, peering angrily through his spectacles. "Kerr, take fifty lines!"

"I never-"Silence, sir! Don't answer me! I will have work done here, not idle chatter !"

Figgins pinched Fatty Wynn.

"If you go on, Fatty, you'll get impots for the whole cass!" he growled. ("Now, fif you say another word, I'll stick a pin in you!"

"Dry up! You're like a beastly phonograph for talking!" Fatty Wynn dried up, but he kept his eye on Blake's desk. He meant to have some of that toffee. He saw Blake take out the little packet and glance at it again, but Mr. Lathom's eye was on Blake.

"Is that sweets you have there, Blake?"
"No, sir," said Blake, slipping it back under his desk.

"You know, it is forbidden to bring sweets into the classroom, but I do not think you would tell me an untruth. Whatever it is, leave it alone."

"Yes, sir. "What a ghastly fibber!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "It was toffee. I saw it as plain as anything. I never saw such s howling fibber t But I'll have some of that toffee. It would only serve him right."

Blake did not move the mysterious article again, and when

the class was dismissed he had apparently forgotten all about it, for he left it on the ledge under his desk.

Fatty Wynn grinned as he noted it. He marched out with the rest of the boys, assuming as indifferent an air as he could, and when they had dispersed to the four quarters of

St. Jim's he stole back quietly to the class-room.

The master was gone, and the room was quite deserted. "Good luck!" murmured Fatty.

He stepped quietly into the class-room, and made his way towards Blake's desk. He looked under it.

"Here it is! Ha, it isn't toffee; it's butterscotch, I

believe," murmured Fatty Wynn.

In a moment the prize was within his grasp. There was a footstep in the corridor. The fat boy of the New House started. Was it Blake coming back to see if his toffee was safe? He should come back too late, anyway, Fatty Wynn mentally resolved, as he buried his teeth in the tempting

Toffee-butterscotch? Toffee or butterscotch never tasted

like that before.

"Gerooh!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Gr-r-r-r-r-rooh!" Blake looked in at the door.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Fatty?"

"Gr-r-r-r-rooh!"

Fatty's face was strangely contorted, and he was making frantic endeavours to expel the greasy, horrible substance from his mouth.

"Yah! Booh! Grer-r-r-rooh!"

Blake roared.

"Do you mean to say you've been trying to scoff my stick of grease-paint, Fatty?"

"Gr-r-rooh! I thought it was t-t-t-toffee! Gr-r-rugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"-Fatty made a frantic rush from the room, to get his mouth washed out, leaving Blake leaning against the door and yelling with laughter.

The joke was too good to keep, and Fatty Wynn was chipped unmercifully by the whole Form; and after he had got rid of the taste of the grease-paint, he found it harder to get rid of the chipping.

But an idea was working in Fatty's brain. A disappointment in the matter of feeding was the very thing to set his wits most actively to work.

After school Blake went to look for Figgins & Co., to gather them in to a rehearsal of "Little Red Riding Hood," and he came upon Fatty Wynn performing a trick that raised strong doubts in Blake's mind as to his sanity.

A walking stick was stuck in a hollow in the trunk of one of the big elms in front of the New House, fixed horizontally at the level of Fatty's chin.

Fatty had his eyes upon that stick as if it fascinated him, and was seemingly unaware of Blake's approach, unconscious that the School House junior was regarding him

with eyes wide open in amazement.
"My hat!" murmured Blake. "That grease-paint's got into his head, or something, for if he isn't as mad as a

hatter, I'll eat my Sunday topper."

Fatty Wynn retreated slowly from the stick to a certain distance, where he had laid his cap on the ground to mark the spot.

Then he strode rapidly forward, and bent his head down a trifle so that his mouth came on a level with the stick.

Three times he performed this extraordinary evolution, Blake staring at him the while. The School House junior wondered whether he had better rush off in search of Figgins and Wynn, or whether he had better attempt to reason with Fatty. That he was out of his senses did not appear to admit of the slightest doubt.

"I say, Fatty—"

Fatty Wynn was just striding forward again. He stopped

as Blake spoke, and turned towards him with a nod.

"Hallo, Blake!"

"What on earth are you doing, Fatty?"

"That? Oh, it's a new gymnastic exercise."

"Oh, is it?" said Blake, relieved in his mind. "I see.

I thought you were miles off your rocker." Eatty Wynn grinned.

