

THIS BOOK CONTAINS absolutely New and ORIGINAL SCHOOL TALES.

THE GEM LIBRARY

1^d
PRICE
2

SPOOFED!

LONG, COMPLETE
SCHOOL TALE OF
TOM MERRY.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"OW!"
"LET'S LOOK!"
SHOUTED BLAKE
AND LOWTHER
TOGETHER—"OW!"

FOOTBALL

This splendid large-size Match Football will be sent to any address on receipt of **6d. DEPOSIT**



and upon payment of the last of 16 further weekly instalments of 6d. each. A Reliable Repairing Outfit is given FREE. Note.—Our Cash-with-Order price is only 7/6. Nothing better manufactured. Send 6d., or more, and secure this wonderful bargain.

BRITISH MANUFACTURING CO.
(F 24), GREAT YARMOUTH.

6d. DEPOSIT,

This Handsome Phonograph, with large enamelled Flower Horn (Gold lined), and Two Records, complete in case, will be sent to any address on receipt of 6d. DEPOSIT and upon payment of the last of 18 further weekly instalments of 6d. each. Two 1/- Records are given free. Send 6d., or more and secure this wonderful bargain.

THE BRITISH MANUFACTURING CO.
(P 24), Great Yarmouth.



COLLECTOR'S 2/- OUTFIT FREE! Contains:

1.—A Stamp Album, strongly bound, 400 illustrations. 2.—Illustrated Book, entitled "The Guide to Stamp Collecting" (usual price 8d.). 3.—A Packet of British Colonial and other stamps, including Newfoundland, South Australia, Natal, N.S. Wales, Queensland, Cape Colony, New Zealand, Jamaica, Victoria, Ceylon, Transvaal, Set of 5 Canada, Set of India, &c., &c. 4.—A Packet of the Celebrated "Superb" Stamp Mounts. 5.—A Perforation Gauge, guaranteed correct.

The Entire Collector's Outfit, usual price 2/., will be sent Absolutely Free to every Stamp Collector sending 3d. (abroad 6d.) to pay for postage and packing. Don't Miss This Chance. Send at Once.

Henry Abel & Co., WALSALL.

TATTOOING. NO PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED.

The "Simplex" Outfit contains complete Tattooing Kit, including Ink, Colours, Solutions, Needles, Transferable Designs, &c., &c., and full Instructions for Artistic Tattooing without previous experience. Post free 3/6. Every article as used by Professional Tattooists. The Instructions alone are worth the money. Foreign orders 6d. extra.

"NOVELTIES" (H Dept.), 67, Britannia Road, Norwich.

AN ASTOUNDING OFFER. A 2/6 PARCEL FOR 3d. READ.

The Parcel contains a Packet of Foreign and Colonial Stamps, Fifty all different (no duplicates), including Cuba (unused), German (80 p.), Canada (King), Patiala (Indian Native State), Roumania, Ivory Coast, Japanese Empire, Transvaal, Mexico, Russia, France (10c. unpaid), St. Louis, U.S.A., postage due, Newfoundland (Royal Portrait), and many others too numerous to mention. Also a Packet of Stamp Mounts, a Handy Collector's Pocket Book for Notes, Addresses, &c., 2 Perforation Gauge (guaranteed correct, with instructions for use), a Packet of Transparent Envelopes (indispensable to Collectors); and in addition to the above we are Presenting Free a Duplicate Folding Pocket Case (fitted with transparent pocket). This Parcel, containing the Packet of Stamps, Duplicate Case, Mounts, Pocket Book, Gauge, Transparent Envelopes, &c., &c., will be sent per Return of Post on receipt of 3d. and 1d. stamp for postage. New Price Lists, containing some bargains equal to the above, sent with every parcel. Postage for Colonies, 6d.

KING BROS. LTD. BILSTON.

Be sure and mention this paper when communicating with advertisers.

"THE BLACK SHEEP,"

Mr. H. St. John Cooper's Latest Serial Story,
STARTS IN THE CURRENT

PENNY PICTORIAL

It is the strongest Novel Mr. Cooper has ever written.

In the Same Issue Appear:

"THE RED LIGHT."

A Splendid Illustrated Article on the **RAILWAY CRISIS**. By **WALTER HUDSON, M.P.**, Railwaymen's Representative for Newcastle-on-Tyne.

"THE TRAGEDY OF No. 9 HOLE."

A Brilliant Golfing Story of **SEXTON BLAKE, DETECTIVE**.

"THE FIFTH."

Some Forgotten Facts About the Historic Gunpowder Plot, with Some Wonderful Photographs of Brilliant Firework Displays.

"AN ANONYMOUS LETTER."

A Charming and Dramatic Complete Story. By **HERBERT MAXWELL.**

BART KENNEDY on

"THE KING'S HIGHWAY."

A Picturesque Account of one of Mr. Kennedy's Own Experiences as a Tramp.

"THE DEATH TRAIN."

One of the Recollections of Mr. **FRANK SCUDAMORE**, late Special Correspondent to the "Times" and the "Daily News."

"FOOTBALL CLUBS WITH GREAT RECORDS."

Illustrated with Striking Snapshots of Remarkable Bits of Play.

"SQUIRE BROWN'S TROUT."

A Humorous Complete Story, Cleverly Illustrated by **G. M. PAYNE.**

"MURDERLAND."

More Exposures of the **CONGO ATROCITIES**. By **E. D. MOREL**, Author of "Red Rubber," &c., &c. Illustrated.



"Dick!" screamed Esther. "Oh, Dick, my husband, for God's sake wait! Dick! It is murder! For mercy's sake—" But it was too late. The blow had fallen. (A dramatic incident illustrating "THE BLACK SHEEP.")

GET IT NOW—The Current
PENNY PICTORIAL

**NEXT
THURSDAY:**

"D'ARCY'S ROMANCE"

**A COMPLETE SCHOOL
STORY OF TOM MERRY.**

No. 35.

Vol. 2.



A COMPLETE STORY FOR EVERYONE, AND EVERY STORY A GEM!

SPOOFED!

A SPLENDID TALE OF TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy's Stratagem.

"STOP a minute, you chaps!"

Tom Merry was coming out of the School House at St. Jim's with Manners and Lowther. It was a clear, crisp afternoon at the beginning of November, and the Terrible Three were bound for the football field for a little practice.

But they stopped at once as Jack Blake spoke. The serious, not to say solemn, expression upon Blake's face impressed them.

"Hallo," said Tom Merry, cheerily, "what's the trouble?"

"Oh, he's in the throes of composition!" said Monty Lowther. "I can tell that by the gleam in his eye. He's looking for a rhyme for a new poem in the 'Weekly.' I say, Blake—"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Blake. "Something's up."

"What's up?" asked the Terrible Three together.

"There's something brewing in the New House," said Blake impressively. "Figgins & Co. are getting up some jape to work off on us, and I can't catch on to it. That's what's up."

The Terrible Three were duly impressed.

The warfare between the School House and the New House at St. Jim's had been in abeyance for a week or two, but it never slept for long.

"I say, that will want looking into," said Tom Merry anxiously. "Come to think of it, Figgins & Co. have been acting very mysteriously the last day or two. I might have guessed that there was something in the wind from their manner."

"Well, I did guess," said Blake, with a superior smile, "and I've looked into it. Only the trouble is, that I can't discover what's on."

"Of course you can't. You couldn't expect to, you know. You've come to just the right party for help, Blake. We'll look into it," said Monty Lowther.

Blake looked fierce.

"If you've come out this afternoon to look for a thick ear, Lowther, you—"

"Peace," said Tom Merry, waving his hand paternally. "Peace, my children. When there's a row on with the New House we stand together. That's agreed."

"That was my idea, but if Lowther—"

"If Lowther says another word we'll boil him in oil. Now, what do you think Figgins & Co. are up to, Blake?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "It's something up against



the School House, I know that; but whether it's against you three, or against us in Study No. 6, I can't tell. My idea is that we should join and see into it, and give those New House bounders the kybosh, anyway."

"And a jolly good idea, too," said Tom Merry heartily.

"I've done my best to get on to it," said Blake. "I've tried to pump Figgins, but he wasn't saying a word. Then I tried Kerr, but you know what a canny Scot he is; I might as well have tried to pump a brick wall. Then I tried Fatty Wynn. I filled him up with jam tarts and cream puffs in the tuck-shop to make him talk, but he never said a word. Not a word!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "After I'd blown fifteenpence in feeding him!"

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry. "Ungrateful! Beastly! But what can you expect of those New House wasters?"

"Exactly. Herries had a try, too. He borrowed Taggles's ladder to get a peep into the window of Figgy's study, and they discovered him, and poured a can of water over him. It was rotten for Herries."

"Ha, ha! It must have been."

"Now D'Arcy is trying," went on Blake. "He says he's going into Figgy's study on some excuse or other, and will spy

Every Thursday.

ONE LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

One Halfpenny.

out the lay of the land. But I fancy Figgy will be a bit too cute for him."

"I fancy so, too. Gussy isn't the kind of chap to come it over Figgins. He—"

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy!"

Tom Merry turned his head and beheld the swell of the School House, who had just come up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked as nice and nobby as ever in his beautifully-creased trousers, well-fitting jacket, and fancy waistcoat.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, with a nod. "I hear you're going to beard the lion in his den—that is to say, Figgins & Co. in their study."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy complacently. "I'm goin' to discovah the dark secwet, deah boys. You wequire a fellow of tact and judgment for a thing like this, you know. You all know what an awfully deep fellow I am."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry, with a wink at his comrades. "We all know how awfully, fearfully, horribly deep you are, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah. I'm goin' ovah to see Figgins, you know, in a friently way, and when he lets me into the study—"

"But suppose he doesn't let you in."

"Oh, he will!" said Arthur Augustus confidently. "You see, I shall knock at the door, and when he says, 'Come in,' I shall go in. If he says, 'Who's there?' I shall say, 'Pwatt,' and he won't know it's me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the Terrible Three in surprise. "I fail to see the weason of this mewwiment," he remarked.

"I wegard that as a weally cute stwatagem."

"But it will be telling a whopper, won't it?"

"Not at all. You know perfectly well, Tom Mewwy, that a gentleman never tells a whoppah. I shall say, 'Pwatt!' that is all. I shall not say it is Pwatt. I shall say, 'Pwatt!' and Figgy can draw his own conclusions. That is not a whoppah. That is a stwatagem."

"I see. A fine distinction, Gussy."

"Yaas, you see a stwatagem is permitted in warfare, just as a ship will hoist the enemy's flag sometimes, you see. That's a stwatagem, not a whoppah."

"I see. And Figgy is sure to believe that it is Pratt at the door."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Well, go ahead, Gussy, and we'll wait for you and see how it turns out," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I'm goin', but I weally do not see the weason of this wibald laughter," said Arthur Augustus, looking puzzled. "If you can see anythin' w'ong with my stwatagem, I should be glad to hear it."

"Well, it's just possible that Figgins may recognise your voice, you know."

"Not at all, deah boy. I shall be awfully careful to imitate Pwatt's voice."

"Well, if you're awfully careful the wheeze ought to work all right. Once you get into the study you'll be able to see what's going on, I suppose."

"Yaas, wathah. A New House kid told me that Figgins is always keeping his study door locked when he's not in it, and that shows there's somethin' there to give the wheeze away," said D'Arcy. "Pwatt is in the secwet, and so is Fwench, I hear."

"But when you get inside they may slay you for bowling them out," suggested Blake.

"I weally am not afraid of that," said D'Arcy loftily. "I am p'pared to suffah for the good of the cause, and it is impos- to get information about the enemy's movements without wunnin' some wisk."

"Well, go ahead, then, and good luck."

"Thank you, I am goin'. I shall soon be back, deah boys, with full information."

And the swell of the School House marched off towards the New House. He looked back once and saw four juniors laughing heartily.

D'Arcy held his head very high as he walked on.

"I weally do not see the cause of this mewwiment," he muttered. "The only thing I can think of is that Tom Mewwy is jealous of my awful cuteness."

He entered the New House.

"Hallo, what do you want?"

It was Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, who asked the question. D'Arcy surveyed him through his eyeglass.

"I have come to speak to Figgins in a friently way, deah boy," he remarked.

Monteith grinned.

"You'll find him at home, I think," he remarked. "Go up, by all means."

"Thank you," said Arthur Augustus languidly. "I will."

He ascended the stairs and stopped at the door of the study occupied by the famous firm of Figgins & Co., the chiefs of the juniors of the New House.

The door was closed, and from within came a faint murmur of voices and the sound of a laugh. There was certainly something going on in Figgy's study.

Arthur Augustus tapped at the door.

"Hallo!" came Figgins's voice from within. "Who's there?"

"Pwatt!"

There was an exclamation inside the room.

Some moments elapsed, and then the door was suddenly flung open, and three juniors came out with a rush.

D'Arcy was hurried right across the passage to the wall opposite, and then the study door was closed again, shutting out the three juniors. It was evident that there was a fourth occupant of the study.

The three who had rushed out were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—the famous Co. They fastened upon the astonished and breathless D'Arcy, and pinned him against the wall.

"Oh, weally," gasped D'Arcy, "I wish you would not be so extremely wuff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, the long-limbed New House chief. "You—you duffer! You howling ass! You—you—you lunatic!"

"I object to bein' chawactewised as a lunatic. I object—"

"Ha, ha, ha! If you want to know, Gussy, Pratt is in that study at the present moment."

"Oh, dear," gasped Gussy, "I—I nevah thought of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! But if he hadn't been there I think we should have recognised your beautiful accent. What do you think, chaps?"

