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

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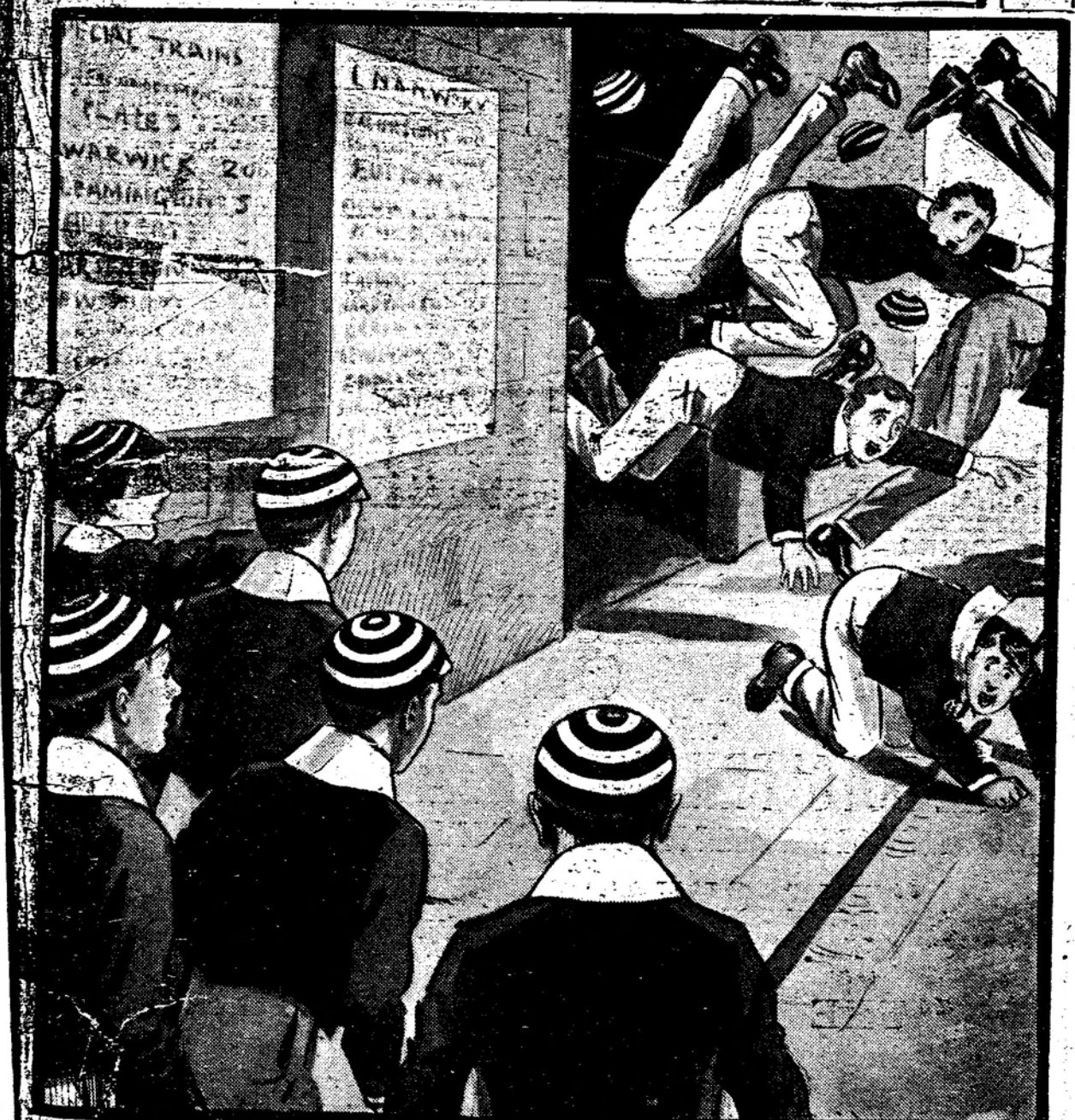

A form came hurtling through the doorway of the station—the form of Jack Blake of the Fourth. It rolled on the pavement, and after him came whirling Kangaroo of the Shell, and then Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn and more School House fellows—all ejected by force from the station. "We're done!" panted Blake to his dismayed leader. "The station's crammed with New House chaps, and they won't let us in!"

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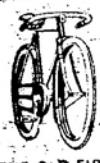

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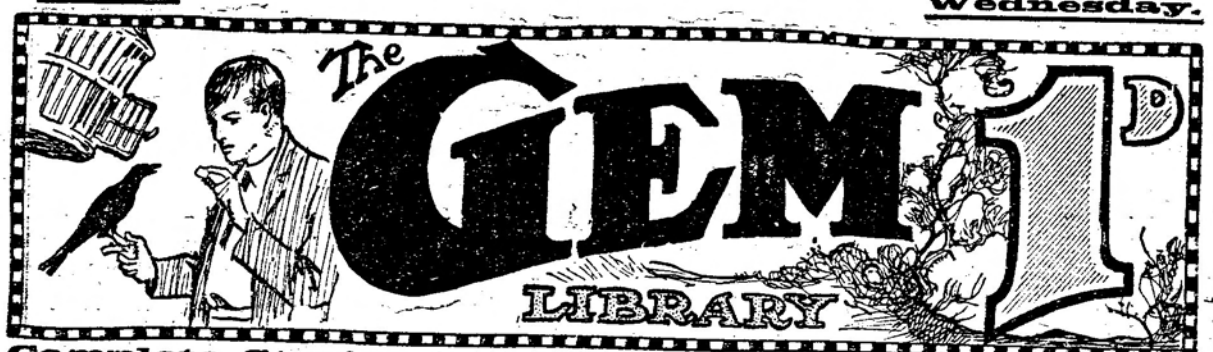

Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem

HONOURS DIVIDED!

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

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
The Chance of a Lifetime.

TOM MERRY of the Shell was the first to hear the news.

He did not waste time about it.

He dashed upstairs at top speed, making for his study in the Shell passage, in the old School House of St. Jim's, to tell Manners and Lowther.

There was no time to waste. It had not taken Tom Merry an instant to decide what was to be done. If Figgins of the New House should get to know about it——. But there was no time to think about that. It must all be settled before Figgins of the New House knew a word of it.

Afternoon lessons were over at St. Jim's, and there were a good many fellows in the passages, and on the stairs.

Tom Merry did not heed them.

He rushed through the fellows on the stairs like a Rugby three-quarter getting through the enemy. There were yells of protest from fellows he bumped over or elbowed aside; behind the Shell fellow, as he dashed on, the voices rose in a roar.