"Ha, ha! You see, this is the trick, and it's awfully difficult. You have to start from the spot where I have laid my cap for a mark."
"Yes?"

"Then you've got to reach the end of the stick in exactly three strides, and take it in your mouth, and close your teeth on it-see?'

"I should say that was a jolly easy thing to do, Fatty."

"You can say so if you like, Blake, but I'm pretty sure
you couldn't do it," said Fatty.

"Oh, rot! If could do it."

Oh, rot! 4 could do it with my eyes shut." You couldn't do it with them open.

"I tell you it's as easy as falling off a horse."
"Well, if it's so easy, let's see you do it," said Fatty,
with a smile of such evident unbelief that Blake's back

was got up immediately. "I'll jolly soon show you I can do it!" said the School-House junior, nettled. "It's about the easiest trick I've

ever seen." "Let's see you do it, that's all."

Blake strode to the spot marked by the cap.

"That right?"

"Yes, you're on the right spot."

"Three strides, and then take the end of the stick in your mouth?" "Exactly.

"Why, any fool could do it!"

"You haven't done it yet. Never mind the rest of the fools; you do it." Look here, Fatty Wynn-"

"Oh, do the trick! You're not going to crawl out of it

like that."

"Who wants to crawl out of it?"

"You do, I believe."
"I'll soon show you. I could do it on my head. Look here, then."

Blake calculated the distance, and made three exact rides to the horizontal stick. Then, inclining his head strides to the horizontal stick. slightly, he seized the end of it in his mouth.

The trick was certainly simplicity itself; but the moment Blake had seized the stick in his mouth he gave a fearful yell, and let it go again, as if it were red-hot.

"Yah! Groo! Ugh! Oh! Ooh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins and Kerr, emerging from behind a tree, from which they had been watching the whole

"Gerooh-gerooh-g-g-r-r-r-r!"

"How do you like mustard?" screamed Fatty Wynn, laughing till the tears rolled down his plump cheeks. "How do you like 'em done? Ha, ha, ha!"

For the end of the stick underneath was thickly covered with that fiery condiment, and Blake had his mouth almost

The trick was a simple one, but there was more in it than met the eye.

Blake coughed and sneezed and barked, the tears running from his eyes in streams, and his nose gradually assuming a beautiful beetroot hue.

"You-you-you horrid bounder!" "Ha, ha, ha !"

"I'll—gerrooh—I'll—gerrooh— "Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake rushed off to wash out his mouth under the pump, leaving Figgins & Co. almost in convulsions.

CHAPTER 8.

The Great Entertainment-And How It Ended.

ATURDAY evening! The great day had arrived

All the junior portion of St. Jim's was eagerly anticipating the performance of "Little Red Riding Hood" by the amateur actors of the triple alliance.

Many of the seniors, too, took an interest in it. A number of them had declared their intention of being present in the hall to see how the youngsters made fools of themselves.

Kildare and his friends, Darrel and Rushden, who were always good-natured, had promised to come, and set the example to the Upper Form fellows.

Some of the masters had received invitations, and had

Mr. Railton, who was really sorry for the mischief caused by the barring of the pony, willingly consented to be an honoured guest.

All the juniors of both houses were determined to be

Gore and Mellish and some more wanted to interrupt, and cause as much trouble to the performers as possible by laughing in the most thrilling places.

Others were merely curious. Many anticipated fun. Jimson said that the plan had been changed so suddenly that the players would certainly not know their parts, or would get them mixed, and that it would be the funniest thing ever seen at St. Jim's. urged all those who liked a good laugh to be present.

And so when the time came round, there wasn't any doubt at all that the triple alliance would have a good

-An hour before the time fixed for the start the hall began to fill.

Juniors came in in two and threes after tea, and scrambled for the seats, and passed loud remarks upon what they expected the play would be like. But they admitted that the stage was very well got up, considering.

The scene represented a cottage on the border of a wood at the back of the stage. In the foreground was the cottage of Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother, arranged so that the audience could see right through it.

As it was impossible to rig up a curtain to let drop between the scenes, the trouble of changing scenes was obviated. The same one would have to do all the time; but, as Tom Merry said, the acting was the thing.