"Rather," said the grinning Co.

"And now, Gussy, just explain what you mean by coming here and attempting to deceive three innocent youths in this barefaced way," said Figgins severely.

"I—I—I will explain if you will welease me. You are cwumplin' my jacket and soilin' my collah."

"You're going to get worse than that if you don't explain yourself," said Figgins, shaking the swell of the School House. "Now, what do you mean? Expound! Explicate! Do you hear?"

"It—it was a stwatagem," gasped D'Arcy.

"What did you want to get into our study for?"

"I wanted to discovah what you were up to, you see."

"I see. Blake must have been off his rocker to send a kipper like you on a voyage of discovery. If you had found out anything we should have suffocated you in the cellar and buried you under the floor."

"Oh, weally, Figgins—"

"As it is, I think a less severe punishment will meet the case. If we pour some paraffin on him and set him alight, chaps—"

"Good wheeze!" cried the Co. heartily.

D'Arcy wriggled.

"Figgins, if you are so extremely bwatal—"

"Oh, I forgot, paraffin costs money, and we can't afford it!" said Figgins. "Perhaps we'd better jump on him instead."

"I wefuse to be jumped on. I distinctly—"

"You've got no voice in the matter," said Figgins. "Jumping on is the sentence, and we'll carry it out at once. Bring him along to the steps in the passage, kids. We'll lay him at the bottom of the steps, and all jump on him together from the top."

"Splendid idea."

"I pwotest—you will hurt me, in all pwobability, and you will certainly damage my clothes. I wefuse to be jumped on. Understand, Figgins, that I uttaly wefuse to be jumped on."

"Ha, ha! Bring him along."

The New House trio dragged the vainly resisting swell of the School House along the passage to the steps. There were three rather steep steps at this point, just the place for the execution of Figgy's idea.

"Down with him!" said Figgins.

Arthur Augustus was plumped on the floor.

"Now, you know what you've got to do," said Figgins.

"You're to lie still here while we jump on you. Get up, kids!" Figgins & Co. jumped up the steps, and stood on the top one. In a twinkling D'Arcy was on his feet, and racing down the corridor as if for his life.

"Ready, Gussy," said Figgins. "Why, he's gone! I say, you boulder, come back. We haven't jumped on you yet."

But Arthur Augustus did not come back.

He was out of the New House like a flash of lightning, and he did not stop running till he joined the School House chums at the door of the other house. Figgins & Co., laughing loudly, returned to their study.

ANSWERS

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy Tries It On.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stopped running at the door of the School House, and stood gasping for breath, too winded to reply at once to the questions of the chums waiting for him there.

"What have you found out?" demanded Blake.
"What is the dread secret?" asked Tom Merry. "It must be something awfully blood curdling, to bring you racing back like this to tell us."

"Rather," said Herries, who had joined the group. "See how excited he is! He's seen something that's made his gore run cold."

"Was there a dead body in the study?" Monty Lowther wanted to know. "Have Figgins & Co. committed a hideous, horrid, awful crime?"

"Did you see any bloodstains?" asked Manners. "Any crimson-hued knives, or meat axes with tell-tale stains on them?"

"Oh, don't wot," said D'Arcy, recovering his breath at last. "I have had a most unpleasant expewience. My stwatagem was not successful."

"You surprise us."

"Yaas, I was extwemely surprised myself. I had planned it so beastly carefully, you know. But Pwatt happened to be in the study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I couldn't foresee that. I am not a beastly pwophet, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins & Co. knew it was I, and they wan out and behaved most wuffly," said Arthur Augustus. "I escaped by the skin of my beastly teeth, you know. They were goin' to jump on me, but I wan away in time. Pewwaps, when I come to think of it, they were only jokin', but they were weally vewy wuff and wude."

"Shocking," said Tom Merry. "Now, kids, as Gussy's stwatagem is a ghastly failure, we've got to think of something else. You didn't get a look into the room, even, Gus?"

"No. Figgins & Co. wan out, and Pwatt closed the door behind them."

"Well, that proves, if we needed proof, that there's something going on in the study," said Tom Merry. "I wonder what it is. We're going to discover."

"That's easier said than done," Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah. If an awfully deep fellah like me can't get on to it, Tom Mewwy, I don't see how you chaps are going to succeed," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Well, we're going to try, as well as our limited intellects will allow," said Tom Merry. "And, as a matter of fact, I've got an idea."

"Well, we'll hear it," said Blake condescendingly.

Tom Merry waved his hand round the wide quadrangle.

"Look round you, kids. What strikes you most in our surroundings?"

Blake looked round him.

"Lathom," he said, nodding towards the master of the Fourth Form, who was crossing the quadrangle with his slow, solemn steps. "He strikes us most—sometimes with a cane, sometimes with a pointer."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't mean that. What strikes me most is the autumnal state of the trees in the quad—the fact that most of the leaves have been shed."

Blake looked puzzled, and so did the others.

"You generally find trees in an autumnal state in the autumn," said Blake. "I can't see anything remarkable in that."

"It would be more remarkable if the twees were thick and gween in the beginnin' of Novembah—"

"And I can't see what the state of the trees has to do with the subject in hand."

"Can you ever see anything till I point it out, you kids?" asked Tom Merry. "I draw attention to the leafless state of the trees because that makes it possible to carry out my idea. You will observe that that rotten old casual ward called the New House is built directly opposite the School House, on the other side of the quadrangle. From my study window we cannot see much of it in the summer, because the leaves are so thick on the trees. But in November the case is different. From our study window, dear kids, we can see the window of Figgins's study."

"I darsay you can, but I don't see how you're to make it out at that distance," said Blake. "And if you could be sure of the window, you couldn't see into it, if that's what you're driving at, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry smiled loftily.

"What's the matter with a telescope?" he asked.

The chums gave a simultaneous jump.

"A telescope!"

"Exactly. A telescope in our window would command

Figgins's study, now that the leaves are off the trees. Figgy is hygienic, and believes in fresh air, and always has his window open. All the better for us."

"But you're not going to blue a small fortune on a telescope to—"

"Not at all. I'm going to borrow one."

"Ah, I see. If a fellow in the house has a telescope—"

"I don't know one that has. But I know that Herr Schneider has a telescope, and I know that he is going to lend it to me."

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I say, Tom! You'll never have the nerve to ask Herr Schneider to lend you his telescope?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; I've a lot of nerve, but not quite enough for that," he said. "I'm going to borrow it without asking, you see. He ought to be willing to lend it to us in the interests of the house, and if he isn't, that's his look out."

"Of course," agreed Blake. "That's right enough. But Herr Schneider happens to be in his study, and as I saw him at the window smoking his pipe, he's not likely to shift before dark—"

"Unless he's shifted. We can manage it. I know just where he keeps that telescope, and I only want a chance to nip in and collar it."

"Twist me to do that," exclaimed D'Arcy. "You require a deep fellow to work off a twick like that, deah boys. I weally think I had bettah be entwisted with the task of collarin' the telescope."

"Oh, go and drown yourself," said Blake. "What's your idea, Tom Merry?"

"I wefuse to go and drown myself," said D'Arcy, before Tom could speak, "and I wegard the suggestion as a wiculous one. I think I ought to go to Herr Schneider's study and twy to bowwow the telescope—"

"Oh, travel," said Blake, taking the swell of the School House by the collar and twisting him round. "There, run away and play—"

"I wegard this conduct as most wuffianly—"

"Off you go! Now, get on with the washing, Tom Merry."

D'Arcy surveyed Blake with withering scorn for a moment, and seemed inclined to commit assault and battery on the spot; but then a new idea came into his mind. He smiled broadly, and went into the School House.

"My idea is for one of us to trick Schneider out of his study," explained Tom, "while I nip in and get the glass. It can be done."

"Good. But, I say, where's that image gone," exclaimed Herries anxiously. "It's just like the ass to go and try—"

"He'll spoil everything," exclaimed Tom Merry. "Go and see where he's gone."

Blake and Herries ran into the house. Arthur Augustus was knocking at the door of the German master's study.

"Come away," said Blake in a shrill whisper. "D'Arcy! Gussy! Come away!"

D'Arcy turned his head and smiled scornfully.

"Gussy, old chap! Do come— Oh, the horrid ass—he's done it now!"

The German master's voice was heard from within the study:

"Come in, aiu't it."

Arthur Augustus opened the door of the study and went in. Blake gave a groan.

"He's done it now! The howler—the idiot—the cuckoo! All the fat will be in the fire!"

"We'll boil him in oil when he comes out," murmured Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three had followed Blake and Herries into the house. They waited in keen anxiety to hear what was said in the study.

The German master was seated by the open window, with his meerscham in his mouth, and a book in his beloved Deutch in his hand.

He looked inquiringly at the swell of the School House as he came in.

"Vell, and vat did you vant pefore?" he asked.

"I am extwemely sowwy to disturb you, sir, but could you go to Mr. Walton's study for a few minutes, sir?" said D'Arcy. The German master grunted.

"Ja, I vill go," he said reluctantly.

He thought, of course, that D'Arcy had brought a message from Mr. Ralton, the master of the School House. He did not want to leave his cosy seat, but he could not disregard a message from the house-master.

He rose slowly, and laid down his pipe and his book, and crossed to the door with his ponderous steps. Then he glanced at D'Arcy.

"You may leave te study, mein poy."

"Certainly, sir," said D'Arcy briskly.

He followed the German master to the door. Herr Schneider went along the passage, and then glanced suspiciously back. D'Arcy had not left the study. Herr Schneider came back to the door. The fact that there were five juniors in the

passage, all looking superlatively innocent, added to his suspiciousness.

He looked into the study, and then gave a grunt.

Arthur Augustus was calmly opening the drawer in his table where the telescope was kept. He did not see the German master bearing down upon him, and was not aware of his return till he felt a fat finger and thumb closing on his ear. Then he gave a jump and a sudden yell.

"Mein Gott!" said Herr Schneider. "Of all te cheek as nefer vas after before! Vat you look dere for? Vas it tat you vas vish to steal something mit yourself, ain't it?"

D'Arcy flushed scarlet.

"You insult me, Herr Schneider!" he exclaimed. "That is not a remark which should pass from one gentleman to another."

"Mein Himmel! I nefer did hear a poy talk so after! Vat you vas look in tat drawer for, ain't it?"

"I must weally wufese to answer that question, Herr Schneider, as you have made such an insultin' remark. I weally——"

"You vas play some drick, perhaps. It vas nearly te Fifth of November, and perhaps you vas put te firework in mein desk?"

"I assure you, sir, that such was not my intention. I merely——"

"It vas some peastly mischief, ain't it? I do not believe tat Mr. Railton sent you to me mit tat message."

"You will remembah, sir, that I made no assertion to that effect. I merely said——"

"Ten Mr. Railton, he did not send you before?"

"N-n-n——" said D'Arcy. "I merely——"

"Den you send me on te chase of te wild duck!" exclaimed Herr Schneider, probably meaning a wild goose chase. "You——you haf more vat you Engleesh call te cheek tan any oder poy as I nefer knew before. Hold out your hand."

"But weally, Herr Schneider——"

"Hold you tat hand before!" thundered Herr Schneider, taking up a cane.

"I assure you that my intention was not diswespectful."

"Hold out tat hand, ain't it?"

D'Arcy reluctantly obeyed, and he received four cuts, two on either hand, that made him wriggle. Herr Schneider pointed to the door.

"Now you can go," he said. "I teaches you to play te Fifth November dricks on me, ain't it? Go at vunce, you pad, cheeky poy."

And Arthur Augustus went. Blake, Herries, and the Terrible Three glared at him as he came out of the study. He had no sympathy to expect from them.

"You ass!" said Blake witheringly. "You nearly spoilt the lot. If you had mentioned the telescope, we'd have skinned you by inches, and boiled you in turpentine."

"Weally, Blake, I wegard those fewocious thweats as supremely vidiculous," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am suffowin' considerable pain at the pvesent moment, and so I will not stay to argue with you. My stwatagem did not succeed——"

"Your stratagems are a bit too funny," growled Blake. "Travel along. We don't want any more of your giddy stratagems."

And the swell of the School House "travelled along," leaving the others to obtain the telescope without his assistance.

CHAPTER 3.

A Startling Discovery—The Great Wheeze of Figgins & Co.

HERR SCHNEIDER settled down again to his book and his pipe at the open window of his study. He had been disturbed; but the caning of Arthur Augustus had afforded him considerable satisfaction. He had hardly resumed his book, however, when it was suddenly smitten by some missile that nearly knocked it out of his hand.

Herr Schneider started up in wrath. A little stone rolled on the carpet, and he knew by that that some audacious marksman had actually dared to make a target of his book with a catapult.

"Mein Gott!" muttered Herr Schneider. "Tat is vorse tan te cheek of te oder poy after!"

He glared from the window into the quadrangle.

There was no one in sight, but from behind a tree near at hand he saw the toe of a boot protruding into view, and he had little doubt that it belonged to the marksman in cover. The German master picked up the cane from the table, and went quietly from the study. He meant to take a summary vengeance upon the audacious marksman in the quad, and to teach him that it was not prudent to play such tricks upon an august German master.

As he went from the house, cane in hand, Tom Merry came lightly along the passage, and slipped into the study. To open

the draw of the table and take out the telescope, was the work of a moment; and with the coveted prize under his arm, Tom Merry darted out of the study. Up the stairs he went at top-speed, and burst into Study X, which was the apartment in the School House occupied by the Terrible Three.

Manners and Lowther were there, with Blake at the window. Blake turned his head as Tom ran in and placed the telescope on the table.