"You silly ass!"

"Where are you running?"

"What's the game?"

"What's the matter?"

"Collar him!"

"Bai Jove! You've wumpled my jacket, you silly duffah."

Tom Merry did not heed—he did not even hear. He reached the landing, and sprinted down the Shell passage to his study. Skimpole of the Shell was coming out of his study at the same moment, right in Tom Merry's way. There was a terrific collision, and Skimpole rolled into his study again, gasping, his spectacles sliding down his nose. Tom Merry did not give him even a glance. He reeled a little from the shock, but he dashed on, and kicked open the door of his study.

Manners and Lowther were there. Manners was cutting films at the table—Manners generally was cutting films, when he was not developing in the vault under the School House, or messing about with his camera in the quad. Monty Lowther was chewing the end of a pen, preliminary to filling up a page with new and original chestnuts for the comic page of "Tom Merry's Weekly." Both the juniors stared as Tom Merry came tearing in, breathless and excited.

"Hullo! Steady the Buffs!" said Manners. "Don't jolt me, you ass! I'm cutting films."

"Blow the films!"

"Got a good rhyme for chump?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Fathead!"

"That doesn't rhyme with chump," said Lowther, in astonishment.

"It rhymes with Lowther," gasped Tom Merry. "Put that rot away! Stop that bosh, Manners."

"Eh?"

Monty Lowther calmly chewed his pen, and murmured over the scathing limerick he was composing for the "Weekly," a description of Figgins of the New House.

"In the New House there lives a great chump,
Whose face always gives me the hump;
His napper is fat,
But his calves are not that,
They're as slim as—as—as——"

Monty Lowther reflected.

"Now, if lath rhymed with chump, it would go all right," he said. "How would the handle of a pump do, Tom Merry?"

"Put it away!" roared Tom Merry.

"Oh, rats! You see—Oh! you fathead!"

Tom Merry made a violent descent upon the table. Monty Lowther's sheet was jerked away and hurled across the study, and the inkpot after it. Then Tom Merry grabbed at the roll of films Manners was dissecting. Manners gave a wild yell as his scissors zigzagged through the film.

Next Wednesday:

"UNDER A CLOUD!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

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"Oh! you ass! You've spoiled it now, one of the best, a view of St. Jim's, seen from the south. You dangerous ass! Are you dotty?"

"Put it away! There's no time for rotting," roared Tom Merry. "Can't you see there's something on, you slackers?"

"Well, what is it?" asked Lowther, with some show of interest. "A raid from the New House?"

"No, ass!"

"Those bounders in the Fourth Form getting their backs up?"

"Rats! No."

"The one and only Wally of the Third in trouble again?"

"Fathead! Blow Wally!"

"Blow him as much as you like," said Lowther amicably. "I don't mind! But what is it? Are we gated on the afternoon of the first giddy House match of the season? Has the order gone forth that we're not to play cricket next Wednesday, or——"

"It's the biggest, best, wonderfullest wheeze that ever wheezed," said Tom Merry impressively. "All I'm afraid of is that Figgins & Co will get to hear of it, and will be before us."

"Look at this film," said Manners, "I——"

"I—I'll jam the film down your neck, if you don't dry up," exclaimed Tom Merry, exasperated. "Don't I keep on telling you that this is the biggest score we've ever had a chance of getting over the New House? When I heard the news, it made me jump. If Figgins hears of it, he won't waste time jawing about silly films, and making up rotten limericks, I can tell you."

"It's a jolly good limerick," said Monty Lowther warmly. "I only want a good rhyme for chump. Slim as the handle of a pump would do, but——"

"I'll chump you, you fathead, if you don't chuck it," growled Tom Merry. "Look here, next Wednesday we're playing the first House match of the season."

"I believe we know that already," grunted Manners, mournfully eyeing his film.

"We've got to lick the New House to give the cricket season a good start. We've simply got to walk over Figgins & Co. this time."

"Well, we're going to do it!"

"But we shan't do it if Figgins gets on to this, and gets ahead of us," shouted Tom Merry. "Suppose Figgins gets him, what will happen then?"

"Eh?"

"We've got to be first. We've got to collar him, to bag him, to make sure of him."

"My hat!"

"There's no time to be lost! He's got to be bagged."

Manners and Lowther stared blankly at Tom Merry. A dreadful doubt smote them simultaneously that the junior captain of the School House had taken leave of his senses.

"Bag whom?" demanded Manners, "Figgins?"

"Figgins! No, you ass!"

"Kerr, then?"

"Kerr? Who's talking about Kerr?"

"Blessed if I know what you are talking about," said Monty Lowther, in bewilderment. "You're talking about bagging somebody, and the only chap you've mentioned is Figgins. Blessed if I want to bag Figgins. They're welcome to keep him in the New House."

Tom Merry waved both hands in his excitement.

"Ass! Fathead! Duffer!"

"Go it!" said Monty Lowther. "If it's a slanging match, I'm on. Fathead, chump, frabjous burbler——"

"You—you silly ass! you—you jabberwock——"

"You chortling duffer!" said Lowther cheerfully. "You burbling josser! You——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Listen to me," roared Tom Merry. "Can't you see sense? I jolly well wish I'd gone to Study No. 6 instead! I tell you there's not a second to lose. If we don't bag him, the New House chaps will. Do you understand?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Manners.

"I got the news from Kildare of the Sixth—it's a dead cert. He's coming into the Shell."

"Kildare is?" said the bewildered Lowther. "They're putting a Sixth Form chap down into the Shell? I don't believe it."

"Not Kildare, fathead. Can't you understand?"

"No, I admit I can't. Perhaps if you explained instead of performing gymnastics, it might be a little clearer," Lowther suggested.

"The new kid——"

"What new kid?"

"Haven't I been telling you all this time?" roared Tom Merry excitedly. "The new kid is coming to-day, he's coming into the Shell, but his House isn't decided on, and we've got time to arrange it—see?"

Lowther yawned.

"Blessed if I see any cause for excitement. New kids have come to St. Jim's before. Why, we were new kids ourselves once upon a time," said Lowther, in a tone that implied that that was centuries ago.

"But this new kid is something extra special," gasped Tom Merry. "Don't I keep on telling you? Can't you understand? If we get him, we walk all over Figgins & Co. in the House match; we walk all over the New House in every giddy match; we walk all over all the teams we play all the season; we walk——"

"Jolly lot of walking we're going to do, it seems," said Lowther. "Who's the wonderful new kid, then? Something at cricket?"