The costumes were really successful. They had been selected and hired by Kerr, who was well up in that branch of the business; and Figgy's wolf-skin, especially, was a

The long legs of Figgy trailed out a little behind the wolf; but it is impossible to get anything quite perfect in this world, and when Blake said that the audience might smile, Figgy said they could smile and be hanged, which settled the question.

Eight o'clock was the time fixed for the start. But at

eight o'clock there was no sign of the players.

The audience were in their places. The hall was very well filled, and the younger portion of the audience began to show unequivocal signs of impatience.

"Time!" shouted Jimson, stamping on the floor. "Time!"

"Play!" bawled Gore.

"Come on! When are you going to show up?"
"They've gone to sleep!"

Blake came out from behind the scenes. He was dressed

as a shepherd of the olden time, and had nearly finished

his make-up, only one cheek being left untinted.
"We're just coming on," he called out; "don't get impatient.

"Yah! Buck up!"

"Go and finish boiling yourself!"
"Time! Time!"

Blake retreated.

The noise increased. As the masters were not there in an official way, they did not think fit to interfere unless there was a disturbance, and the juniors were allowed to make as much mere noise as they liked.

They liked to make a great deal. Shouting, stamping, cat-calling, and whistling penetrated behind the scenes, dismaying the histrionic aspirants, who were not half ready. "I say, this won't do!" said Blake. "You ought to manage the thing better than this, Tom Merry."

"It isn't my fault if you're not ready in time."
"You're not ready yourself."

"Well, I don't come on till it's time for me to kill Figgins."

"Little Red Riding Hood ought to go on first," said Blake. "I really don't know why he takes such a long time to get ready.

'I'm just done," said Fatty Wynn. "You ought to have been done ten minutes back."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Oh, rats!" said Little Red Riding Hood.
"Get on!" said Tom Merry, helping Fatty Wynn with his rather troublesome garments. "I say, this skirt is too

"Can't be helped now," said Kerr; "Fatty can pin it

up. That's what he und "Give me some pins," said Fatty. That's what he did in the rehearsal."

"Anybody got any pins?"
"I haven't."

"No, I haven't, either. Do you take me for a blessed pin-cushion?"

"I must have some pins." "See if the audience have any to give away." "They're cackling enough already without that. here's a couple; you'll have to make them do, Fatty."

All right.' "Now, get on, for goodness sake!"
"Gimme the basket."

"Here it is. Do get on!" Fatty Wynn, whose smooth, fat face looked girlish enough in its make-up under the red hood, came on the stage with

his basket under his arm. Bravo!" shouted Jimson. "Good old Fatty!"
"Silence!" cried Kildare.

Little Red Riding Hood, blushing furiously, came forward to the footlights, which were composed of a row of bicycle-

"'How glad I am to take my dear old granny her supper!'" said Little Red Riding Hood. "Every day I—I

"'I follow this path through the wood," came the prompter's voice from behind the scenes.

"I follow this path through the wood, and—and—
"And take the supper to my dear granny.""

"'And take the supper to my dear granny, who lives in the cottage all alone. But I am so afraid of the wolf. "Now the song, fathead!"

The audience heard the words as plainly as Fatty Wynn did, and the gravest person present could not help chuckling. "How does the beastly thing go?" murmured Fatty Wynn.
"I am Little Red Riding Hood—"

"That's right; I've got it.

I am Little Red Riding Hood, I wander gaily through the wood,

"Ger-r-r-r !"

It was a ferocious growl, and Figgins came on as the wolf, on his hands and knees, the wolf-skin covering up everything but his feet and ankles. He was greeted by derisive

MISTER

"Hallo! There's Brer Wolf!" "Look at his feet!"

"Enormous!"

"Tuck in your tuppeny, Figgins!"
"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Hark! Don't he sound ferocious!" "Silence !"

"'Where are you going, Little Red Riding Hood?"
"'I'm going to the inn to get on the track, if it may be, of those rascals Dick Turpin and Tom King," replied Fatty Wynn, in his confusion forgetting that he was Little Red Riding Hood, and not a follower of Jonathan Wild, sa had been originally arranged.

Order next Thursday's copy of "The Gem Library" in advance. A grand complete tale of Tom Merry's schooldays,

There was a yell of laughter.
"You ass!" came the prompter's yoice. "You're going to take a beastly support o your beastly grandmother!"

"All right," said Fatty. "'I'm going to take a beastly support on y beastly grandmother, Figgins."

You silly cuckoo!" said the wolf; and the audience welled again.

yelled again.