"Got it? Good! Come and take a squint at old Schneider. He's just come out."

Tom Merry ran to the window, and looked out over Lowther's shoulder.

Herr Schneider had descended the steps of the School House, and was making towards the tree from behind which the boot protruded. As Tom looked out, Herr Schneider was seen to stop and stare, and then bestow a kick upon an ancient boot—which was all he found behind the tree.

The German master's face was a study. He realised that the catapultist was far away, and that that ancient specimen of footgear had been deliberately placed where he found it to trick him into coming out in the vain hope of discovering the delinquent.

"Mein Gott!" muttered Herr Schneider. "Tat vas such a cheek as nefer vas after! Mein Himmel! If I vas find tat poy, I make him warm mit himself before."

And the wrathful Teuton returned to the house. He re-entered his study, but the drawer of his table was closed, and he observed nothing unusual. And he resumed his book in blissful ignorance of the absence of the telescope.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's done. I've got the glass, and now to discover what Figgins & Co are up to over in the New House. Come in, Herries, old man! You did that catapult trick jolly well, and it's worked like a charm."

Herries came into the study. Arthur Augustus accompanied him. The swell of St. Jim's was still rubbing his hands and making a rather wry face.

"Better lock the door," said Monty Lowther, "in case we're interrupted. We don't want it to get out that we're on to Figgy's little game."

"That's so. Lock the door, Herries. Now, let's mount the telescope. It's very thoughtless of Herr Schneider not to have a stand for it; but I suppose he didn't foresee that we might want to use it. A chair and a cushion will do the trick."

Tom Merry pulled out the telescope, and placed the large end on a cushion on the window-sill, and the other end on the back of a chair. Then he applied his eye to the small end, and adjusted it to his satisfaction, till he could make out the pattern of the brickwork on the front of the New House, and knew that the glass was right for making an observation at that distance.

"Now for Figgy's window," he said. "It's not so easy to find it with the glass. Hallo, that looks like it! My hat! Figgy's shaving himself!"

"What?"

"He is. He's got a shaving mirror close to the window, and—— Scott! It's not Figgy, it's Mr. Ratcliff! I'm looking at the wrong window."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry shifted the telescope to a higher row of windows. "That's better. Here's one—no, that's not Figgy's window. There's a chap there washing himself."

"Can't be Figgy's room, then."

"No; it isn't. Ha, here we are! I'd know that chivy anywhere. Great Scott!"

Tom Merry lifted his eye from the telescope in sheer amazement.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed everyone, greatly excited.

"What are they doing? Committing a giddy murder?"

"Pway let me see," said Arthur Augustus. And, as he happened to be nearest Tom Merry, he dropped his eye to the small end of the telescope. "Dear me—there's a spider's web or something——"

"That's the twiggery on the trees, ass!"

"Oh, yaas; I see! Now I can see Figgy. Gweat goodness gwacious!"

"What are they doing?"

"Stop!" yelled D'Arcy excitedly; forgetting that Figgins & Co. were on the other side of the quadrangle, in the opposite house. "Stop, you howwid bwutes! You'll kill him!"

This exclamation raised the excitement in the study to fever pitch. D'Arcy was jerked away from the telescope, and Manners put his eye there. He gave a gasp of horror and amazement.

"The—the demons! They must be mad. Who can it be? They're killing him!"

"Let's look!" shouted Blake and Lowther together.

They dragged Manners away, and put their heads down to look. And as they did it at the same moment, their heads came together with a terrific crack.

"Ow, you ass!" roared Blake.

"Oh, you howling lunatic!" yelled Lowther.

"You've nearly broken my head!"
 "You've almost busted my cocoanut!"
 "You howling——"
 "You raving——"
 "Idiot!"
 "Lunatic!"

Herries put his eye to the telescope. He went quite pale.
 "What can it mean? They're murdering him."
 "Here, let me see again!" said Tom Merry; while Blake and Lowther were ruefully rubbing their damaged craniums.
 "It's some giddy mistake."

He applied his eye to the glass again. The telescope was bearing full upon the open window of Figgins's study, and the interior of the room was fully displayed to view, especially as a bright fire was burning in the grate.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn could be seen with perfect plainness, bending over an inanimate form stretched upon the floor of the study. Figgins was kneeling beside the figure, and appeared to be holding it down. And Kerr was handing nails to Fatty Wynn, who—horrible sight!—was driving them into one of the shoulders of the helpless form beneath him, with powerful blows from a hammer. It almost seemed to Tom Merry that he could hear the blows, so perfectly clear was the picture to his eye.

Why did not the helpless victim of the cruelty of Figgins & Co. make some struggle—why did he submit with such quiet resignation? Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"I see it now!"
 "I saw it!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "It's no laughin' matter, Tom Mewwy. They are killin' that poor chap. I'm goin' o'ah to stop them."

The swell of the School House was already unlocking the door of the study.

"Stop him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. And Blake quickly jerked D'Arcy back into the room. "It's all right. It's only——"

"Blake, I insist upon your weleasin' me instantly. I refuse to be a party to a howwid cime. Tom Mewwy, I am surprised at you—I weally——"

"It's all right, Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Figgins & Co. are making an effigy, that is all."

"A—a—what?"

"An effigy. Fatty Wynn is nailing on the arms, that's all. Have you forgotten that Tuesday is the Fifth of November?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that!"

Blake applied his eye to the telescope, and took a survey of Figgins's study. Then he gave a sniff.

"Well, you are a lot of asses," he exclaimed. "I should have seen that at once."

"Pity you didn't, then, instead of banging your wooden napper against my head," growled Monty Lowther. "You've made my brain ache."

"Oh, rot! You can't make an empty space ache——"

"Dry up!" said Tom Merry, settling down to the telescope again. "Figgy is making an effigy for Guy Fawkes Day—there's no doubt about that. You know we're allowed to have a bonfire in the quadrangle, and I suppose he's going to burn the thing then. But what does he want to keep it such a giddy secret for? That's curious."

"It's something up against the School House," said Blake, with conviction. "Perhaps he's going to burn some of us in effigy."

"Ah, I shouldn't wonder!"

Tom Merry watched the movements of Figgins & Co. Fatty Wynn, having finished with one shoulder, started on the other, and the blows of the hammer went on. When he had done, the figure was lifted up, and it stood upon its feet without being held.

It was a curious figure. It was about the height of a boy of fifteen, and the framework was of wood, for it stood upright unsupported. The body and legs had evidently been padded out, however, for they fitted the clothes that were placed upon the figure—a very old Eton suit. The boots were extremely large, as was necessary, to hold the flat pieces of wood to which the uprights were nailed.

The head of the figure seemed to be made of a stuffed linen bag, the front surface being tight and smooth. It was surmounted by a School House cap. As Tom Merry watched, Figgins took a paint-brush, and began to daub features upon the face. The features were not beautiful. Then Kerr attached a large placard to the chest of the figure, upon which was the following inscription in bold, black letters:

TOM MERRY,
 THE BIGGEST GUY
 at St. Jim's!

Tom Merry clicked his teeth. He knew all now—that was the great wheeze of Figgins & Co. The New House juniors were going to burn the School House chief in effigy on the Fifth of November!

"Hullo, what are you getting waxy about?" asked Blake.

"Look and see!"

Blake looked, and grinned. The others looked in turn, and the grinning became general.

"Well, that's not far wrong," Blake remarked, "about Tom Merry being the biggest——"

"Order, Blake!" said Monty Lowther. "No personalities."

"Well, you know, truth is truth, and——"

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy, "twuth is always twuth, don't you know, deah boys; and, weally, this time Figgins & Co. seem to have stuck the wight nail on the head."

"No rotting," said Tom Merry. "Whoever it is they select to burn in effigy, the joke is up against the School House, and we've got to nip it in the bud."

"Righto!" said Blake heartily. "They're not going to work off a wheeze like that on us!"

"We'll collar their giddy guy!" exclaimed Monty Lowther excitedly.

"Bravo!" came in a chorus of approval.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You can twust me to do that. I will——"

"No you won't, Gussy."

"My deah boy, you require a vewy deep stwatagem to——"

"We've had enough of your stratagems. We'll put our heads together over this, and think out a plan," said Tom Merry. "No good raiding the guy now; they'd have time to make another before the Fifth. We've got to collar it, say, on Monday night, so as to leave them in the lurch on the Fifth."

"Good! And we'll alter it a bit, and burn Figgins in effigy with his own blessed guy."

"And meanwhile," said Tom Merry, "we'll make the fireworks ready for the Fifth——"

"Make 'em! How can we make 'em?"

"I know how—I've got a recipe," said Tom Merry. "It comes much cheaper to make them yourself—besides, the fun of it! If you chaps like to stand your whack, we'll make enough for the whole family."

"Good! We shall have the pull over Figgins & Co. in that line, too. My hat," said Blake, "we shall have some fun on the Fifth, and no mistake!"

And Blake was right—but we must not anticipate.

CHAPTER 4.

A Curious Capture.

FIGGINS & CO. were in high feather. They had given the finishing touches to their guy, and though Figgins probably exaggerated when he said it bore a striking resemblance to Tom Merry, there was no doubt that it was really a work of art.

"This is a ripping wheeze!" Figgins remarked on Monday, as he and the Co. surveyed their completed handiwork. "Those School House rotters haven't the faintest idea of what is going on, and they won't have any, till we burn their giddy chief in effigy in the quadrangle. Then they'll wake up to the fact that we've got ahead of them."

The Co. chuckled gleefully.

"They know there's something on," Kerr remarked. "We know that by their attempts to get into our quarters. And Study No. 6 have left off rowing with the Terrible Three, and have chummed up with them since Saturday, which shows that they're putting their heads together over it. But they won't find out anything."

"Not much," said Figgins emphatically. "So long as we fasten the window and lock the door whenever we leave the study, nobody can get in and see the dummy. My hat, what a jolly good dummy it is! The face is a bit flat, but that can't be helped when it's made of a stuffed bag. But I really think I've got the features like."

"Well, rather like."

"Very much like, I think. If Miss Priscilla Fawcett were here, she'd think this was her ward—her darling Tommy. I believe she would, really. Anyway, he'll have the placard on his chest big enough in case he ain't recognised."

"But I say, Figgy," remarked Fatty Wynn, who had been looking thoughtful, "Tom Merry has got ahead of us in one thing."

"What's that, Fatty?"

"He's making his own fireworks; I had it from a kid in the School House. Tom Merry has got a recipe for making fireworks, and he's turning them out by the dozen. Lowther went over to Rylcombe on Saturday afternoon and got the stuff."

"Yes, I've heard something about that," Figgins remarked, with a nod. "I was thinking about it. If Tom Merry can make fireworks, so can we."

"We haven't got the recipe."

"We can get it."

"How?"

"My dear kid, Tom Merry is bound to have it about him

We've only got to collar him and go through his pockets and seize the giddy thing," said Figgins coolly.

"Well, that's one way—and all's fair in war," Kerr remarked. "If we can't find the recipe, it would be a good idea to raid their fireworks, and collar the lot."

"That wouldn't be easy, but we might do it. We'll try for the recipe first. I rather fancy myself as a manufacturer of dangerous explosives."

And safely looking up the study to secure that valuable effigy, Figgins & Co. left the New House—on the warpath. Lessons were over for the day, and there was a dim November mist descending upon the quadrangle, though it was not dark yet. Football was impossible, and the juniors were mostly idle.

Figgins sniffed as he went into the open air.

"Beastly rotten this," he remarked. "Never mind, it's good cover, that's one thing. Come and have a scout round the School House."

They crossed the dim, misty quadrangle.

As luck would have it, Tom Merry was coming out of the gym; and Figgins & Co. caught sight of him as he went towards his own house.

"There's the bounder!" muttered Figgins. "I'll slip ahead in the fog, and cut him off from the house, while you nail him, kids."

"Righto!" said the obedient Co.

Figgins disappeared in the mist. The Co. stalked Tom Merry towards the School House for a minute, to give Figgins time, and then made their rush.

Tom Merry turned at the sound of footsteps, and caught sight of the Co.

In a moment he was struggling in their grasp.

"Hallo, what's the row?" he exclaimed, as he gave Fatty Wynn a dig in the ribs that fairly doubled up the Falstaff of the New House, and laid him, gasping like a porpoise, in the quad.

"What's the trouble, you wasters—eh?"

With a neat wrestling trick he dropped Kerr on top of Fatty Wynn. Then he ran on towards the School House before the Co. could rise, suspecting that there were other New House fellows in the vicinity.

He ran right into Figgins, and the long, sinuous arms of the New House chief closed round him and held him fast.

"No you don't!" said Figgins.

"What's the game?" demanded Tom, as he wrestled with the great Figgins, chest to chest.

"We want that recipe."

"That what? Oh, the firework recipe! You won't get it."

"Won't we?"

They wrestled furiously. Tom Merry would probably have got the better of it, though Figgins was no mean antagonist, but the Co. came panting up, and the School House leader was gripped and plumped upon the ground. Figgins promptly sat upon his chest.

"Got him!" he said, with a grin. "Now for the giddy recipe! Where is it, Merry?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to. Hold him tight, kids."

"We've got him. Buck up before any of those School House bounders come up."

"Rescue!" bawled Tom Merry at the top of his voice.

"Rescue! School House rescue!"

There was an answering shout from the mist.

"Yaas, watah! What's the beastly mattah, deah boy?"

"Rescue, School House!"

"Just a moment—I've dropped my beastly eyeglass."

Figgins chuckled. He was going through Tom Merry's pockets like an expert pickpocket; while the Co. held the struggling School House junior fast.