"Something at cricket!" scoffed Tom Merry. "I should say so? Haven't you heard of him? Don't you know about him? Where on earth were you brought up, if you don't know about him?"

"But you haven't told us his name yet!" shouted Lowther. "How should I know anything about him when I don't know his blessed name?"

"Well, you keep on interrupting me with your silly limericks and your idiotic films," said Tom Merry. "His name's Lacy, Cedric Lacy, Lacy the Zingaro, Lacy who took four wickets against Loamshire; Lacy who——"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

And at last Manners and Lowther were properly impressed.

CHAPTER 2.
Rival Claimants.

CEDRIC LACY!

It was a name well known to every fellow at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry looked triumphantly at his chums, gratified with the impression his words had made now that they understood. Manners and Lowther could not very well fail to be impressed. Cedric Lacy was a name to conjure with.

All the fellows had heard of the wonderful youthful cricketer, the son of a member of I Zingari, the "kid" who had once been put on to bowl in a county match and had taken four wickets in succession against crack batsmen; the boy who made centuries as easily as other fellows made twos and threes; the youth who would have played for England against Australia if he had been old enough.

And he was coming to St. Jim's!

"My only summer chapeau!" said Lowther, with a deep breath. "You're sure he's coming?"

"I had it from Kildare. Kildare and Darrel were jawing it over. The Head told Kildare! It's true enough."

"By Jove!" said Manners. "And it's not settled which House he's going into?"

"No; he's going to settle that himself, it seems."

"It's jolly well settled," said Lowther. "We settle that in this study. He's coming into the School House. Why, it will be ever so much kudos for us to have him here, even without shoving him into the cricket matches. And if he plays cricket for the House, we'll beat any team we tackle, junior or senior."

"My hat! We'll challenge the Sixth and beat them hollow!" chuckled Manners.

Tom Merry's eyes danced.

"We've got to have him in the School House!" he said. "What I'm afraid of is, that Figgins may get the news, and get up to some dodge for getting him into the New House. You know what awful rotters those New House chaps are; they'd think nothing of trying to get the fellow into their House without letting us know about it—the spoofers."

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

Tom Merry glared at him.

"What are you cackling about?" he demanded.

"It seems to me that that's just what we're going to do," grinned Lowther.

"Ahem! Well, you see——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't waste time cackling," said Tom Merry. "There's enough to do without wasting time hearing you go off like a

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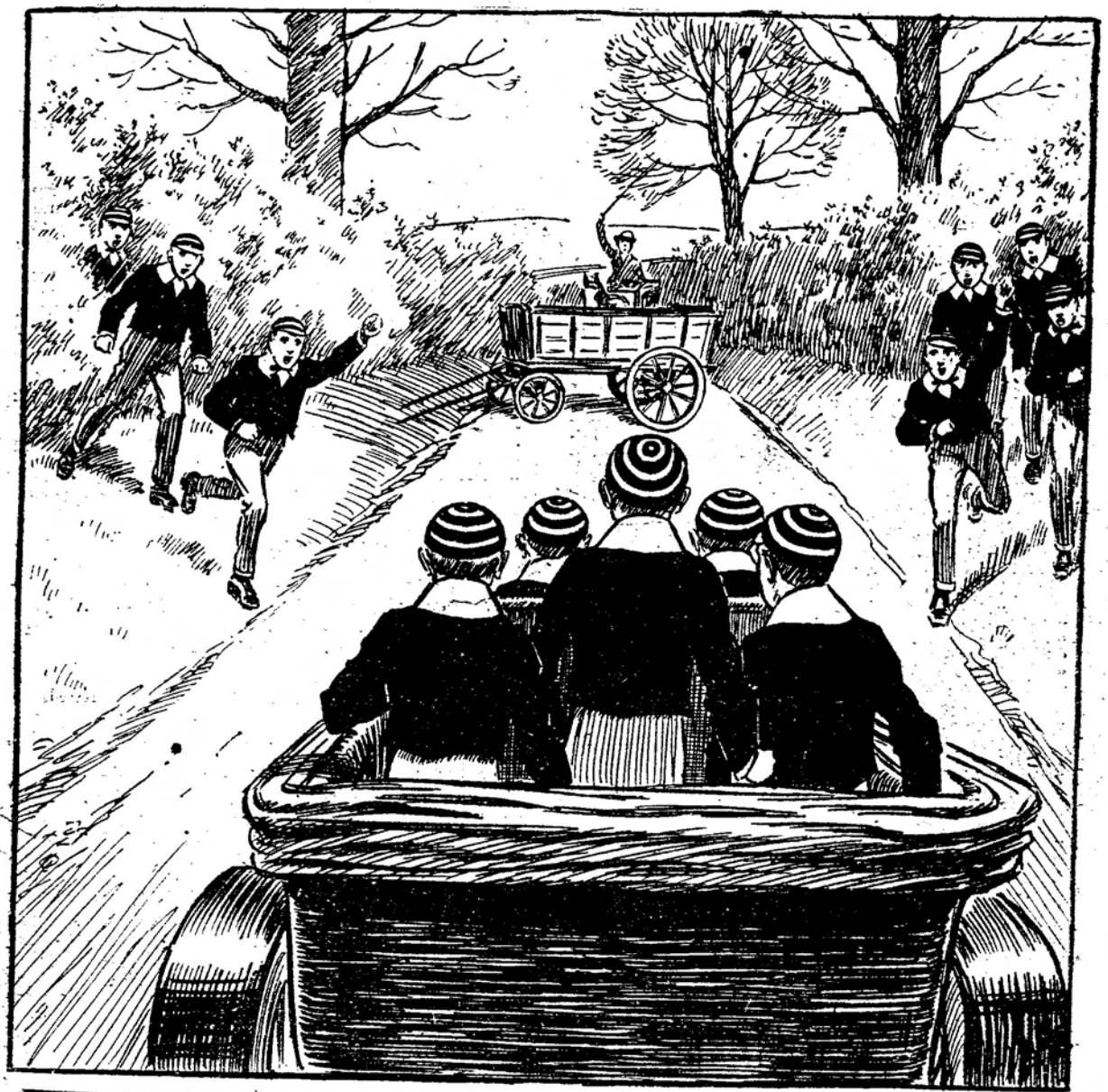

Figgins glared ahead down the road. A farmer's waggon was in the middle of the lane, completely filling up the road, and on the other side of it was a butcher's cart.