"Here, for goodness' sake let the villagers go on and frighten the wolf away!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in despair.
The three villagers rushed on. Herries, Kerr, and D'Arcy

were all right as far as costume and make-up went. They shouted at Figgins, who wriggled away behind the scenes, his big feet being the last seen of him.

Pursue the wolf!" exclaimed Kert. "He must be Blain!

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy.

The audience shrieked at this remark from a villager.

"Go it, Gussy! Go and slay Figgins!"

Silence!"

"You've come on too soon!" exclaimed Little Red Riding Hood. "I haven't got half through my little lot yet. Get

"Sha'n't!"

"Gussy! Gussy! Let Gussy say his bit!" shouted Jimson.

"Go it, Gussy !" Little

Shut up, Fatty, and go on with your song!" growled the prompter.

Fatty Wynn began to sing again:

" I am Little Red Riding Hood, I wander gaily through the wood; I pick the flowers upon the way, And-and-and-

"Oh, get to the cottage and get on, do!"
Fatty Wynn moved towards the cottage. His grandmother, alias Herries, was there, in a really imposing-looking cap. She would have greeted Little Red Riding Hood in a nice little speech, but Herries's memory was at fault.

"Say something, you sily ass!" said Little Red Riding Hood, in a stage-whisper.

Go on!"

Aha, good landlerd!" said Herries, quite losing his presence of mind. "Hast seen two horsemen ride by in hot haste! Hal By my halidom—I mean my sword—there I behold the two rascals drinking in the garden, Little Red Riding Hood!

"Oh, you silly villain!" groaned Tom Merry. "You're not a tipstave now; you're Red Riding Hood's grandmother I'

"I must e'en away and warn Jonathan Wild!" exclaimed Herries.

Shut up, for goodness' sake!"

"I've brought you your supper, grandmother dear,"
said Little Red Riding Hood.

"Thank you, my dear," said Herries, recovering him-lf a little. "And are you going home through the wood?".
Yes, grandmother."

"Then-

Red Riding Hood's grandmother was interrupted by a voice from behind the scenes.

"Tom Mewwy, I wefuse to be called a silly ass; I distinctly wefuse!"

"Shut up!

"I will not shut up! I wefuse to be chawactewised as a silly ass. Yaas, wathah!"

"If you don't leave off talking, Gussy, you will get a dot

on the boko!" I wefuse-

There was the sound of a yell, and then the villager came rushing on the stage with the huntsman in excited pursuit." "Horray!" yelled Jimson. "They're waking up now.

Right across the stage went villager and huntsman, to

wisa, year behind the scenes on the other side, whence a voice will quickly heard in vigorous protest.

"Tom Mewwy, I no longah wegard you as a fwiend.

Weally-"Here, this will spoil everything!" growled Blake. "Let's

go on and do something. Get on, Figgins! They like the wolf part, and you can put in a bit extra," said Kerr. "Good enough!" said the wolf.

And Figgins crawled on the stage and growled.
"The wolf! The wolf!" cried Red Riding Hood's grandmother. "Where is the huntsman? Buck up, Tom Merry!
Where has that silly ass got to?"

Where has that silly ass got to?"
"Tom Mewwy, I wefuse—"
"Where's Gussy? Gussy ought to go on now!" exclaimed

Arthur Augustus heard him, and he came on loyally; but he was in a state of excitement and confusion, and had completely forgotten his part.

"Go it, Gussy!"
"These gallant widers will never fall victims to their cwuel foes if I can save them!" cried D'Arcy. "I will go and warn them of their pewil."

Ha, ha, ha!' "'Dangah!" shouted D'Arcy. "Dangah! Good fwiends, you are in deadly dangah! Jonathan Wild is on the woad with his extwemely wuff followahs—'"
Oh, hark at the silly cuckoo!" ejaculated the wolf.

"This comes of letting these silly School House kids into it." "Hallo! What's that about the School House?" de-

manded Red Riding Hood's grandmother. I say you School House images are mucking up the whole thing!"

"You New House wasters are spoiling it, you mean!"
"Who are you calling wasters, Herries?"

"I'm calling you New House mongrels wasters!"

"Do you want a black eye or a thick ear?"

"I want 'em both if there's a New House kid who can give 'em to me."