D'Arcy's slim figure came looming up through the mist.

"Come on, deah boys! It's those New House boundahs attackin' our respected friend Mewwy. Come on, and give them the howwid kybosh!"

And D'Arcy, who had heaps of pluck, rushed into the fray.

Fatty Wynn had to let go Tom to defend himself; and then Blake hove in sight, and tackled Kerr. But at the same moment Figgins drew his hand from Tom Merry's breast-pocket with a folded paper in it.

It was too misty, and there was no time to read it. But Figgins had no doubt that it was the recipe.

"I've got it!" he shouted. "Come on."

He jumped up from Tom Merry. The Co. tore themselves loose and dashed away into the mist with him.

"After them!" yelled Tom Merry, jumping up excitedly. The School House boys made instant pursuit, but it was easy for Figgins & Co. to dodge them in the mist. In a couple of minutes the New House trio were safe inside their own house, chuckling gleefully at their success.

"Done 'em brown," said Figgins, unfolding the paper under the gas in the junior common-room. "Now for the dark secret."

The next moment he gave a howl.

"What is it?" asked Kerr anxiously. "Isn't it the recipe?"

"Look at it!" howled Figgins.

The Co. looked at the paper, and this is what they read:

SIR FATTED AND HIS FAYRE LADYE

(Continued from No. 2 of "Tom Merry's Weekly.")

Note for new readers.—Sir Fatted serenades his fayre ladye, and the Baron Bold, her respected pa, hears him a-doin' of it. And he heard Sir Fatted sighing: "Love, the golden hours are flying.

And your lover true is dying for a clasp, a smile, a kiss. Oh, take pity on my plight, love; fly, oh, fly with me to-night, love.

All is ready for the flight, love, it's a chance you shouldn't miss. It is true I have no gold, dear, but true love is wealth untold, dear.

Hearts cannot be bought or sold, dear; oh, fly, fly with me, I pray,

And in happiness most utter we will live on bread-and-butter; So my darling ducky, flutter to these arms, and we'll away."

Figgins & Co. exchanged wrathful glances.

"It's Blake's contribution to the third number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' exclaimed Kerr. "The Editor had it in his pocket, and—"

"And Figgy has collared it instead of the recipe," exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Oh, Figgy!"

"How was I to know that Tom Merry would be carrying this piffle about in his pocket?" growled Figgy. "There wasn't any time to look at it."

"Better let 'em have it back," said Kerr. "They'll want it for the 'Weekly.' This is a beastly frost."

"Oh, come along," said Figgins. "We're going to have that recipe, or bust something."

And once more the New House trio sallied forth into the November mist.

CHAPTER 5.

A Mysterious Recipe!

TOM MERRY brushed the dust from his clothes. Half a dozen School House fellows were round him now, indignant and sympathetic.

"What did the bounders want?" asked Blake. "It was Figgy, wasn't it?"

"Yes. They wanted the recipe for making fireworks."

"My hat! You didn't let 'em have it?"

"I couldn't trust it into their hands. They'd be blowing up the New House before they knew what they were doing," said Tom Merry.

"Well, that wouldn't matter much," Monty Lowther remarked. "But they might blow up the School House as well, and that would be serious. But I thought I heard Figgins say he'd got something as I ran up."

"So he had, but he hasn't got the recipe," said Tom Merry.

"I keep that in my waistcoat pocket, and he hadn't felt there. I don't know what he's got, but it's not the recipe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry felt in his pockets. Then he burst into a laugh. "I know now. It's Blake's contribution to the 'Weekly.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, I say, that's not a laughing matter," exclaimed Blake. "That's a most important contribution of my poetic serial, and—"

"Figgy is sure to return it," said Tom Merry soothingly.

"I wonder if he'll have another try for the recipe. If I thought so, I'd rig up a little joke on him."

"Good wheeze," exclaimed Monty Lowther, at once. "If he wants a recipe, let him have one—it will be a ripping joke."

And the School House chums, discussing the idea, went into their own house. Three forms loomed up from the gloom.

"Hallo! there's Figgins & Co.," whispered Blake.

"They're still on the track. We can work this all right."

They disappeared into the house. Figgins & Co., unaware that they had been spotted, watched them go.

"The beasts!" said Figgins. "No chance now. But we're going to stick to it, kids. If we can only get hold of the recipe, there's plenty of time to get down to Rylcombe and get the stuff, and make the fireworks to-night."



POLLIE GREEN

IS IN

This Week's

"Girls' Friend."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

"Suppose we can't read the recipe," suggested Fatty Wynn, a new thought coming into his mind.

"Why couldn't we read it, fathead?"

"Why, you know you can't always read prescriptions," said Fatty. "I've had one that was only for a simple compound, and I couldn't make head or tail of it. It looked like a cryptogram about a buried treasure, or something of that sort."

"Very likely, but a recipe isn't like a prescription. We shall be able to read it all right. If we can't, we'll take it to the chemist's in Rylcombe, and get him to translate it into English."

"Yes, we could do that."

"What's the idea?" asked Kerr. "Are we going to watch the School House like a lot of giddy detectives? Jolly cold weather to start in the shadowing business."

"You can go back to the New House, if you like, Kerr. I'm going to stick here and watch. Tom Merry is bound to come out again; he's not the fellow to stick indoors because he's had a scrap with us."

"Oh, I'm game if you are. I only said it was cold," said Kerr pacifically.

"I knew that without your telling me," said Figgins.

The fact was, Figgins was feeling cold himself. It was easy to plan to lay in wait for Tom Merry, but to stand there shuffling one's feet in the November damp was not cheering. But the patience of the great Figgins had its reward.

There was a sudden scampering of feet in the School House, and a diminutive figure ran down the steps.

Figgins & Co. darted back into the cover of the mist, but not too far to watch. The fugitive who had suddenly darted out of the School House was Curly Gibson, of the Third Form. Figgins observed with a thrill that he had a paper clutched in his hand.

The next moment Tom Merry appeared on the top step.

"Curly! Come here, you young rascal! Give me back that paper."

"Sha'n't," said Curly, looking back. "I don't see why I shouldn't make crackers as well as you, Tom Merry."

"You young ass, it's dangerous. You'll blow yourself up. Give me that paper, or I'll come out and lam you."

"Sha'n't."

Tom Merry came down the steps, and Curly ran off. He ran fairly into the arms of Figgins & Co., who had the paper out of his hand in a second, and vanished towards the New House.

Curly set up a yell.

"Come back! Give me my paper."

"It's too dangerous for a kid to have, and you had no business to steal it, you young rascal, you," said Figgins, over his shoulder. "Tell Tom Merry we're much obliged."

And Figgins & Co. disappeared.

Tom Merry joined Curly in the mist. Strange to say, the hero of the Shell did not appear at all angry with the Third Former, but patted him on the shoulder in the most cordial way, and they re-entered the School House together.

"Did I work it all right?" asked Curly, with a grin.

"You did, my son," grinned Tom Merry, "and there's your tanner."

Meanwhile Figgins & Co. had gone into their study. The second attempt had been crowned with greater success, and this time there was no doubt that they had captured the valuable document. Figgins lighted the gas in the study. He unfolded the paper on the table, and three pairs of eager eyes scanned it.

"The recipe!" exclaimed Figgins gleefully. "Got it at last. No doubt about it, kids. This is what I call a real stroke of luck, and no mistake."

There was no doubt about it. The document was evidently a recipe, for written upon it in plain letters were the words "Recipe for making fireworks at home." But the recipe itself was slightly puzzling. As Fatty Wynn had prophetically suggested, it bore a resemblance to a doctor's prescription in its unintelligibility.

"Arm. vi. can.—Tro. q. pr.—ab or.—It. fa. prof.—Lav. ve. lit."

Figgins scratched his head.

"It—it's Latin, I should think," he said.

"It's all abbreviations," said Kerr.

"Well, they always use abbreviations in prescriptions," said Fatty Wynn, sagely. "It's to prevent your understanding them, and makes 'em look awfully knowing, you know."

"But this isn't a prescription. It's not for a bottle of medicine or lotion."

"I don't see why a recipe shouldn't be made up the same way."

"This one is, that's clear," said Figgins. "It's written in medical language, and very likely Tom Merry got it from a medical man, some chap who dabbled in chemistry, you know. I can't make head or tail of it, but perhaps the firework man in Rylcombe will know it at a glance."

"There don't seem to be any quantities given," Kerr remarked.

"No, that's so—not in figures, at any rate, but these words may contain it all," said Figgins. "I wish we could make 'em

out. The word 'can' may mean that we need a can to get some of the stuff in."

"Then there's 'or,'" said Kerr, "that's French for gold, you know. I suppose we can't want gold as an ingredient."

"Well, there's 'lit,' and that's French for bed," said Fatty Wynn. "We can't want a bed. I don't think any of it's French."

"We'll take it to the gunpowder merchant," said Figgins decisively. "No good trying to puzzle it out ourselves. If he can't understand it, we'll go to the chemist. He's a well-educated chap, and he's bound to know."

"Righto," said the Co. It was evidently the only thing to be done.

"We shall have time to get back before locking-up, if we hurry," said Figgins, slipping into his coat. "Get your things on."

The trio were quickly ready. They locked the study up behind them, and went out to the gates. As they walked into the lane, and set their faces towards Rylcombe, the form of Tom Merry loomed up from the gloom near the porter's lodge.

The hero of the Shell was chuckling gleefully.

"Gone!" he ejaculated, as he gazed after Figgins & Co.

"Gone—and now for the raid!"

And Tom Merry darted off at top speed for the School House.

CHAPTER 6.

The Enterprising Burglars.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Six School House juniors stood laughing like hyenas when Kildare put his head out of his study to see what the row was about. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, stared at the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 in amazement. They seemed to be going to have a succession of alarming fits.

"What's the matter with you kids?" demanded Kildare.

"What are you making all that cackling about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"We were just wondering, Kildare," said Monty Lowther, calming down a little.

"Wondering what?"

"Whether you would lend us your face for a guy. It's the Fifth to-morrow, you know."

Kildare came out of his study, and the juniors decamped. The captain of St. Jim's, who was always good-tempered, laughed as he went back into his room. The six youngsters went off into a fresh roar as they gathered again in Study No. 6, the famous apartment belonging to Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy.

"My one and only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Tom Merry, "if this doesn't beat the giddy record! Fancy Figgins & Co. trying to get that recipe made up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd like to see the firework merchant's face when they show it to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But now to business," said Tom. "Figgy may be back in less than an hour, and we've got work to do. This is where the enterprising burglars come in."

"Well, after that barefaced attempt at highway robbery in the quad, Figgy can't grumble at anything," said Blake. "But how are we going to do it?"

"Yaas, wathah! That's the question, Tom Mewwy! If you chaps care to entwist the mattah to me, I will twy—"

"But we don't!" said Monty Lowther.

"Exactly, we don't!" assented Tom Merry. "We've been rather fed up with your stratagems, Gussy. We want a rest for a bit."

"Of course, I'm not the kind of fellow to put myself forward at all, on this or any other occasion, Tom Mewwy. But I weally think that in a delicate mattah like this, a fellow of judgment and sagacity is required, and undah the cires—"

"Under the cires," said Blake, "you can dry up, Gussy. Go on, Merry! It's no good thinking of going up to Figgy's study the usual way. We might get the door open, but we could never carry the dummy out without attracting attention."

"That's so," agreed Tom. "I've thought of that."

"And as for a ladder up to the window, they're up to that dodge," Manners remarked. "Herries tried that on them."

"But they were in the study then," said Herries. "They're not in it now. That makes all the difference."

"Not so much," said Tom Merry. "I know that they fasten the window on the inside, and it's a patent catch, which can't be opened from the outside like the ordinary kind with a pen-knife. Besides, the ladder is a bit too prominent, and would be bound to attract attention, even if Taggles would lend us the ladder at this time."

"He would if we tipped him."

"I don't know. Railton ragged him for letting us have it after dark once before."

"Well, what's the plan?" asked Blake. "If we're not to go in by the door or the window, what's the game? I suppose you don't recommend going down the chimney from the roof?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, but I've got a plan, all the same. My idea is to slip into the New House and go up to Figgy's study. That's easy enough, especially in this misty weather."

"But I know they keep the door locked while they're away."

"Yes, but the locks on the doors of the whole corridor are just the same make, same as in this house. I could easily sneak a key from one of the other doors."

The juniors gazed at Tom Merry in admiration.

"Was Charles Peace a relation of yours?" asked Blake. "I suppose Bill Sikes was a connection? And Cartouche must have belonged to a French branch of the Merry family. You're about the best burglar for your age that I ever heard of."

"It's a good idea," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah. I am weally surprised at Tom Mewwy's hittin' on such a weally wippin' ideah. I nevali thought of that myself, deah boys."

"But when you're in the study," said Blake, "as I said before, you can't carry out a lifesize dummy without alarming the whole house. You can't expect to."

"I know that, but once I'm in the study, there's nothing to prevent me from opening the window on the inside, and letting the dummy down to you fellows with a rope."

"Bravo!" shouted the juniors, in chorus.

It was a really clever plan. If admittance could once be safely gained to Figgy's study, all was plain sailing.

"I admit it's a good plan," said Blake. "I'm surprised at you fellows thinking of it."

"Yaas, wathah, it is weally extwemely surpwisin'!"

"The sooner the quicker," Monty Lowther remarked. "It may take time, and Figgy's & Co. won't be very long. Let's get to business."

"Good! I'll get the rope from our study," said Tom Merry, "then we'll be off!"