Chinese cracker. We've got to get Lacy into the School House, by hook or by crook——"

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll have him in this House, if we have to shut him up in a box and sit on the lid," said Tom Merry. "Look here, it's all rot about his not having decided yet on his House. Naturally a fellow of Lacy's form comes into the School House—the cock-house of St. Jim's."

"Naturally!" agreed Manners and Lowther, at once.

"The Head ought to have settled it. I must say that I think it's a bit negligent of the Head! But he doesn't understand about the necessity of keeping the School House at the top."

"Might explain it to him," suggested Lowther.

"Ahem! Look here, we've got to have Lacy. That's settled. We can't get at him and warn him to choose the School House, and to beware of spurious imitations. The Head's got to decide. My idea is to get some of the fellows to come to the Head at once, and petition him to put Lacy in this House. And the sooner the quicker, because Figgins is sure to think of the same thing as soon as he hears the news—and I saw Kildare talking to Monteith of the New House as I came up—and Monteith will carry the news over there—I shouldn't wonder if Figgins knows by this time."

"Get the chaps together, then, and let's go to the Head," said Lowther briskly.

"Good! Gather 'em in, then!"

And the Terrible Three of the Shell hurried out of the study.

There was evidently no time to be lost. As soon as Figgins & Co. of the New House learned that Cedric Lacy was coming to St. Jim's, they would leave no stone unturned to get that much-desired youth into their House. And perhaps Figgins knew it already!

The Shell fellows lost no time. They gathered up their chums in the House for the deputation to the Head. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, of Study No. 6, were the first; the mere name of Cedric Lacy gathered them in, without further explanation. They knew the reputation of that wonderful youth. Kangaroo of the Shell, and Glyn and Dane, and Reilly and Kerruish, and several more fellows, were gathered in. Other fellows were out of doors, and there was no time for more. Tom Merry & Co. in a state of buzzing excitement, made their way to the Head's study.

"Hold on a minute, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, as the captain of the Shell was

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "UNDER A CLOUD!" A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

about to knock at the door. "This is wathah a delicate mattah you know——"

"Yes, yes; buck up!" said Tom Merry impatiently.

"Pway don't intewwupt me. I was about to explain——"

"If you've got anything to say, say it!" roared Blake. "Figgins may come hopping along the passage at any minute."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, shurrup!" growled Monty Lowther. "Let's get in."

"I was about to explain," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with a great deal of dignity "that this is a delicate mattah, and ought to be left in the hands of a fellow of tact and judgment. I think I had bettah do the talkin'."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Suffocate him, somebody," said Tom Merry, as he tapped at the Head's door.

"I wefuse to be suffocated——"

The Head's door opened.

Figgins of the Fourth came out. Figgins, the junior leader of the New House at St. Jim's, and the deadly rival of the School House party, stared at Tom Merry & Co. They stared at him. What had Figgins wanted in the Head's study? Had he heard the news and forestalled them? But for the fact that it was the Head's study, Figgins of the Fourth would have been grasped by many hands, and bumped on the floor. As it was, the School House fellows glared at him, and passed him, and went into the study.

Dr. Holmes had taken up his pen after dismissing Figgins. He laid it down again with an air of patient resignation as the School House juniors crowded in.

"Dear me!" said Dr. Holmes. "What do you boys want?"

"If you please, sir —"

"Pway allow me to explain, Tom Mewwy— "

"Shut up!" said Manners in a fierce whisper, which was perfectly audible to the Head.

"I wefuse to shut up, Mannahs—— "

"You see, sir——" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ahem!" said the Head. "My time is valuable. May I ask you to come to the point, and explain what this extraordinary invasion of my study means?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "We're awfully sorry to interrupt you, sir; but this is a matter of tremendous importance."

"Yaas, wathah, sir! You see—— Ow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped as Monty Lowther pinched his arm with terrific energy.

Tom Merry went on.

"It's about the new chap, sir."

"The what, Merry?"

"The—the new boy, sir," said Tom Merry, a little abashed. "We've heard that Cedric Lacy is coming to St. Jim's, sir."

"That is correct," said the Head.

"I suppose he will be coming into the School House, sir?"

"That matter has not been arranged," said the Head. "There is now accommodation for new boys in both Houses, and his wishes, or the wishes of his father, will be respected in that matter. Is that all?"

"Nunno, sir. We—we've come to you, sir, to ask a favour."

"Yaas, wathah! Ow!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Head glanced severely at the swell of St. Jim's.

"D'Arcy! What do you mean by making that ridiculous noise?"

"Sowwy, sir!" gasped D'Arcy. "A silly ass twod on my foot, sir."

"Keep quiet, then," growled Monty Lowther.

"I wefuse to keep quiet——"

"We've come as a deputation from the whole house, sir," said Tom Merry, for a moment forgetting the existence of the senior Forms. "We want you to put the new kid into the School House, sir. It's the best House for him, and we want to have him among us, sir. We'll look after him, and give him a welcome, and—and——"

The Head smiled.

Encouraged by the smile, Tom Merry went on:

"We 'specially want Lacy in the School House, sir. He's a ripping good cricketer, and we want him in the House team. I hope you'll decide to put him in the School House, sir. We should all be very grateful."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Dr. Holmes shook his head.

"I am sorry," he said. "It is very curious, but I have just received a request from Figgins to place the new boy in the New House."

Tom Merry's face lengthened.

"Oh, sir! That's sheer cheek of Figgins; he can't expect anything of the sort."

"Wathah not, sir. It's just cheek, sir!"

The Head smiled again.

"You haven't given him to Figgins, sir, have you?" asked Tom Merry anxiously.

"I have not assigned him to the New House," said the Head. "As I said, I have left that matter open. It will be decided when he arrives. I have told Figgins so. And now, please, retire from my study; I am busy."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors moved towards the door. They had not succeeded, but it was some satisfaction to know that Figgins had not succeeded either. Figgins had heard the news, evidently, and he had been first in the field with the Head. But he had not succeeded. Tom Merry paused at the door as his comrades filed out.

"Would you mind telling us when the new boy is expected, sir? We—we should like to give him a bit of a reception."

"Certainly," said the Head. "He may come to-day or to-morrow. In the latter case, I understand that he will arrive by the three-thirty train at Rylcombe."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Tom Merry followed his companions out of the study. He closed the door, and in the passage the juniors paused to look at one another.

"No go!" said Manners sententiously.