"Well, here's one that can, by Jupiter!" The next moment the wolf and Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother were locked in a deadly embrace, and the sight of the old lady with her cap pushed back, and the wolf on his hind legs staggering over the stage in combat, was really irresistibly comic. The audience were all on their feet now, screaming with merriment.
"Here, stop that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, seizing Figgins by the legs and attempting to drag him off Herries.

The loyal Co. at once rushed to the rescue, and in a moment Tom Merry was on his back on the stage, with Kerr and Little Red Riding Hood sitting on his chest.

That was naturally more than the other School House fellows were going to stand. Blake jumped upon Kerr, and Manners seized hold of Fatty Wynn. D'Arcy, who seemed to have completely lost his head, was shouting at the top of

Dangah, dangah, good fwiends! Jonathan Wild and his extwemely wulf followahs are on the woad! Dangah,

dangah!"

Although D'Arcy was not taking an active part in the conflict, the odds were against the New House contingent, and Figgins & Co. would soon have been defeated, but Figgins bawled for rescue. All thought of the play was over now; it was School House against New House, and the old feud which had slept for a time was fully aroused.
"Rescue, New House!" yelled Figgins.

"Hurrah! Down with the School House cads!" shouted Pratt, leaping upon the stage; and a horde of New House juniors followed him.

The School House youngsters were not far behind. Half the hall seemed to empty itself upon the stage in a minute or less, and the scenes went crashing down under trampling feet, and the cottage of Red Riding Hood's grandmother was speedily a wreck.

Masters and prefects were doubled up with laughter, and for a minute or so there was no interference, and the combat raged wildly. Then Mr. Railton and Kildare and the rest shouted for order, and as their voices were not heeded, they invaded the stage and dispersed the fighting juniors by main force.

"Clear the hall, Kildare!" said the housemaster.

The hall was cleared. The juniors went (swarming out, shouting excitedly. They dispersed at last, and the New House party marched off to their own house. Tom Merry was gasping for breath.

Well, we've beaten them, anyway!" he exclaimed.

Blake gave him a withering look. "So this is the way your giddy triple alliance works out, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "Look here, triple alliances are off from this night forward! If anybody comes to Study No. 6 again proposing triple alliances he will get slain!"

And Blake marched off with Herries, both of them having damage to repair.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy; and he followed his chums. And from that day forward matters resumed their old footing, and nothing more was heard at St. Jim's of the Triple Alliance.

Mary to the transaction of THE END.

(Our next Issue will contain a splendid School Tale, entitled" The Merry HObby Club," Order in advance.)





A School Tale. By MAURICE MER

Rex Allingham, Jim Fisher, and Bob Bouncer are three well-known chums at Stormpoint College. Hal Trehearn, the captain of the school, favours them; but they are bullied by Jardon and Symes, two Fifth-Formers, who play many spiteful tricks upon them. Bob mysteriously comes into some money, and, as he is frightened that his stepfather—who is coming down to the school—might like to have the handling of it. Bob draws it from the hand and hides it. His stepfather have the handling of it, Bob draws it from the bank and hides it. His stepfather arrives, but he is unable to obtain the money, and so takes his departure, much to Bob's delight. One morning, in class, Perkins puts his hand in Bob's desk, and is bitten by a parrot contained therein. The matter is taken before the doctor, and Bob is asked many questions. (Now go on with the story.)

The New Addition-His Extraordinary Knowledge.

"Where are you going to keep the parrot, Bouncer?" demanded the doctor.

"In the dormitory, sir, just over Perkins's head, so that if it wants a bit of worm now and then, it can have it!

"You are going to do nothing of the sort!"

"Well, I'm going to give him to Lily. She said she wished she had a talking-parrot; and this one can say almost

anything."
"Well, there is no necessity for you to give the bird

away. You can keep it-

"I don't want to keep it, sir. I bought it specially for Lily. If she's got a yearning for a parrot, I don't see why she shouldn't have one. I may ask her to lend it to me for a day or so in the holidays, so that I can make it bite

my stepfather!"

"Silence! You have no right to speak of that gentleman in such a manner."

"I've got a cage for the parrot, sir, and, if you don't mind, I will take it to Lily now."

"I don't wish you to waste your money in such expensive presents for my daughter," said the doctor.