It did not take Tom Merry long to fetch the rope. He came back with it wound round his body under his jacket, and quite unnoticeable.

The School House six sallied forth. The mist was thickening, and though it was not yet quite dark, it was as gloomy as night in the quadrangle.

Five juniors remained waiting in the shadow of the New House wall, under the window of Figgy's study, far above. Tom Merry was to make the venture in the New House, in spite of the misgivings of Arthur Augustus.

"I weally wish you would leave this mattah in my hands, Tom Mewwy," the swell of the School House urged. "I am not a fellow to bwag, but I weally considah the mattah would be safah in my hands—I do weally."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry gratefully.

And the hero of the Shell disappeared into the gloom. The five juniors remained waiting under the window. Would he succeed?

Three minutes elapsed—four—five!

"I am afwaid he has made a feahful muck of it, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "You would have done bettah to entwist the mattah to me."

"Hark!" said Manners.

He had caught a sound from above. They strained their eyes upward. They could barely make out Figgy's window-sill in the mist. A dim object came into view over the edge of the sill, and they knew that it was the head of Tom Merry.

"Below there!"

It was a shrill whisper from the hero of the Shell.

"Right-o!" said Blake cautiously. "Have you managed it all right?"

"Yes, there was no one about. I got the key of the next study, and I've locked myself in. Look out for the dummy."

"We're looking out, but it's jolly cold. Buck up!"

There was a long wait. The juniors shivered below in the mist, while faint sounds could be heard proceeding from the study above. Presently a dim form appeared above the window sill, and what looked remarkably like a boy swung out.

"Look out!" muttered Lowther, "It's coming."

The figure swung down the wall, past the lower windows, and swiftly reached the juniors waiting at the bottom. Lowther and Manners seized it, and Blake untied the rope.

Tom Merry looked down from the study window.

"Got it all right?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here's the rope, Merry. Get out as quick as you can."

"Right-o! You cut off with the dummy."

Tom Merry hauled in the rope and closed the window. He fastened it again as he had found it, and let himself out of the study, and locked the door behind him. Then he returned the key to the door, and hastily descended the stairs.

He met Pratt face to face. The New House junior was coming up, and he stopped and stared at Tom Merry in amazement.

"Hallo, you School House boulder! What are you doing over here?"

"Oh, just having a look round, Pratty," said Tom Merry.

"Let me pass, please."

"Wait a bit. I'm going to see if——"

"Sorry I can't wait!"

Tom Merry seized Pratt and twisted him aside, and left him sitting and gasping on the stairs. Before Pratt had finished gasping, Tom Merry was gone.

"The—the rotter!" gasped Pratt. "I wonder what he's been up to! No good, I'll be bound. I'll go and have a squint at Figgy's study."

He went up to Figgy's study and tried the door. It was safely locked, and Pratt was reassured. But whether he discovered the truth or not Tom Merry cared little as he sprinted across the quadrangle in the mist. The prize was safe!

CHAPTER 7.

Mr. Lathom Is Ignored.

MEANWHILE, the School House juniors had lost no time. Blake and Lowther lifted the dummy, taking one end each, and hurried off with it, Herries, Manners, and D'Arcy following. To get the prize across the quadrangle in the mist was not difficult, but to carry it up to a study in the School House for concealment was not so easy.

Manners scouted in the hall, and announced that the coast was clear, and then Blake and Lowther rushed the dummy into the house and up the stairs.

"Come on, to our study!" said Lowther, as Blake halted.

"Better put it in No. 6," said Blake.

"Rot! Tom Merry will expect to find it in our room. Come on!"

"Tom Merry can expect what he likes. I'm going to——"

"No, you're not!"

"Yes, I am!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, I——"

The dispute waxed warm. It was really only when in warfare with Figgy's & Co. that the peace could be kept between Study 6 and the Terrible Three. Each party claimed to be the head of the School House, and the question was never satisfactorily settled.

The wrangle was growing hot when a figure in gown and mortar-board came up the passage. It was Mr. Lathom's, the short-sighted, big-spectacled master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

In a moment the dispute ceased. Blake and Lowther had set the figure upon its wooden feet in the dusky passage, while they argued. At the sight of the master, who had evidently been attracted to the spot by the dispute, for he had a cane in his hand, the juniors ceased to wrangle, and fled precipitately.

They scampered along the passage, and Mr. Lathom quickened his steps as he heard them go. The form-master stopped at the sight of the figure.

We have already said that the dummy was life-size, and padded to fill out an old Eton suit. In the dusk of the misty passage it was not surprising that the short-sighted form-master imagined that he had one of the School House boys before him. The figure was standing erect, and seemed to be staring straight at the form-master.

"What is all this noise about?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom angrily. "How dare you make such a disturbance in the passage?"

There was no reply. The form-master peered at the silent form.

"Answer me!" he exclaimed. "Are you deaf? How dare you remain silent when I am speaking to you?"

Still no reply. Mr. Lathom's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He was one of the best-tempered of the masters at St. Jim's, but this insolence on the part of a boy was enough to ruffle the serene temper. The fellow was staring straight at him, and refused to reply.

"Boy, will you answer me? What is your name? What Form do you belong to?"

Still the same chilling silence. The form-master was amazed. He had never been treated with such disrespect before, and he could not understand it.

"For the last time," he thundered, switching the cane in the air, "answer me!"

The figure refused to answer. At the corner of the passage five juniors were hugging themselves with silent glee.

"He thinks it's a giddy kid," chuckled Blake. "Let's see the fun. My hat! this beats cock-fighting. Who's that coming?"

"It's Tom Merry," murmured Lowther, looking behind him to the stairs.

"Stop him; he'll spoil the fun!"



"Hold out your hand!" roared Mr. Lathom.

Tom Merry was stopped as he was about to pass the group. A few words acquainted him with the state of affairs, and he joyfully entered into the joke.

The voice of Mr. Lathom could be heard in raised tones of anger. It was seldom that the master of the Fourth lost his temper, but he had certainly lost it now.

"Very well," he thundered; "since you choose to display this unparalleled insolence, I have no alternative but to inflict a proper punishment. Hold out your hand, sir!"

"My word!" murmured Blake, "I can see the dummy doing it!"

Mr. Lathom gasped with wrath. The figure did not hold out its hand, nor did it vouchsafe one word in reply to the excited form-master. It simply maintained that steady, chilling stare, apparently of contempt, which had already exasperated the form-master.

"Hold out your hand!" roared Mr. Lathom.

Not a movement did the figure make. That was not very surprising to the juniors, who knew the facts, but it astounded Mr. Lathom. He was amazed, scandalised, by this direct disobedience. The cane swished up into the air.

"You compel me," said Mr. Lathom, in concentrated tones of anger—"you compel me to administer a more severe punishment than I should otherwise inflict. If you do not immediately hold out your hand, I shall thrash you soundly."

Still the hand was not held out. Mr. Lathom waited a moment, and then his sorely-tried patience was exhausted.

He brought down the cane with a terrific thwack across the shoulders of the silent form.

The figure gave a lurch and fell upon its face. Thwack, thwack went the cane across the most exposed part of it.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Lathom, "now that I have punished your astounding insolence, you can rise. Get up at once, sir!"

To his exasperation, no notice was taken of his command. The fallen form lay quite still, and Mr. Lathom stared at it with amazement, mingled now with alarm.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Do you hear? Get up!"

No reply—no movement!

"My boy! Is it possible he is in a fit—that he is ill? That must be the explanation—or else the fall has stunned him! Dear me, if I have been too severe, I shall never forgive myself! My dear lad, get up immediately, and I will pardon you."

The "dear lad" did not take advantage of that generous offer. He remained prone and silent, and fear deepened in Mr. Lathom's heart.

There was something awful in the stillness of the prone form in the dusky passage. Was it a fit, or a faint, or—or—Mr. Lathom's heart beat as the dread word formed in his mind—was the wretched youth dead? It really seemed like it.

He trembled, and stooped to feel the heart of the fallen one; but it could not be done without turning him over, and as soon as he touched the body Mr. Lathom withdrew his hand quickly.

Even that momentary touch showed him that there was none of the warmth in the body that there should have been in a living form.

"Good—goodness gracious! I—I dare not touch him! I—I had better get help."

The little form-master scuttled off towards Mr. Railton's study, his gown trailing behind him. Six juniors threw themselves upon the linoleum and wept with mirth.

"Oh, my only beloved Aunt Jane!" gasped Tom Merry. "This is too funny for anything! I say, we must get the dead body hidden before he comes back."

He ran swiftly along the passage, Monty Lowther at his heels. They picked up the figure and raced it along into the study.

"Here, I say, it's to go in No. 6!" called out Blake, hot in pursuit.

"Rats!" was Tom Merry's cheerful reply, and the dummy was in Study X before the Fourth Form chums could get near it. They followed the Terrible Three in.

"Look here, Tom Merry, I tell you—"

"Dry up! There's Lathom coming back. We must get the thing out of sight."

The dummy was hastily shoved under the table. His feet stuck out, but Tom Merry set a chair over them. The door was left ajar, and the juniors crowded round it to listen. It was quite possible that Mr. Railton would look into the study, knowing of old whence most of the mischief in the School House proceeded.

The house-master was looking both concerned and sceptical as he followed Mr. Lathom along the passage. He held a lamp in his hand.

"This is the spot, I think!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Believe me, Mr. Railton, I did not strike with the cane with sufficient force to really injure the most delicate boy. He must have been in a fit before I— But where is he?"

"I do not see him," said the house-master, flashing the light of the lamp to and fro. "Are you sure this is the right spot, Mr. Lathom?"

"I—I think so. He fell to the ground with a hollow thud, like a— Dear me, he seems to be gone! Let us look further along."

"By all means," said Mr. Railton, having no further doubt in his mind that the master of the Fourth had been the victim of some kind of a practical joke. "I do not think you need alarm yourself, Mr. Lathom."

"But—but the unfortunate boy neither moved nor spoke," said Mr. Lathom, in great agitation. "I mistook his silence for insolence, or I should not have caned him. Now I know he must have been ill—in some kind of a trance, perhaps. Dear me, where can he be gone to? I am sure we have come too far, yet we have not seen him."

He peered into every corner of the passage through his big spectacles. The house-master, with his keener sight, took the whole place in at a glance.

"Perhaps someone else has come along and removed the body," murmured Mr. Lathom. "Shall we inquire? It is terrible, but we had better inquire."

"Yes, we will inquire," said Mr. Railton drily. "I see by the light that Tom Merry's study door is partly open. We will inquire there."

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry, as the words reached the ears of the juniors. "What asses to give ourselves away!"

"Yaas, wathah!" D'Arcy hastily closed the door. "Now—"

"You ass! You lunatic! Now you've shown him that we were watching there, and—"

"Bai Jove! I never thought of that!"

"Image! Ass! They're coming, kids! Get hold of some pens, books, papers—anything! We must be frightfully hard at work!"

The six juniors were round the table in no time, slaving away at prep. in a really industrious and meritorious manner.

CHAPTER 8.

Spoofer!

IT is time we returned to Figgins & Co. Puzzled as they were by the mysterious recipe, they were in high good humour as they strode along the lane to Rylcombe.

"We've made a giddy coup this time," Figgins remarked complacently. "Dame Taggles has the school shop filled with fireworks for to-morrow, but they're at high prices, and I calculate we shall save a lot by making them ourselves. Of course, if the recipe doesn't work out all right, we can fall back on the school shop."

They arrived at the shop in Rylcombe, where a grand display of combustibles was made for the approaching Fifth, and where Figgins had discovered that Tom Merry obtained his supplies for the manufacture of fireworks.

They marched in, and Mr. Smithers, the proprietor, nodded pleasantly, anticipating a good sale of fireworks.

Figgins handed him the recipe.

"I want some of those things," he remarked casually, as if he understood it all perfectly. "Just let me have them, will you?—about the same quantities as you supplied Tom Merry with."

Mr. Smithers looked at the recipe, and then looked at Figgins, and then at the recipe again. He puckered his brows in a puzzled way.

"I suppose you young gentlemen are having a little joke with me?" he remarked.

"Certainly not," said Figgins. "I really don't see why you should think so. We want some of that stuff for making fireworks."

Mr. Smithers smiled.

"Is—is this a recipe for making fireworks?" he asked.

"Of course it is!"

"And do you young gentlemen understand it?"

"My dear chap, I suppose you understand it, as you deal in the things," said Figgins loftily. "I suppose you don't want us to teach you your business, do you?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Smithers, scratching his head. "But I'm blessed if I understand this recipe. If any feller gave you this and said it was a recipe for making fireworks, I'd say he must have been 'aving a little joke with you."

"Look here, didn't Tom Merry have some stuff here for making fireworks?"

"That he did."

"Well, this is his recipe," said Figgins.

"I never saw any recipe," said Mr. Smithers. "I sold him the stuff he asked for; but he told me he was getting some of the things down straight from London, so as to keep the secret."

"Yes, I heard that from Lowther, too," said Fatty Wynn.

"Then you can't help us make the beastly thing out?" asked Figgins, disappointed.

"No, I'm sorry I can't," grinned Mr. Smithers. "I say, are you certain you haven't got hold of a doctor's prescription by mistake?"

"Of course I am!" growled Figgins.

"Well, that's what it looks like. If Master Merry gave you this as a recipe, he must have been 'aving you on, that's all I can say."

"But he didn't give it to us; we collared it."

Mr. Smithers scratched his head again, looking extremely puzzled.

"Well, I can't understand it! That's all I can say, young gentlemen. If you take it to the chemist he may be able to tell you whether it's a prescription or not."

"Thanks! I think I will," said Figgins.