"I considah——"

"Never mind. Figgins hasn't got him, either," said Jack Blake.

"I was speakin', Blake——"

"And we've got to take jolly good care that Figgins doesn't get him, either," said Monty Lowther.

"Faith, and ye're right!" remarked Reilly. "We've got to get at him the moment he arrives, and point out to him that the School House is cock-house of St. Jim's, and that he's got to belong to it."

"I considah that it would have been all wight if you chaps had left the talkin' to me," said D'Arcy, with a sniff. "The Head wants managin' in a mattah like this. It wequires a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"Half-past five," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, you are intewwuptin' me——"

"I know that, Gussy. It's half-past five. If the chap is coming to-day, he must be in by the six train," said Tom Merry. "He's pretty certain to come to Rylcombe station. We had better get down to the station. We can meet him as he gets out of the train, and talk to him like a family of Dutch uncles on his way to the school."

"Yaas, wathah! I'm surpwised that I didn't think of that."

"Come off!" said Tom Merry.

And the crowd of juniors streamed out of the School House, and hurried across the quadrangle to the school gates.

CHAPTER 3.

On the Warpath.

"WHAT luck?"

Half a dozen voices asked the question as Figgins of the Fourth came into his study of the New House.

Quite a crowd of juniors were there. Kerr and Wynn—Figgy's inseparable chums—and Redfern, Owen and Lawrence, the rival Co. in the New House, were there, on the best of terms, apparently. As Redfern had nobly said, this was no time for rags. It was a time for the House to pull together as one man. The question whether Redfern & Co., or Figgins & Co., were to be considered the great chiefs of the New House juniors, could be left over; the immediate business of all parties was to see that Cedric Lacy was captured, by hook or by crook, by the New House, and made a member thereof, before those rotters over in the School House had a chance at him. The news that Lacy was coming to St. Jim's had caused as much excitement in the New House as in the rival establishment. Figgins & Co. meant to have him in their House, if it could be done, though the skies fell.

Figgins shook his head in response to the eager question.

"Seen the Head?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"Can't settle it. The kid's father has selected which House he's going into, very likely; if not, the kid settles it himself."

"What rot!" said Redfern. "He ought to be shoved into the New House as a matter of course. A cricketer of his class ought to belong to the cock-house of St. Jim's."

"I should jolly well say so!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, the question's left open, so far," said Figgins. "But that isn't all. As I came out of the Head's study, a whole crowd of School House chaps went in—Tom Merry, and Blake, and the whole giddy family. They looked at me as if they could eat me."

ANSWERS

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"Then they know?" asked Thompson of the Shell.

"Yes, they've got the news, too, and the whole blessed gang have gone to the Head to ask to have Lacy in their House."

"The cheek of it!" said Lawrence.

"Awful!" grinned Redfern.

"Well, it is cheek," said Figgins. "A fellow of Lacy's class as a cricketer ought to come into the New House. We're all agreed on that."

"What-ho!"

"I've been looking out his record," said Kerr. "There's been a lot about him in print. He seems to have played cricket almost as soon as he was born in Australia. They take cricket seriously down there, you know. He was a wonderful bowler when he was twelve years old, and he bats like an angel."

"Never seen an angel bat," said Redfern.

"Oh, rats! His father's a member of I Zingari, and a first-class cricketer. Lives in England now. The kid will be playing for Australia some day—if he doesn't stay in England and play for England. You could have pointed out to the Head that they've got one Australian in the School House now, Figgy—Noble of the Shell—so it's only fair that we should have the new one."

"Never thought of it," said Figgy. "Don't suppose it would make much difference, though."

"Not likely," said Fatty Wynn. "The Head doesn't really quite understand about the New House being cock-house of St. Jim's, and all that."

Redfern grunted.

"He thinks more about the war between the Greeks and the Trojans than about the war between the New House and the School House," he said.

"As the Head hasn't settled the matter, we've got to settle it for ourselves," said Figgins, coming out of a brown study.

"Yes, rather! But how?"

"It's agreed that this Cornstalk chap is coming into the New House?"

"Agreed!"

"We've got to manage it somehow. He'll be here to-day or to-morrow, and we've got to catch him young, and train him up in the way he should go, that's all. Who's coming down to Rylcombe with me?"

"Good egg!" said Redfern. "We'll all come. If we can get at him at the station, we can get him into the House here, and make him decide to be a New House chap, whether he likes it or not. We can persuade him gently and sweetly, and if that's not any good, we can rag him bald-headed."

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, then," said Figgins. "Monteith said he thought the chap was coming to-day, and if he comes he must come by the six train. There isn't a later one."

And the crowd of New House juniors streamed out of the study and left the New House. They crowded out of the school gates, and turned into the road to Rylcombe village.

Figgins uttered a sudden exclamation.

"My hat! Look at that!"

Ahead of them on the road appeared another party of juniors. The New House Co. did not need telling whom they were. They recognised Tom Merry and Co. at once.

Figgins's brow wrinkled darkly.

"Those rotters are on the same tack," he said.

"Awful sneaks!" said Kerr. "Trying to forestall us."

"They jolly well won't do it, though," said Redfern. "We'll have the chap, if we have to carry him off by main force. He's our Cornstalk."

"Yes, rather!"

The party ahead soon spotted the New House juniors behind. They slackened down for Figgins & Co. to overtake them.

The rival parties from St. Jim's looked at one another wrathfully and questioningly.

"Going down to Rylcombe?" asked Figgins.

"Yes," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Where are you going, Figgy?"

"Oh, we're just strolling down there," said Figgins airily. "I suppose you fellows are going to raid the Grammar School?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, we're going to give the Grammarians a rest," he said. "We all got so jolly chummy over the fire at the Grammar School that rows are barred for a bit. Don't want to stop you fellows, though. You just get on, and raid the Grammar School, and show us what the New House can do when they fairly get on the warpath."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, that's a jolly good idea," said Jack Blake. "We shall be awfully interested to hear how you get on, Figgy."

"Pile in, Figgy," said Monty Lowther encouragingly.

Figgins sniffed.

"We're not raiding any blessed Grammarians now," he said. "The Grammar cads can go and eat coke, and so can you School House bounders. Look here, What are you going down to Rylcombe for?"

"Nice afternoon for a walk," suggested Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that all?" asked Figgins suspiciously.