"Well, I don't see how you are going to help it now, sir, seeing that the bird is bought and paid for. I don't know that I particularly want a parrot, and I know she does. I've got a good talker for her. There was a better talker, only he was grey, and Lily said she preferred the green ones. But this one can say a good lot, and he never says anything vulgar, so he will just suit."

"Hallo!" cried Polly.

"You had better let my daughter take care of the bird

for you," said the doctor.

"He'd be too much bother to me, sir, and I would forget to feed him, or something like that. No; if you want me to keep a tame animal—and I rather want one myself—I've got my eye on a tame bear. He belongs to the circus, but the showman has offered to sell him to me. I'll bring him round to-morrow night. He will sleep all right in the dormitory, and-

"You will do nothing of the sort!" gasped the doctor. 'Take that bird away, and don't you dare to bring any animal into the college without my consent!"

"All right, sir; but I would be glad if you would think the bear over. I have set my heart on him, and he would do to bite Jardon and some of the other bullies. The shew-man says I can have him a week on approval, if I deposit his value. I think it is because he is going to shift his pitch in three days' time, and I wouldn't be able to return that bear fortune in my own night, and __'' whether I approved him or not." "I don't require to know anything about your

"Take that bird out of the room!" ordered the doctor. "And I strictly forbid you to bring any other animal into this college without having first gained my permission."

Then Bob took his parrot away, and he forgot to return treat you as such. Sit down!" to that class.

The following morning, when the boys were in class, Bob

gave some information to Rex, who was seated next to him.
"There's a new chap come. You never saw such a fop
in all your life. Wears jewellery and an eyeglass. Fortunately he won't be in our class, because he's about seventeen. He's rather tall and rather slim. You never saw such a masher—"

"Are you talking, Bouncer?" demanded Mr. Salmon.

"Yes, sir."

"Write a hundred lines."

"Yes, sir. I said good-morning to his lordship, and he put up his eyeglass and said, 'Er—who are you?' I told him, and he said, 'Er—well, Lam Mr. Alburton. Run away, you dirty-faced little boy!" Is my face dirty?"

"Are you talking again, Bouncer?"

"If you please, sir, yes."

"I assure you it does not please me. Write another hundred lines. What were you saying?"

"I asked Rex if my face was dirty, sir, because Swiper said it was.'

"Who is Swipes?"

7" The new boy, sir."

"His name is Alburton."
"Yes, sir. I call him Swipes for short. Oxford they call beer swipes, and if this new boy is all burton, he must be swipes. Because burton is equal to beer, and beer is equal to swipes, and things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. Quod erat demonstrandum."

Perhaps it was fortunate that the new boy entered the room at that moment. Needless to say, every eye was fixed upon him, but he did not seem to mind that at all. He was rather a simple-looking lad, and Bob had described him accurately.

"Take a seat on that form, Alburton," said Mr. Salmon, who had already seen him.

Swipes fixed his monocle in his eye, and gazed at the floor. Then he gazed at the form.

"Fancy! No carpet on the floor!" he exclaimed, in a voice loud enough to reach the master.

"Have you never been to school before, Alburton?" inquired Mr. Salmon.

"Certainly not! I have had a private tutor-er-a decent sort of man in his way, but the idiot got consumption and died."

"It is a great pity that you stick that ridiculous glass in your eye!" said Mr. Salmon sternly. "If you are short-sighted you should wear spectacles. I wonder your mother allows you to wear that eyeglass!"
"Allows me!"

"That is what I said."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"At what are you laughing, boy?"
"At your ridiculous remark. As though anyone dare to dictate to me what I was to do! Why,

affairs. I fear you are a spoilt child!"

"I am not a child!"-Then do not behave like one, otherwise I shall have to

"Am I expected to sit on a wooden form?"

"Shall I fetch him an air cushion, sir!" inquired Bob.

"Silence ! Sit down, boy!"

"I am not accustomed to being spoken to like that by a schoolmaster," observed Swipes.

"There are several things to which you will have to become accustomed at this college. Discipline is one of them. "My mother-

"I am correcting you now. Not your mother. You are a

vers foolish little boy to behave in this manner."
"I am not a little boy, and Mr. Salmon picked up his cane and fixed his eyes on the

extraordinary lad. He was never harsh with new boys, but he knew that this case required very special treatment.
"Obey my command!" said Mr. Salmon firmly.

"Of course I shall sit down—er—I have no intention to stand during the lesson!"