The New House trio walked rather disconsolately out of the shop. They left Mr. Smithers laughing, convinced that they were the victims of a joke of Tom Merry's, as Figgins wrathfully remarked.

"The chemist may be able to make it out," Kerr suggested hopefully. "After all, these may be the scientific names of some chemicals we've never heard of, you know, and the chemist may know them at a glance."

"We'll try, anyway," said Figgins, but less hopefully.

They soon arrived at the chemist's.

Mr. Pilling knew them well, and he was very polite. He saw the paper in Figgins's hand.

"You want that prescription made up?" he asked at once.

"Not exactly, Mr. Pilling," stammered Figgins. "It—it isn't a prescription, it's a recipe. I want some of the chemicals down there."

He handed the paper to the chemist.

Mr. Pilling looked as surprised and puzzled as Mr. Smithers had looked, and evidently could make neither head nor tail of the mysterious document.

"Recipe for making fireworks at home," he murmured. "May I ask, Master Figgins, where you got this peculiar recipe?"

"We got it from Tom Merry, sir. No, it isn't a joke of his. We collared it against his will, and he was wild. He was keeping it a secret."

"He needn't have minded," said Mr. Pilling, "for I'll guarantee that no one could possibly discover the secret from this."

Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"But can't you read it, sir?" said Figgins. "You know Latin."

"Yes, I know Latin, but—"

"And you know the abbreviations used in chemistry—"

"Yes, of course I do; but they're nothing like this. This has nothing to do with chemistry."

Figgins's face fell.

"But can't you make anything out of it at all, Mr. Pilling?"

"I'm afraid not. Wait a minute, though. There seems to be something familiar in it," said Mr. Pilling, puckering his

brow over the paper. "I have seen something like it before somewhere, but it seems broken and disconnected here."

He gazed and gazed at the mysterious recipe.

Figgins & Co. exchanged more hopeful glances. It was evident that the chemist was making something of it at last. They watched his face with keen anxiety. Were they on the brink of a sudden and startling discovery?

Sudden and startling, indeed, the next development was.

Mr. Pilling lifted his head from the paper, and burst into a roar of laughter that shook the coloured bottles on the shelf.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ha, ho! Ha!"

Figgins & Co. stared at him.

"If you wouldn't mind telling us what you're laughing at, Mr. Pilling," said Figgins stiffly, "we should be very much obliged."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you read the recipe, sir?"

"Yes—ha, ha! I have read it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then tell us what it means, please."

"Certainly!"

Mr. Pilling laid the paper flat on the counter, so that they could follow it with him.

"Look here. Arm.vi.can.—Tro.q.pr.—ab or.—It.fa.prof.—Lav.ve.lit. I thought there was something familiar-looking about the beginning of it. So you don't recognise it?"

"I! Us! No, we don't!" said Figgins & Co. together.

"Then you've forgotten your first book of Virgil," said Mr. Pilling, laughing. "I suppose you are a long way beyond it, eh?"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Figgins. "But what on earth has the first book of Virgil got to do with this recipe for making fireworks?"

"A great deal, as it happens. If you add a syllable to each of the syllables here, you will find that this wonderful recipe is composed of the first two lines of the *Æneid*," said Mr. Pilling, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"What?" yelled Figgins & Co.

"*Arma virumque cano, Trojæ qui primus ab oris Italian, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit Litora.*"

Mr. Pilling could hardly quote the lines for laughing.

Figgins & Co. scanned the mysterious recipe as he recited them, and, of course, the whole thing was clear in a flash.

The scene with Curly, as Figgins ruefully realised now, must have been got up for their especial benefit, and the recipe was a "spoof" one, deliberately concocted in the School House to send them off on a wild-goose chase.

By taking the first letters or syllables of the words in the old familiar lines that begin Virgil's famous poem, Tom Merry had succeeded in producing a mysterious looking document, which was perfectly simple as soon as the clue was supplied.

The whole thing was a hoax.

"Spoofed!" groaned Figgins & Co., tout ensemble.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the jovial Mr. Pilling. "I can translate that for you now, if you please, young gentlemen. 'Arms and the man I sing, who first from the walls of Troy, a fated fugitive, came to Italy and the Lavinian shores.' But I'm afraid I can't—ha, ha, ha!—supply you with any chemicals to fit a recipe like that."

The feelings of Figgins & Co. were too deep for words.

Figgy put the famous recipe in his pocket, and the New House trio marched out of the shop. They left Mr. Pilling almost in hysterics.

"Done!" said Figgins gloomily.

"Dished!" said Kerr.

"Diddled!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Let's get back to St. Jim's," said Figgins desperately. "I say, it's just occurred to me that Tom Merry may have had a double motive in playing off this jape on us. Those School House kids may be up to some game while we're away. Of course, they can't get into our study, but still—"

The suggestion was enough to strike dismay to the hearts of the Co.

There was no telling what Tom Merry might be up to, and the discovery that they had been "spoofed" into leaving St. Jim's caused them a deep uneasiness as to what might be going on in their absence.

"Let's get back," said Kerr briefly.

"Come on, then."

And the three juniors started for the school again, sprinting along the misty lane as if they were on the cinder-path.

CHAPTER 9.

The Manufacturers.

MR. RAILTON looked into Tom Merry's study.

He smiled grimly as he noted six juniors crowded round the table, working away like boys possessed.

"Ahem!" said the house-master, "I'm sorry to interrupt you if you are so busy."

Tom Merry looked round, apparently becoming aware of the house-master's presence for the first time.

He rose to his feet respectfully, and the other juniors followed his example.

"Don't mention it, sir," said Tom Merry. "Always at your service, sir."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Have any of you seen anything of—ahem!—is there some one under your table, Merry?"

"Under my table, sir? No, certainly not."

"Yet I am convinced that I can see a pair of feet protruding," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I really think you must be mistaken, Merry."

Mr. Lathom peered through his spectacles, and discerned the feet of the figure.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "You are quite right, Mr. Railton. There is someone concealed under the table. I begin to think that I have been the victim of a trick."

The house-master smiled.

"Merry, who is that?"

"Oh, that, sir!" said Tom Merry, appearing to comprehend at last. "That's nothing, sir, only our effigy, sir—a guy, sir."

"Oh, a guy! Let me see it."

"Certainly, sir. Lend a hand, Monty."

Tom Merry and Lowther pulled the effigy out from under the table, since there was no help for it. It was brought out into full view.

Mr. Railton surveyed it with a grim smile, and then looked at the master of the Fourth. The juniors preserved perfectly solemn faces.

"Does that resemble the boy you saw in the passage, Mr. Lathom?"

The form-master's face was a study.

"Ye-es, to some extent, I must say it does," he stammered.

"I could not make out the face, as the light was so bad. I really think—"

"Now, Merry, did you place that effigy in the passage to deceive Mr. Lathom?"

"No, sir," said Tom, promptly.

"Mind what you say, Merry. I do not think you would tell me a lie."

"I never would, sir," said Tom proudly. "It was a—a mistake. I could tell you how it arose, sir, if you like."

"Pray do so, Merry," said the house-master, smiling.

"Some of the chaps were bringing the guy to the study, sir," said Tom, frankly, but without specifying the "chaps."

"They heard Mr. Lathom coming, and bolted. They left it standing there. I think Mr. Lathom must have mistook it for a boy."

"Ahem—er—undoubtedly! I think that must be the case, Mr. Lathom."

"I came up the passage," said the form-master, who had turned very red, "because I heard a great noise of disputing, and I am not surprised that the disputants—er—fled. It is possible that I—er—made this mistake, but I cannot acquit the juniors of deliberately allowing me to do so, and of allowing me to remain in my error."

The house-master tried not to laugh. He realised very keenly how utterly absurd the scene must have been, and understood quite well that the juniors had naturally had no desire to spoil the fun.

"We are very sorry, sir," said Tom Merry penitently. "We hurried the thing into the study so as to get it out of the way. We thought that the best we could do under the circumstances, sir."

"I have no doubt you did," said Mr. Railton severely. "As the matter appears to have been one of inadvertence, Mr. Lathom, I think we might overlook it."

"Certainly," said the master of the Fourth, recovering his good-humour. "Boys will be boys, and young rascals will be young rascals. Don't do it again, my lads, that's all."

"Certainly not, sir," chorused the six, in great relief.

The masters quitted the study. The juniors set the guy upon its feet, and executed an impromptu war-dance round it.

"Well rid of that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he stopped breathless. "Some masters would have given us fifty lines each, and confiscated the guy."

"That's not Railton's sort," said Blake. "He's good stuff, a bit different from old Ratty of the New House, kids."

"Rather! And Lathom's a good little ass, too!"

"Yass, wathah! I wondah, deah boys, if Figgins & Co. have discovered their great loss yet," D'Arcy remarked. "We shall have to see that they don't weacaphah the dummy."

"We're going to keep solemn watch and ward over it," said Tom Merry. "One or two of us, at least, must always keep in the study. The guy musn't be left alone for a single moment. It's a jolly good one, and will burn well to-morrow at the bonfire, with some paraffin chucked over it. But we must make a new placard."

"What did you do with the one Figgy had on it?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, I left that in Figgy's study, with a message of thanks

written across it. Give me that sheet of cardboard, Monty, and I'll draw up a new one. Then we'll get on with making the fireworks."

Tom Merry dipped a brush in the ink, and soon made a new placard for the effigy.

"FIGGINS!

"THE NEW HOUSE GUY."

"I've brought a New House cap to stick on him," said Tom Merry, "and we must make his legs a bit skinnier, to look more like Figgy's."

"Ha, ha! That's so!"

The improvement of the dummy was soon finished. Then the firework-making went on. Tom Merry's recipe, of which he refused to disclose the secret, seemed to be a good one. He doled out the necessary ingredients to his assistants, and they had to be content with helping, without knowing the secret.

"Couldn't trust it into your hands, kids," the hero of the Shell replied, to all inquiries. "You'd be blowing up the house. We're making crackers and squibs cheaper than you can buy them, so be satisfied with that."

"That's all vewy well, Tom Mewwy, as fah as Mannahs and Lowthah are concerned," said D'Arcy. "But there's no weal weason why a fellah of my discevetion shouldn't be entwisted with the secwet. As a mattah of fact, I think it would weally be safah in my keepin' than in yours, don't you know, deah boy."

"Rats, Gussy!" replied Tom Merry. "Get on with the washin', and don't bother."

"I wufuse to get on with the washin'. That is a widiculous expression, as we are not washin' anythin', but are weally manufacturin' fireworks." I wepeat, Tom Mewwy, that I considah you ought as a gentelman to give me that wecipe."

"And I repeat that I won't, so that ends it," said Tom Merry. D'Arcy carefully wiped his hands.

"You are mistaken, Tom Mewwy. That does not end it at all. Unless you give me the wecipe, I shall take it as a personal insult."

"My dear chap, you may take it as a personal insult, or as a personal pronoun, or anything you like," said Tom Merry, in the most obliging way. "I'm not particular."

"I wegard that as a diswepetful remark. Tom Mewwy, I am weluctantly compelled to leave off work for a few minutes to administrah a feahful thwashin' to you."

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" said Tom Merry.

"I wufuse to be killed. I am goin' to—"

"What's that you are wiping your paws on?" yelled Monty Lowther suddenly.

"Weally, I hardly know. I did not observe—"

"You—you ass! That's my silk handkerchief!"

"I am sowwy! You should not leave your silk handkerchiefs lyin' about in such an extwemely weckless way. It does not weally mattah—"

"Doesn't it, you howling dummy? I'll—I'll—"

"My deah fellah, the silk is of a vewy poor quality. I am a 'udge of these things. I would not give four-and-six for that 'andkerchief," said Arthur Augustus. "You weally ought to be obliged to me for gettin' wid of it for you."

Lowther did not appear to be at all obliged. On the contrary, he rushed at Arthur Augustus, and interrupted him by getting his head into chancery.

"Welease me!" howled the swell of St. Jim's, struggling violently. "Welease me immediately, Lowthah! You are wumplin' my collah, you howwible bahhawian!"

"I'll rumple your beastly features!" said Lowther. "I'll—"

Crash!

It was a terrific attack on the door.

The row in the study ceased instantly. The enemy were at the gates.

CHAPTER 10.

The Order of the Boot!

FIGGINS & Co. reached St. Jim's warm with running, and came bolting in just as Taggles went out to lock the gates. They passed the school porter like a flash, and ran on to the New House, and hurried up to their study.

"It's all right!" said Figgins, heaving a sigh of relief, as he found the door still secured as he had left it. "Hallo, Pratt!" he added, as he saw the junior looking out of his study. "Seen anything of the School House rotters?"

"Yes, I met Tom Merry in the house here," said Pratt. "He had the cheek to come in, but I spotted him."

Figgins looked greatly alarmed.

"I say, he hadn't been in my study, had he, Pratt?"

"Oh, no. I looked immediately, and the door was still locked. You can see that for yourself. Isn't it just as you left it?"

"Yes, but—but one never knows, and he's such a beastly artful dodger."

Figgins jerked the key from his pocket and hastily unlocked

the door. The study was dark, but he quickly struck a match and lighted the gas."

At the first glance the study presented the same aspect as usual; but Figgins went at once to the cupboard, where the effigy had been placed. He threw open the door, and uttered a yell of rage and dismay.

"Gone!"

"Gone!" echoed the Co. and Pratt, in varying notes of dismay and fury.

"Look! Tom Merry's had it!"

The Co. stared into the cupboard. Like Mother Hubbard, they found it bare. The effigy of Tom Merry was gone, and it was pretty clear that Tom Merry had taken it.