"My hat! You're getting inquisitive in your old age, Figgy," said Tom Merry, in a tone of patient remonstrance. "There are lots of things to be done in Rylcombe. Gussy may be going to see Miss Bunn at the tea-shop, and we may be going to back him up."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Or we might be going to have a feed at Mother Murphy's," said Tom Merry reflectively. "Mother Murphy sells jolly good jam tarts, you know."

"But you're not going there," growled Figgy.

"Well, no, we're not, as a matter of absolute fact," agreed Tom Merry. "But we might be, you know. Or we might be going to Mr. Wiggs's to see about Gussy's new waistcoat. We're not, but we might be."

"Look here," said Figgins, "if you're going to the railway station——"

"Why, what on earth put that idea into your head?" asked Tom Merry, in astonishment.

"You're not going to the railway station, then?"

"Anything to be seen there?" asked Tom Merry.

"Are you going there?"

"I give that up," said Tom Merry calmly. "Ask me another."

"Figgins seems to have something on his mind," said Monty Lowther. "I suppose a chap could take a walk to think out rhymes for a poem, couldn't he, Figgins? Can you tell me a rhyme for chump?"

"Rats!" said Figgins.

Lowther shook his head.

"That doesn't rhyme," he said. "I'm afraid you haven't got much of an ear for rhyme, Figgins. I've got a limerick going, and I can't get the last rhyme unless I make it pump. What do you suggest?"

Figgins did not suggest anything. He marched off with his fellows, and turned out of the lane into a footpath through the wood.

The New House juniors disappeared into the trees, and Tom Merry & Co. smiled and walked on.

"Figgay isn't goin' to the station aftah all, then," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"I fancy he is," said Tom Merry.

"But he's taken the footpath towards Wayland, deah boy."

"Yes, and as soon as he's out of sight he'll take the short cut through the wood to the village," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Buck up, then!" said Kangaroo.

"No hurry. The train isn't in till six."

And the juniors strolled on. They entered the old village of Rylcombe, and strolled down the quaint old High Street. They reached the railway station at five minutes to six. The first person they saw there was Figgins of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 4.

Captured!

FIGGINS & CO. bestowed a glare upon Tom Merry & Co., and marched upon the platform. They explained to the porter that they had come to meet a new boy for St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. made the same explanation, and marched upon the platform also.

Rylcombe was a little country station, with a long, uncovered platform, on one side of which was a grassy bank laid out in flower-beds.

Figgins & Co. stood admiring the flowers, and taking no notice of the School House fellows, excepting out of the corners of their eyes.

Tom Merry & Co. also kept a surreptitious watch upon the New House fellows. Each party, of course, knew now perfectly well what the other party was there for.

The train was due in a few minutes. When it arrived it seemed probable that there would be a tussle for the new boy. The famed struggle over the body of Patroclus would be nothing to it.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "What's goin' to be done, you know? Are we goin' to have a scwap here in the station?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "Look here, it's settled that those cheeky New House bounders aren't going to get the new kid."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Listen to me. When the train comes in, two of us must get hold of Lacy and run him off, while the rest keep Figgins & Co. back," said Tom Merry. "As soon as I whistle you're to charge Figgins & Co., and keep 'em busy."

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, with an air of serious concern.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"What's the matter now, Gussy?"

"I did not anticipate a scwap with the New House chaps.

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I have put on my best toppah in honour of the new kid," D'Arcy explained. "It is weally vewy awkward."

"Put it in your waistcoat pocket, or your watch-case," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Gussy can keep out of the scrap," said Tom Merry. "He wouldn't be much good, anyway——"

"Why, you uttah ass——"

"Gussy and Reilly can collar the new kid, and get him away," said Tom Merry. "The rest of us will pile on the New House bounders. Gussy can explain to Lacy—put it to him politely, Gussy. We can rely on you for that——"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let him understand that we've come down specially to save him from a gang of rough bounders who wanted to carry him off, you know."

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get him out of the station, and take him into Mother Murphy's tuck-shop," said Tom Merry. "Wait there till we join you. You can fill him up with tarts and things, and keep him there by kindness. Anyway, keep him there, if you have to knock him down and sit on his neck."

"Wely on me, deah boy."

There was a shrill whistle down the line. The train was coming in.

"Here she comes!" said Herries.

"Look out!"

The School House crowd turned towards the incoming train. Figgins & Co. ceased their horticultural studies, and turned round to the train at the same moment. They were whispering together, and casting glances towards the School House fellows. It was evident that Figgins & Co. were prepared for war.

The train came gliding into the station, and it stopped. Tom Merry gave the signal whistle.

"At 'em!" roared Blake.

The School House fellows made a rush.

"Look out!" yelled Figgins. "Line up, New House!"

"Give 'em socks!" roared Tom Merry. "Down with the New House!"

"Yah! School House cads!"

"Buck up!"

"Yah! Oh! Oh! Ow!"

School House and New House were mixed up in a moment in a wild and whirling struggle. They trampled and staggered about the platform, punching and pommelling and wrestling, much to the surprise of the passengers who descended from the train.

Meanwhile, D'Arcy and Reilly, carrying out the instructions of their leader, hurried to the train, leaving Tom Merry & Co. to keep Figgins & Co. busy. They were keeping them very busy, as a matter of fact.

"Can you see him, Weilly, deah boy?" gasped D'Arcy.

"He hasn't got out, the spalpeen," said Reilly.

"Bai Jove! Here he is!"

Arthur Augustus spotted a youth in Etons and a silk hat sitting in one of the first-class carriages, looking out of window at the fight on the platform, with considerable interest and a great deal of astonishment depicted in his face. The youth in Etons did not seem to think of alighting from the train. D'Arcy dragged open the door of the carriage, and put an excited face into it.

"Jump out, deah boy!" he exclaimed.

The stranger looked at him. He was a slim youth, with a sallow complexion, and little round eyes. He was not much like what the juniors had expected Cedric Lacy to be like. But there was no time to think about things like that. D'Arcy laid a hand on the arm of the stranger, as he showed no signs of alighting.

"Quick!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"Get out!"

"What for?"

"This is the station!"

"I know it's a station," said the other, in surprise, "but——"

"Be jabers, have him out, and explain afterwards!" yelled Reilly. "The train's going on!"

"Jump out, deah boy!"

"But—but I say——"

"You're the new kid, ain't you?" shouted Reilly.

"Yes, but——"

"Then come out, alanna."

"But—but—but——"

"Stand back there!" shouted the guard.

"Have him out!" roared Reilly.