"Quite right, Swipes!" murmured Bob, at whose side was

If you ever dare to call me that again, I'll knock your silly head off your dirty little shoulders!" cried Alburton. "I'm a gentleman-

"Glad to hear it!" murmured Bob.

"This is a geography lesson, Alburton," explained Mr. Salmon, in his kindest voice. "I will ask you a few questions to see if you should be placed in a higher Form. Name the largest country in Europe." military discussion

"You must know better than that!"
"Well, Germany."

"Do you mean to tell me that you do not know that Russia is by far the-

"Why, yes; you are right! I forgot Russia. It's on the er-right-hand side, and they export tallow, and corn, and one or two other things such as-er-wheat, and-

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rex. "Sorry, sir! It was a sort

of spasmodic guffaw."
So they do export wheat!" declared Swipes.
"I never said they did not."

"Then what are you laughing for, you ignorant little creature?"

"Silence, Allingham!" commanded Mr. Salmon. "I'I don't need your assistance!"

"I rather fancy you will, sir," said Bob. "You ought to left Rex take him in the gym for ten minutes, and knock the staffing out of him."

I shall gate you for next Saturday, Bouncer! Stay, write another fifty lines

Thanks, awfully, sir! I Milieve I'm right, too!"
Mr. Salmon understood this! Bob was really grateful for those fifty lines in place of being gated.

"Can you name the longest river in the world, Alburton?"
"The Thames. It rises in the—"

Rex was not the only one who laughed that time. Every boy in the class roared. Mr. Salmon mopped his brow; then a gleam of hope came to his breast:

"Perhaps you did not understand my question, Alburton.

Repeat it.

You asked the name of the longest river in the world and I said the Thames. I am not expected to know the exact length of all the rivers in the world, but I know the Thames

is a long one. I've boated on it. I've got a yacht on the Thames

"I don't want to hear anything about that!" interposed Mr. Salmon, "The Thames is two hundred and twenty miles. long. The Amazon is four thousand miles in length. The Thames is one of the shortest of famous rivers."

"Well, I happen to know it isn't!" declared "There's the Swipes. Hogsmill, and I don't believe the twenty miles

long ... ore

Go it. Td famous rivers."

Right that's a famous disa, per canoe. I've got voice woon it. So I have "Toward-

at will do. Attend me. Can you name the highest mountain in the world?"

"Certainly I can! Mount-er-Mount-

"Try him with Box Hill," suggested Rex.

"I'll punch your head directly this beastly lesson is finished!"

"No wonder your tutor died young!" murmured Rex.
"Allingham," cried Mr. Salmon, who had an idea Rex was talking, "name the highest mountain in the world!"

"Gaurisankar, sir. Himalayas. Between Nepaul and Thibet. 29,002 feet. Never could make out how they got the two feet, but I suppose they are right. I'm sceptical about the odd feet, and if I go up it, I shall knock off the top two feet so as to make it easier to remember.".

Are you trying to be clever?" inquired Mr. Salmon.

"He will never succeed if he is!" declared Swipes. "He has named the wrong mountain for the start. Mount Everest

is the highest in the world. I remember the name now." Salmon. Gaurisankar is another name for it. You heard Allingham tell you that Mount Everest is in the Himalayas. Now, where are the Himalayas?"

"It is lamentable!" groaned Mr. Salmon.

where they are, Allingham!" North India, sir," answered Rex.

"Of course he can tell you when he is looking at the book!" cried Swipes.

"Allingham would not need a book to tell me that," said Mr. Salmon. "Besides, he is not so dishonest as to crib. What book have you there, Allingham?"

"History, sir. I'm working up the afternoon prep."

"You ought to have done that last night." "I know, sir. Sorry, Fortuitous circumstances."
"Were you ill?"

"Boxing with Bob, sir."

"Remember, I take the class! On what river is Paris situate, Alburton?"

"If Swipes can't answer that he must be insane!" said "A hundred lines, Allingham! How dare you make a re-

mark like that?" "I was trying to make a joke, sir. It ought to assist him.

I don't think he knows, sir. Paris is on the Seine." "I know more about Paris than you will ever learn. speak the language better than I do English!" declared Swipes. "I think in it."