"How did he get it away?" roared Figgins. "Was he carrying it when you saw him, Pratt?"

It was a ridiculous question, and Pratt snorted.

"Was he carrying it?" he repeated witheringly. "Was he carrying a life-size dummy, and did I notice it, or did he slip it into his waistcoat pocket when he saw me coming, I wonder?"

"He couldn't have been carrying it," said Kerr, sensibly. "He wouldn't risk it. He would let it out of the window to the other beasts in the quad."

"But the window's fastened, and the door was locked!" said Wynn. "How on earth—"

Figgins smote his breast.

"He must have had a duplicate key. Anyway, it doesn't matter how he did it. He's done it, and he's done us. Diddled, dished, and done!"

"And you three," remarked Pratt, in a reflective sort of way, "call yourselves leaders of the New House juniors, don't you, and you allow—"

Pratt had no time to finish. The Co. fell upon him and smote him hip and thigh, and his untimely criticism was nipped in the bud. He went out of the study with a rush, and spun along the passage like a humming-top.

The violent ejection of Pratt somewhat relieved Figgins & Co., and they were able to think more calmly. The blow was a heavy one, but Figgins was not the fellow to give in.

"Tom Merry's collared our dummy!" he exclaimed. "There's no doubt about that, and there's no doubt that we've got no time to make another. We're done, unless we can get it back."

"No doubt about Merry having it," said Kerr. "Look at this!"

He held up the placard which had once been attached to the dummy, and which bore Tom Merry's name in large letters. Across it was scrawled, "Much obliged.—T. M."

"Much obliged.—T. M.," said Figgins, breathing fury. "We'll much oblige him! Are we going to take this lying down?"

"Rather not!"

"Come on, then. They won't expect us in the School House, anyway, and we may take them by surprise and rush them out of the dummy."

It was rather a desperate enterprise, but Figgins & Co. were in a desperate humour. They quitted the study, and hurried over to the School House. They reached the door of Tom Merry's study, and Figgins cautiously and silently tried the handle.

But the door was locked. It was always locked when Tom Merry was handling his mysterious compounds in the manufacture of fireworks. By chance the School House six were saved from a surprise attack; but Figgins & Co. were not to be done.

"All together!" said Figgins, setting his teeth.

With one accord the three juniors drew back and hurled themselves at the door. It shook and groaned, and the lock strained and creaked, but the solid oak did not give way, and Figgins & Co. staggered back from the door, feeling considerably shaken up.

There was an instant sound of alarm within the study.

"Hallo, that's Figgins!"

It was Tom Merry's voice within. Figgins kicked at the door.

"Yes, it's us!" he bellowed. "Give us our dummy, you beasts!"

"Rot!" said Tom Merry, through the keyhole. "What do you want it for? There are lots of dummies in the New House, and Figgins & Co. are the biggest dummies there."

"Yah! Open the door! You're a lot of funks!" yelled Kerr.

The challenge was instantly accepted. The door of the study swung open, but Figgins & Co. had no time to rush in. It was Tom Merry & Co. who rushed out.

The School House allies came out in a body, and the New House trio, attacked by double their numbers, were simply overwhelmed. They went reeling and lurching along the passage, shoved and hustled by the six, who were roaring with laughter.

"Buck up, School House!" yelled Tom Merry. "Here's some New House bounders come on a burgling expedition! Turn 'em out!"

"Turn 'em out!" came an answering yell, as a dozen study

doors were opened, and School House boys thronged from all sides to punish the daring intrusion upon their domain.

"We want our dummy!" howled Fatty Wynn. "We want—"

"Alas, his poor brother!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Sorry, old kids, but New House persons are barred in this respectable establishment. Off you go."

"Turn 'em out!"

"Kick 'em out!"

The School House crowd fairly swamped Figgins & Co. They had come into the lions' den, rashly and recklessly, and they had to pay for their temerity.

The three made a desperate rush at Tom Merry and his comrades; but they could not reach them again. Tom Merry kissed his hand in farewell, as Figgins went rolling down the stairs in the midst of a crowd of juniors.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he trilled.

Dusty, dishevelled, dilapidated, Figgins & Co. were hurled forth from the School House, sprawling into the quad, and a crowd of juniors on the steps hurled jeers and ribald laughter after them.

Figgins & Co. staggered to their feet.

Against such odds it was evidently useless to renew the attack, and they disappeared through the November mist towards their own house.

Tom Merry, laughing heartily, returned to his study with the rest, and the manufacture of fireworks was resumed.

"Figgins & Co. are fairly done this journey," Tom remarked. "We've given them the utter kybosh, and they can't get out of that. They're completely done."

"Yaas, wathah."

But Figgins & Co. did not think so.

They gathered in their study, weary and worn and worried. But the eye of Figgins was still gleaming with the gleam of battle.

"They've done us," he said, "done us now! But it ain't the Fifth yet! We'll have another try to-morrow."

The Co for once looked dubious when their great leader spoke.

"We were going to have a bonfire and burn Tom Merry in effigy," said Figgins. "Well, we won't! We'll collar the School House bonfire, and collar that dummy, and burn Tom Merry in effigy at his own giddy fire. That will show the rotters that we're the cock-house at St. Jim's, I rather think."

"Yes, if we can manage it," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"We've got to manage it," said Figgins.

"But how, Figgy?" asked Kerr, "it's all very well to talk, but—"

"Have you ever known me to fail?" demanded their leader.

As a matter of fact they had, many a time and oft, but they did not like to say so. They contented themselves with asking how he was going to "work the oracle."

"I'll explain," said Figgins. "The idea has been working in my brain for some time, in connection with their bonfire, but I thought we should be busy with our own on the Fifth, at the same time, so I didn't think it out."

"But what's the wheeze?" demanded the Co. together.

And the great Figgins proceeded to explain, and the Co., convinced at last, listened with many a chuckle of joyous anticipation; but what the great "wheeze" was must be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11.

On the Famous Fifth!

THE Fifth of November!

It had come at last!

The Fifth of November, a date not likely to be forgotten so long as British boyhood flourishes, dawned upon St. Jim's dry, and dim, and wintry.

There was no sign of rain, but a mist hung in the air, and the weather was very cold, which was welcome enough to the juniors intending to celebrate the anniversary with a bonfire in the quadrangle.

The Head of St. Jim's had a kindly heart, and he did not forget that he had been a boy once himself, as many school-masters are apt to do.

On the Fifth of November unusual freedom was allowed to the boys, and many little things were judiciously overlooked, which would have brought down the wrath of masters or prefects on the doers on any other date.

So long as they did not go too far the juniors knew that they would not be bothered by prefect or master, for the doctor, like a sensible man, believed that hearty, wholesome fun is good for boys, and for men too for that matter.

Permission had been given to the youngsters of both houses to light bonfires, a permission of which the School House fellows had taken full advantage.

The School House bonfire was in the course of erection during the day. And Taggles had turned a more or less honest penny by the sale of faggots to the juniors.

To the surprise of the School House, there were no preparations for a New House bonfire.

It was known that Figgins had commenced preparations for one, yet now that the date had come it was evident that he had abandoned his intention.

Some of the School House boys, prompted by curiosity, questioned Figgins, but he preserved a non-committal attitude. He gave no reasons, neither did anyone else belonging to the New House. There was undoubtedly a reason, and the whole junior portion of the New House was in the secret. But they kept their own counsel.

"I fancy I can tumble to the little game," Tom Merry remarked, after morning school. "Figgy means to bother us over burning the effigy, instead of having a bonfire on his own. He's going to make trouble."

"Very likely," Blake assented. "Well, we'll be on the watch, and we'll give him as good as he sends."

"Yaas, wathah."

"All the fellows had better be warned to be on their guard," went on Tom, "and they'd better take stuffed stockings, or something of the sort, ready for a row. There's nothing like being ready. When the New House rotters see we're on our guard, they may think better of it."

"If they look for trouble," said Monty Lowther. "They'll find it, and wish they hadn't. We could wipe up the ground with them."

When the famous Fifth did not fall on a half-holiday, a special one was granted by the considerate Head of St. Jim's, so that after morning lessons the juniors were their own masters, except for the preparation of the morrow's work.

The building of the School House pyre went on apace.

It was to be a gigantic bonfire, and a great deal had been spent on it, but it promised to be a great success and worth the time and money.

The fireworks, too, were a big success.

The manufacturers had turned out huge quantities, and of the more ornamental sorts a large supply had been purchased of Dame Taggles at the school shop.

Glad were all the juniors of St. Jim's when the early darkness of the November evening descended upon the old quadrangle.

Dark, and dim, but dry, was the old quad, with the ancient leafless trees raising their gaunt branches in the thickening shadows.

Although the Guy Fawkes celebration was in the hands of the juniors, a great many seniors had condescended to signify a generous intention of witnessing it, and there were a number of Upper Form fellows in the quad when Tom Merry & Co. came out on business.

Kildare took a friendly interest in the matter, and he had assisted Tom Merry with advice, which the junior captain had found useful.

Tom Merry looked round him in the dimness. Lowther held a bicycle lantern up, and flashed its light round. The rays glimmered upon crowded faces, eagerly waiting.

"Gentlemen of the School House," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" roared the gentlemen of the School House.

From the gentlemen of the New House, who were pretty numerous represented, came a loud and prolonged hiss.

"Silence!" roared Blake.

"Gentlemen of the School House," resumed Tom Merry, as soon as he could make his voice heard. "You will be pleased to hear that we have prepared a great celebration for this famous anniversary."

"Annie whom?" inquired the voice of Figgins.

"This anniversary," went on Tom Merry, unheeding, "famous in the annals of English history. For hundreds of years the youth of Britain have celebrated the date upon which Guy Fawkes plotted to blow up the Houses of Parliament, by burning the boulder in effigy."

"Hear, hear."

"We are going to celebrate the date in the good old way, but with a slight variation. Our ancestors celebrated a victory over a lot of bounders by burning Guy Fawkes in effigy. We, gentlemen of the School House, have lately achieved a victory over another set of bounders, dwelling in the New House at St. Jim's—"

"Hear, hear!" from the School House, and groans from the New House.

"A set of bounders," went on Tom Merry, imperturbably, "led by a fearful ruffian known as Figgins, or Stiggins, or some such name."

Laughter and cheers; and a hoot from Figgins or Stiggins.

"We are going to celebrate this victory," said Tom Merry, "by burning the ruffian Figgins in effigy. Fortunately, he strongly resembles a guy in ordinary appearance—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that his effigy might really be mistaken for an ordinary guy. Gentlemen, we shall now light the funeral pyre, and proceed to burn the ruffian Figgins in effigy."

"Hurrah!"

Somewhat to Tom Merry's surprise, the New House boys made no demonstration beyond groans and hisses. The School

House forces were ready for the fray, and perhaps that was the reason.

"Watch the pile, kids, while we get out the effigy," said Tom Merry. He looked round for Figgins, but Figgins had vanished. Neither were the Co. to be seen.

Leaving Blake and Lowther in command at the pile, Tom Merry returned into the School House with Manners and Herries, and they soon reappeared carrying the effigy between them. It was dusky in the quadrangle, but the pyre was not to be lighted until the effigy was mounted upon the pole in the centre of the bonfire, there to perish in the flames.

A shout from the School House boys greeted the appearance of the effigy.

No striking resemblance to Figgins could be detected in it, but even in the dusk the huge placard could be made out.

"FIGGINS,"

THE NEW HOUSE GUY!

Solemnly the School House chums marched the effigy towards the pyre, guarded by a double row of armed and watchful juniors.

"Hurrah!" shouted the School House, "here's another guy! Good old Figgins!"

And then they began to chant some new words which Tom Merry had supplied to an old tune:

Please to Remember

The Fifth of November,

When Figgins & Co. caught it hot!

The words rose in a roar, audible in every corner of St. Jim's. New House boys shouted back derisively, but from afar. They were withdrawing themselves from the vicinity of the bonfire.

"Here we are," said Tom Merry. "Shove that pair of steps across. We've got to hook the guy on the pole in the middle. There's a hook on top all ready to stick into his back. Figgins will look very nice up there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Figgins! Good old guy!"

Tom Merry glanced round him.

The School House fellows had the scene to themselves; the New House had withdrawn. Were they gone in the consciousness of defeat? Or were they plotting mischief?

"Help me up with the—Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Rain! Oh, hang! Rain!"

A spattering of water had fallen upon the heads of the juniors.

"Rain!" howled Blake. "Oh, blow, blow, blow! Rain!"

"How extremely annoyin', deah boys."

"It's not rain," yelled Tom Merry. "It's water."

"Well, ain't rain water, fathead—"

"It's not rain! I—yah! Gerroooooooh!"

Swish! slosh! splash!

No, it was not rain! It was water from the garden hose, which Figgins & Co. had fixed up unseen in the darkness, and were now playing upon the School House crowd!

A jet of water smote Tom Merry as he stood upon the steps, and bowled him over. The effigy fell with a thud to the ground.

Swish! swish! swish!

"They're trying to damp the bonfire!"

"Yah! cads! beasts!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Water was pouring and streaming upon the School House lads. It came in jets and showers, according to how Figgins held the nozzle. It foamed and swept over them.

Seniors as well as juniors came in for a share, and they hurriedly retreated from the scene. They didn't want to be mixed up in a junior row.

But the juniors were too furious to retreat. It was impossible to see Figgins in the darkness, but Tom knew that water must come from the direction of the fountain. He picked himself up and shouted to his followers.

"Come on! Tain't the bonfire they're washing—it's us! They want to capture the bonfire! Come on and slay them!"