Reilly and D'Arcy took hold of the boy. He resisted a little, evidently in a state of the greatest astonishment, but the two juniors fairly dragged him out of the carriage. They reeled on the platform, and rolled over together. The guard rushed up and slammed the door, and said things, but the juniors did not heed him. D'Arcy and Reilly had made their capture, and they did not care for anything else in the wide world just then.

Arthur Augustus jumped up, and helped the new boy to his feet. The boy's hat had been knocked off, and Reilly had rolled on it, and hadn't improved it. The Irish junior picked it up, and smoothed out the dented sides as well as he could, and handed it to the young stranger.

"Here's your hat—come on!"

"But—but I say—what——"

"They're after you!" explained Reilly hurriedly.

"Eh! Who are?"

"That gang of young ruffians," said Reilly. "Our fellows are trying to keep them back. They're going to collar you and take you away with them."

"Good Heavens!" gasped the stranger, turning pale. "I—I—you'd better call a policeman."

"Policeman be blowed!" said Reilly. "We're going to take care of you."

"My train's going!" gasped the other. The train was rolling out of the station.

"That's not your train; you get down here for the school, you know."

"No, I don't—I——"

"Yes, you do. Come on, and we'll show you the way."

"Do you belong to my school?"

"Yaas, wathah! We're in the Fourth, deah boy!"

"But I don't understand——"

"Faith, we'll explain afterwards—when you're safe from those murtherin' spalpeens," said Reilly, dragging the new boy to the exit from the platform. "Come on! Sure your life isn't safe here intirely."

"Goodness gracious!"

"Yaas! Huwwy up, deah boy!"

Willy-nilly, the new boy was rushed down the platform. There was a roar from Figgins. Figgins was tightly clutched in the arms of Jack Blake, but he had seen the manœuvre of Arthur Augustus and Reilly.

"They've got him! Stop them!"

"Keep them back!" roared Tom Merry.

And the struggle was wilder than ever.

"You hear them?" said Reilly, in the ear of the new boy. "They're after you—regular ruffians, all of them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"B-b-but my box is in the train——"

"That will be all right."

"B-b-but I say——"

"This way, deah boy! Got your ticket?"

"Yes, but——"

"You give it up here."

"But I——"

Reilly jerked the ticket out of the new boy's hand, and tossed it to the collector. Then the amazed and terrified stranger was whirled out of the station vestibule into the street. By that time he probably did not know whether he was upon his head or his heels. D'Arcy and Reilly took an arm each of their new acquaintance, and rushed him down the street. With his necktie hanging by one end, his hat on the back of his head, the new boy was rushed along as far as the tuck-shop. The captors whirled him into the little shop; out of sight of the enemy if they came out of the station.

Arthur Augustus gasped breathlessly.

"Done them, deah boys!"

"Faith, and we've done them intirely!" grinned Reilly.

"Hurray for us!"

"B-b-but, I say, I don't understand!" gasped the breathless stranger.

"It's all wight, deah boy—we're lookin' aftah you! Do you like jam-tarts?"

"Eh?"

"There are wippin' jam-tarts heah," said D'Arcy. "Pway twot out the jam-tarts, Mrs. Murphy! And the gingah-pop! And the doughnuts! And——"

The new boy looked a little more cheerful.

"Well, I'm blessed if I understand all this," he said. "But I don't mind having a feed. I'm hungry."

"Pile in, deah boy!"

"Are you paying for all this?" asked the new boy, evidently being of a cautious turn of mind.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'm sure you're very kind."

"Not at all, deah boy. You see, we're all highly honahed at havin' you in the school." D'Arcy explained. The swell of St. Jim's tossed a sovereign on the counter. "Pway twot out the best things you've got, Mrs. Murphy."

"Certainly, Master D'Arcy."

The new boy, though evidently still bewildered and a little alarmed, did not neglect the feed. Perhaps he was specially hungry after his journey; at all events, he piled into the jam-tarts and the doughnuts with an appetite that Fatty Wynn himself might have envied. D'Arcy and Reilly were only too glad to see him occupied thus. They had to keep him in the tuck-shop till Tom Merry & Co. arrived, to escort him to St.

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Jim's. And it was better to keep him by peaceable means than by force. They were prepared to sit on him if necessary; but sitting on him was not really a good way of making him anxious to join the ranks of the School House.

D'Arcy ordered the best and most expensive things that Mrs. Murphy could supply, and the new boy negotiated them almost as fast as they were ordered. Reilly peeped cautiously out of the doorway.

"Here they come!" he exclaimed, after a few minutes.

The new boy paused over a jam-tart, looking alarmed.

"Those ruffians you told me of?" he asked.

"Sure, no; our friends—your giddy protectors," explained Reilly. "We're going to guard you all the way to the school, so that the awful spalpeens can't get hold of you."

"I'm sure you're very kind," said the new boy, and he resumed his attack on the tarts.

Tom Merry & Co., with many signs of battle upon their countenances, came crowding into the tuck-shop. They gave a cheer at the sight of the new boy tucking into the tarts.

"Hurray! Hip, hip, hurray!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Terrible Discovery.

TOM MERRY & CO. had triumphed.

The combat in the station had been simply terrific. Figgins & Co. had not been conquered, by any means; but they had been held in check while D'Arcy and Reilly carried off the prize.

That was all the School House fellows wanted. As soon as they were sure that the new boy was safe they ceased the combat, and streamed out of the station, leaving Figgins & Co. in possession of the hard-fought field—and also of a splendid collection of thick ears, swollen noses, and blackened eyes.

The School House fellows had not fared much better; there was hardly one of them who did not have several marks to show. Jack Blake was dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief that was a study in scarlet; Monty Lowther caressed one eye lovingly; Manners was feeling his teeth to make sure that they were still there—they felt as if they weren't. Kangaroo's nose looked nearly twice its usual size: Herries and Digby and Kerruish had smears of red on their faces. It was one of the most Homeric combats in the history of the rival Houses of St Jim's. But the juniors did not care for damage sustained in honourable combat. They had won the prize; the much-coveted new boy was in their hands. And they did not mean to let him escape from their hands until he had definitely settled to become a member of the School House at St. Jim's.

"Hallo, here you are!" said Tom Merry, dabbing his damaged nose. "We've saved you, kid."

"Thank you very much," said the new boy. "Do you belong to my school?"

"Yes, rather."

"We all do," said Digby. "That's why we chipped in to save you from those ruffians."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You see, we heard you were coming," said Blake, borrowing Digby's handkerchief to apply to his nose, his own being quite done. "Of course, we were all jolly excited when we heard that a chap like you was coming."