"Then I would start thinking in double Dutch!" growled

Bob. I have been all over Paris. We stayed at the best het

for nearly a month-"If you learn't French in a month, I'll eat my hat!" said

Mr. Salmon asked a few more questions. Swipes answered at random. And then he declared that his tutor was an M.A., and a very clever man, and that although the fellow had died, he would back his opinion against any living man. Swipes even went so far as to wager his gold watch—which he said cost a hundred and fifty guineas—against Mr. Salmon's watch, that the dead tutor knew more than ever Mr. Salmon could possibly learn. Swipes also casually men-

tioned that the diamond in his scarfpin cost eighty

guineas.

When that awful lesson was ended the unfortunate Mr. Salmon was almost in a state of collapse. He had striven so hard to control his temper. He had thought of the youth's unlucky mother, and tried to get pathetic, but when Swipes referred to his mother as the poor old lady, it spoilt the pathos. Mr. Salmon would infinitely rather have dealt with a lad who howled at leaving nome. pecause there must be good in such a lad; but when an idiotic creature sticks an eyeglass in his eye, gazes calmly at his master, and refers to a too-indulgent mother as "the poor old lady"why, it rather spoils the pathos.

The master, that day, was not the only one who was glad when the class ended.

(Another long instalment next Thursday.)



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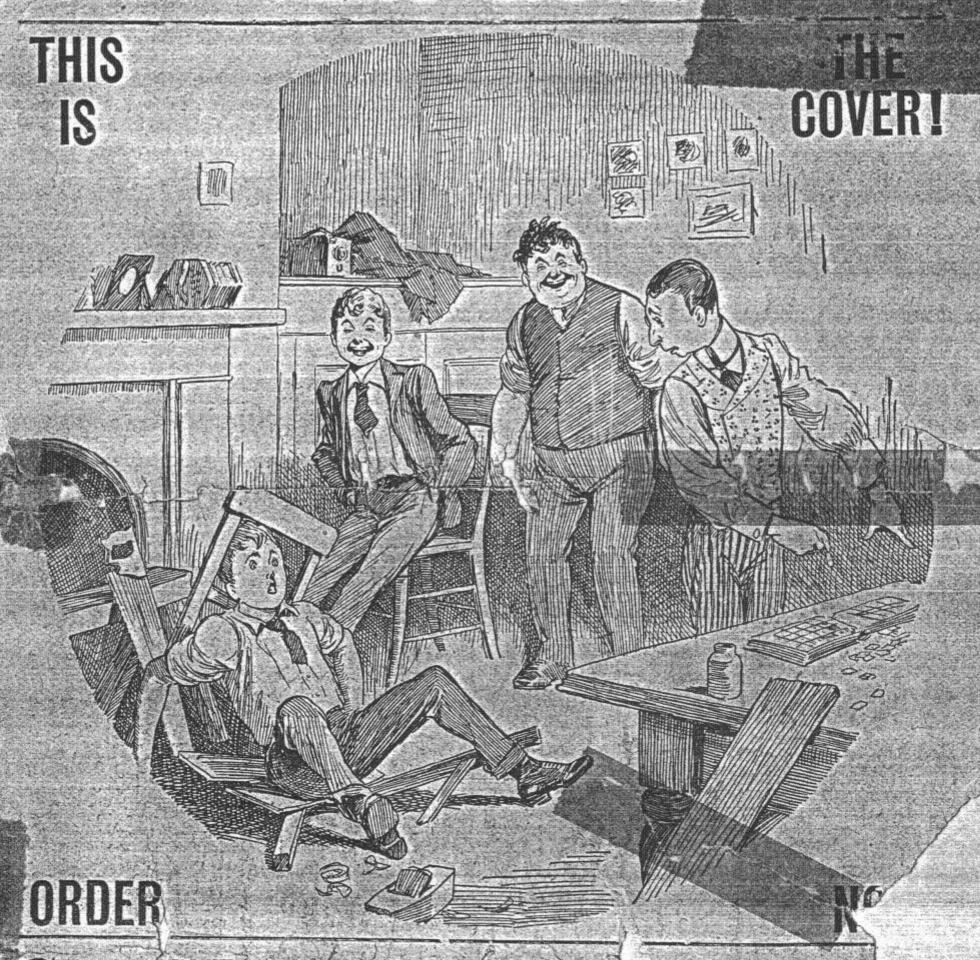
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EDITOR.

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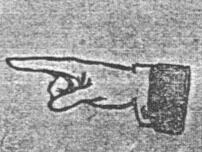
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