The School House juniors needed no second bidding.

They rushed on, following Tom Merry's lead, with whoops of wrath.

Tom Merry's foot caught in a cord stretched in the darkness across the quad, from a peg stuck in the ground to a tree, and he fell over. In an instant his followers were piling on top of him. The juniors were like leaves in autumn strewing the ground. And as they rolled and sprawled and yelped, the deadly stream from the big garden hose played upon them, drenching them to the very skin.

Tom Merry struggled to extricate himself from the heap. So this was Figgys' plan; this was why he had been lying so low, this was the secret the New House had been keeping!

The School House chums were frantic. Careless of the drenching stream, they picked themselves up and dashed on to the attack.

But the others were made of less stern stuff. Many a grown man would have faltered before that sweeping attack; and many of the juniors ran and ran, and did not halt till they were out of its reach. Tom Merry & Co. dashed on, almost alone. They found the gunner with the hose, guarded by

crowds of New House juniors, armed with stuffed stockings and knotted towels.

"Come on!" yelled Tom Merry.

But the School House chums were not sufficiently backed up. The sweeping stream of water had swept their followers away, save some who were gasping on the ground, and did not seem to know whether they were on their heads or their heels. Gallantly the six attacked; but they were helpless against such odds, and they were borne to the ground by weight of numbers.

"We've got 'em!" yelled Kerr.

Figgins chuckled gleefully. This was a success even he had not counted on. Some of the towels were requisitioned to bind the prisoners. A voice was heard in protest.

"Pwaw be more careful of my cuffs, deah boys! If I am a pwiseonah of waw, you may bind my hands, but don't be too wuff with my shirt-cuffs."

"Oh, do not be wuff with Augustus's cuff!" sang Figgins, in the lightness of his heart.

Speedily the School House leaders were secured. By the time they were safe the hose had swept their dismayed followers from the ground, and the coast was clear.

"Buck up, before they rally!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

Figgins was not the fellow to allow grass to grow under his feet. His plans were already laid. Kerr and half the New House forces were left in charge of the prisoners and the hose. With the rest, Figgins rushed on to take possession of the bonfire.

Drenched and dispirited, and deprived of their leaders, the School House juniors were in no condition to rally and resist. Figgins and his followers took almost undisputed possession of the bonfire, and Figgins dragged the dummy up from the ground. To tear off the placard and substitute for it one that Fatty Wynn produced from under his ample jacket, was the work of a moment.

Then the grinning Figgins ascended the step-ladder, and with Fatty and Pratt's assistance, fastened the back of the dummy to the hook at the top of the post, in the centre of the huge pyre. All was ready for lighting the bonfire now.

"Light up!" called out Figgins, as he jumped down from the steps, and pushed them away.

A dozen New House juniors struck matches and set fire to the pile. As the materials had been well drenched with inflammable oil they caught immediately, and a rush of flame went up in the darkness.

In a few moments the bonfire was burning brilliantly. Over the dark quadrangle of St. Jim's spread a ruddy glow from the flame, and the New House juniors stood round whooping and waving their caps.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

In the midst of the flame the effigy rose bold and black to view. The hideous figure, with its daubed face and shapeless limbs, showing up plainly amid the leaping blaze, and the placard pinned on its breast was visible and legible to all:

**TOM MERRY!
THE CHAMPION GUY
of St. Jim's!**

Shouts of laughter came from the seniors standing at a distance. It would not have been fair play for them to interfere, and none of them cared to do so. It was an affair of the juniors, to be settled between the youngsters themselves.

"Here's another guy!" roared the New House crowd.

"Good old Tom Merry! Who's cock-house at St. Jim's!"

"We are! We are!"

Tom Merry and his comrades, helpless prisoners in the hands of Kerr's party, looked on with furious eyes. The victory was with the redoubtable Figgins after all! At the very last moment he had turned the tables on the School House, and not only recaptured his own effigy, but captured the School House bonfire as well. It was too bad!

No wonder the New House juniors enjoyed their triumph. Boxes of fireworks had been dropped by the School House boys all over the place; and these were collected and confiscated by the victors in the fray. To the victors the spoils, was the motto of all the house rows at St. Jim's, and the spoils were great in this case.

Crackers cracked, and squibs squibbed, and Roman candles flared, and every other variety of firework displayed itself against the darkness of the November sky. Such a pyrotechnic display had seldom been seen at the old school!

Crack! Bang! Fizz! Whizz! Splutter! Bang!

Fireworks were exploding everywhere. The din of the explosions, and the shouts of the New House boys, were deafening. Amid it all roared the huge bonfire, with the effigy high in the midst of the flames, and now crumbling to pieces under their burning touch.

Once or twice the scattered and defeated School House juniors made an attempt to rally. But Figgins and his band and the hose-pipe were always ready, and they were driven back with ignominy. Victory was with the New House.

Crash!

The blazing effigy dropped into the heart of the flames, and

a shower of sparks flew in all directions ; and a pyramid soared skyward against the November blackness.

The New House juniors shouted again.

"Tom Merry's gone!"

"Good-bye, Tommy!"

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, imitating Tom Merry's voice and manner, "the ruffianly Merry has now been burnt in effigy."

"Hear, hear!"

"We have now celebrated our victory over the School House——"

"Hear, hear!"

"And it is universally acknowledged that the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Figgins!"

Figgins walked over to the unhappy group of prisoners. His face was beaming.

"I say, you School House kids, shall we make it pax?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Blake.

"We've licked you up hill and down dale——"

"You—you rotter!" said Lowther.

"You're licked hollow, inside and out, and you can't deny it."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Right-o, we can't!" he exclaimed. "You've dished us this time, and we own up, Figgy."

"Yaas, wathah. I own up with gweat pleasuah. I shall be pleased to make it pax, for the wude juniah who is holdin'

They went to the height, and the way Bob chaffed the unfortunate prisoners must have been wormwood and gall to their hearts. The doctor tried to stop him; but the irrepressible Bob still kept shouting out home-truths, until at last the doctor gave him five hundred lines.

The captives got back all right, and the doctor let them off. He had no evidence that they had been guilty of foul play, and the rest was merely a matter of accident.

The following day Bob got permission to go out, and he sent a telegram. Whether he got a reply or not, no one ever knew, for he was a lad to keep his own counsel.

It was not before the following Saturday morning—and that was just at the end of the term—that the three chums received a message that the doctor wished to speak to them, and as Bob had got in a supper the previous night, he felt rather frightened.

However, such a message had to be obeyed, and they all entered the doctor's study, where they found the young captain and Mr. Salmon in the company of Dr. Andale and Bob's stepfather, Mr. Fern.

The doctor motioned them all to be seated, and then he waited for Fern to speak.

"Dr. Andale," cried Fern, "you have requested me to defer what I have to say until my son was present. May I ask if you desire the rest to be present?"

"My headmaster, the captain of this college, and the three comrades. I do desire them to be present."

"Very well, sir. It makes no odds to me. That boy has insulted and defied me, and it is my intention to take him from this college. You know perfectly well that I have the power to take him away, and I shall surely do so."

"I wish to ask the reason, sir?"

"The reason is that he has defied me. I sent him here to be educated, and I find that he is making a considerable sum of money by writing school stories for a certain paper."

"Do you take any exception to those stories?" inquired Dr. Andale. "Before you answer that question, I may tell you that I have read many of them, and I consider that their tendency is to improve the readers. There is nothing in any of the stories that I have read that I would mind my young daughter reading."

"That is not the question. No son of mine shall defy me. He has made money, and he has—has defied me. I won't be defied. No son of mine shall do such a thing. The boy is under my control, and I shall take him from this college forthwith. I consider that you have incited him to defy me, and I won't be defied. No, not by man, woman, or child!"

"What have you to say to this, Robert?" demanded the doctor.

"Nothing, sir. If he is not intoxicated, he is not far off it."

"No, you sha'n't!" cried Hal, stepping in front of Bob.

"That boy has lied in saying that I am drunk!"

"I have never known Bob to tell a lie yet," retorted Hal.

"Do you say that I am drunk, fellow?"

"I did not say so. If you desire my opinion, I will give it."

"Give it, fellow—give it!" shouted Fern, shaking his fist in the young captain's face. "Just you give that opinion, and you will see what the consequences will be."

"There is no occasion to shout at me," said Hal calmly. "The very fact that you consider my opinion would be insulting is sufficient to prove your crime, unless you imagine that I would speak falsely. I am extremely sorry for this, Dr. Andale."

"You leave that man out of the question!" roared Fern. "I have not a good opinion of him."

"Then you must be very intoxicated!" said Hal.

"You must be in a far more intoxicated state than I imagined when you entered this room. That you have been drinking—I am sorry, Bob—that you have been drinking, I know, and so do you. Whether you are drunk or not, I leave

my superiors to judge. I should say that you were inebriated."

"Repeat those words, young blackguard, and I will knock you down!" howled Fern.

"Bob, old man, I respect you!" exclaimed Hal. "I've watched you, as I have tried to watch every boy in this college. It is a captain's duty. He is supposed to help the Head. You see, he lets me speak now, and although he could speak a million times better—"

"Steady, Hal!" murmured the doctor.

"Well, I don't care, sir. You could speak infinitely better, and that is what I mean to say. There is no boy in this college who could honestly say that he has had anything but justice from you. Now, Mr. Fern, I have nothing to say to you. I will not speak another word to you. Dr. Andale will speak, and the words that he will say will be just. I do not think that he will make them clever."

"Mr. Fern, your stepson has been a pupil at my college for many years. It is not my intention to blame or praise him. I may say things that will hurt his feelings, but it shall be done with good intention. I think your son is worthy—"

"His son-in-law!" growled Bob. "I've had nothing from him, and I won't take his name, nor will I call him father."

"Do you think you are writing for dramatic effect, boy?" sneered Fern.

"I'm not writing at all, and if I did write I wouldn't make a—"

"Stop, Bouncer!" cried the doctor. "I command you to say no word against your father!"

"Right, sir! All the same, he isn't my father. I only want to say this. I did start writing for a boys' paper, and I'm going to continue it."

"Stay, Bouncer!" exclaimed the doctor. "We have to deal with the matter of your remaining at this college. Your stepfather says that you shall not remain. Your guardian—I have been in communication with him, Mr. Fern—has given him permission that he shall remain, provided that the means can be found. Now, Robert Bouncer has those means. By his splendid efforts, and his toil—the lad must have worked at night—he receives an income that would considerably more than support him at this college. I have his guardian's permission for him to remain here, and Robert Bouncer, if he elects to do so, shall pay me his college fees."

"You old money-grabber!" howled Fern.

"Now, Bob," exclaimed the doctor, "I will say what I fear will hurt your feelings. Your stepfather owes me a sum of money; but I will not take that from you, my dear lad, and I have only mentioned the fact so that you may know what manner of man he is. Go on your own account, my lad, and if you ever want a friend to help you, you shall not come to me in vain. Now take your choice."

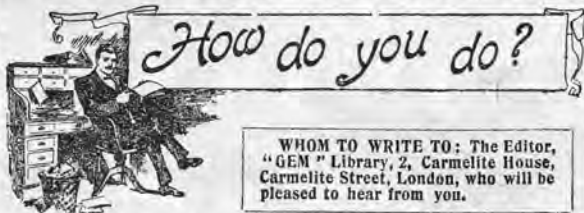
"Rats!" growled Bob. "Why don't you ask a sensible question? Go on, take me back and flog me as hard as you like, and then flog me again and I'll howl; but I won't howl out that I like that man better than you, however hard you

hit, sir. Try me if you don't believe my words, sir."

"Good-day, Mr. Fern!" said Dr. Andale.

"Leave my room, and never enter it again, at your peril!" cried the doctor. And as the cur sunk away, the good old doctor grasped Bob's hand: "You shall pay me full fees, boy. I'll stick on extras if you dare to break anything. Mr. Salmon wants you. He is as sick of this as I am. You shall pay me full fees, Bob, with all the extras; but if at any time you want those fees to be halved, quartered, or turned to nothing, come to me, my dear lad—just you come to me. Stormpoint is proud of you."

"Hurrah!" shouted Hal. (The first chapters of the only new and original school tale by S. Clarke Hook, entitled "TEMPEST HEADLAND," will commence in next Thursday's number. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance.)



"D'ARCY'S ROMANCE."

Gussy comes very much to the fore next week, and you will follow the troublous course of his love affair with interest, and will say with Tom Merry that after all Augustus is a decent sort of ass.

Another important feature in our next issue will be

"TEMPEST HEADLAND,"

the new and ONLY original school tale by

S. CLARKE HOOK.

THE EDITOR.

P.S.—Thanks for postcards received. Shall be glad to have your criticism.

Next Thursday's Cover— 'D'ARCY'S ROMANCE.'

Grand
Complete
Tale of

Tom Merry's
Schooldays.



D'ARCY'S

LOVE
LETTER

YOUR

PLEASE
ORDER

"GEM"

IN
ADVANCE.

LIBRARY

3

NEW ADDITIONS TO

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" LIBRARY.

No. 30: TOM MERRY & CO.

A Splendid and Absolutely
NEW Tale of School Life
and Adventure.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

No. 31: THE RIVAL FORTS.

A Thrilling Tale of Life in the
Service of the Hudson Bay
Company.

By MURRAY GRAYDON.

No. 32: WOLVES of the DEEP.

A Stirring Story of a Great
Conspiracy, introducing
Ferrals Lord and Ching-
Lung.

By SIDNEY DREW.

PRICE 3^{D.} EACH.

JUST OUT.



HERE
YOU
ARE!

LOOK!