"Were you, really?"

"Certainly. We don't get a new boy like you every day."

"Wathah not!"

The new boy looked surprised.

"I'm very much obliged to you," he said. "I didn't know you knew anything about me at the school."

The juniors grinned.

"My dear chap, there isn't a fellow who hasn't heard of you."

"Not likely."

"Keep an eye on the street," said Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. will be after us. We shall have another row before we get in."

"Who are those chaps?" asked the new boy. "Wouldn't it be better to call a policeman? I never heard of anything like this before."

"They belong to the school," explained Tom Merry. "Awful lot of spoofers. When they heard you were coming they made up their minds to get you into their House."

"Did they?"

"And, of course, we weren't going to stand that," said Blake. "A fellow like you must come into our House."

"I—I see," said the new boy, though evidently he did not see.

"We're the cock-house," Tom Merry explained. "The best House—everything is a bit more classy in the School House than in the New House."

"Is it, really?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You'll find it so," said Blake. "The place those chaps live in is a regular casual ward, and their Housemaster is a—a—a regular convict."

"Awful fellow!" said Digby solemnly. "Man named Ratcliff—we call him Ratty! He's a fearful beast—canes you as soon as looks at you."

"Specially heavy on new kids," said Kangaroo.

"Yes, new kids regard him with horror," said Kerruish. "Kind of nightmare, you know. I don't know whether it's true about a new boy having been found dead in his study, but I shouldn't wonder."

"Goodness gracious!"

"You see, you're bound to come into the School House," said Tom Merry. "We shall put you in the junior cricket eleven, too."

"Will you really?"

"Certainly. You'll play for your House the first time."

"I think I should like that."

"So shall we," grinned Blake. "You're going to pile up runs for us, and take wickets by the bushel."

"I—I don't know if I could do that. I'm not really a very good cricketer," said the new boy.

The juniors laughed. This assumption of modesty on the part of the wonderful Australian tickled them very much.

"Here come the bounders!" said Bernard Glyn, looking out of the doorway.

"'Ware New House cads!" said Tom Merry. "I don't think they'll try to rush us here. When we get out there will be a scrap."

"They jolly well won't get him away from us."

"No fear!"

"Ready to start, kid?" asked Tom Merry. "Keep in the middle of us, you know, and we'll keep those ruffians off. They sha'n't get near you."

"You're very kind," faltered the new boy. "I did not know that there were such dreadful boys at Abbotsford."

The juniors stared at him.

"At where?" said Tom Merry, with a gasp.

"At Abbotsford," said the new boy. "I did not know there were two Houses, either. I don't know much about the school."

"Abbotsford!" said Blake faintly. "What do you mean by jawing about Abbotsford? You're not going to Abbotsford."

"Yes, I am," said the new boy, in surprise.

"Abbotsford! My hat!"

"You're coming to St. Jim's!" said Tom Merry.

"St. Jim's! What's that?"

"What's that?" roared Tom Merry. "It's our school!"

"Is it really? There's some mistake," said the new boy, in a tone of perplexity. "I thought that wasn't my station, really, only these two fellows insisted upon my getting out of the train. In fact, they dragged me out. I'm going to Abbotsford."

The St. Jim's juniors looked at one another dumbly. It was evident that there had been a mistake—a ghastly mistake.

"Ye omadhaun!" roared Reilly at last. "Sure we asked ye if ye were the new boy?"

"So I am!"

"A new boy for Abbotsford School?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"Oh, my sainted aunt! My only summer hat!" said Blake. "What's your name, you image? What do you call yourself when you're at home? Isn't your name Lacy?"

"Lacy? No. My name's George Sanders!"

"George Sanders!" yelled Blake, exasperated. "You—you putty-coloured worm, if your name's George Fathead Sanders, what do you mean by palming yourself off on us as Cedric Lacy?"

"But—but I didn't!" gasped the new boy. "You didn't ask me my name. You dragged me out of the train, and——"

"It's Gussy, of course!" groaned Tom Merry. "Might have known what would happen if we let Gussy have a hand in it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"And that blithering wild Irishman!" howled Blake.

"Sure, and I——"

"Oh, scat! We've got the wrong man!"

CHAPTER 6.

Sold!

THE St. Jim's juniors looked daggers at the surprised and inoffensive George Sanders. The new boy for Abbotsford School blinked at them. It was really not his fault; the abductors had not given him a chance to explain. He had not had, of course, the remotest idea that the St. Jim's fellows had mistaken him for somebody else. If he had not been dragged forcibly out of his carriage, he would have gone quietly on in the train to Abbotsford. The truth was clear, Cedric Lacy had not arrived yet—he was to arrive on the morrow, evidently. After all their trouble and their alarums and excursions, Tom Merry & Co. had succeeded in capturing a boy who did not belong to St. Jim's at all, and had never even heard of the place.

"The silly ass!" said Blake, in measured tones. "But we

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were asses, too, to think that that putty-faced bounder was Cedric Lacy!"

"He doesn't look the part, certainly," grinned Kangaroo.

"Wathah not!"

"Bump him into that box of eggs!" said Herries; "that's the only thing we can do now."

George Sanders looked alarmed.

"I—I say, it wasn't my fault you made a mistake, you know," he expostulated. "I didn't ask to be dragged out of the train. If you bump me I shall call a policeman."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't touch the silly ass!" said Tom Merry, bursting into a laugh. "He can't help being George Sanders. I dare say he'd be Cedric Lacy if he could."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody ought to be jolly well ragged!" growled Herries.

"Gussy's the man," said Kerruish. "Gussy's got the wrong pig by the ear."

"Weally, Kewwuish——"

There was a shout from the street. The face of Figgins appeared for a moment in the doorway, and disappeared as a biscuit whizzed towards it. Outside the tuck-shop the New House juniors had gathered in force.

"Here they are!" shouted Figgins. "They've got him in there!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"They can have him now," he said. "They can have all the George Sanders that ever Sandered for all I care!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Don't let on, though," murmured Blake. "The laugh will be up against us! Let them capture him if they like—they're welcome."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The good-humour of the juniors was somewhat restored at the idea of Figgins & Co. falling into the same blunder. Figgins of the Fourth looked into the doorway again.

"Truce!" he exclaimed.

Digby lowered the egg he had picked up.

"I want to jaw to you fellows," said Figgins darkly. "You've swindled us. We came down to the station to meet that chap, and you carried him off under our noses. We're not going to stand that, I can tell you. You've got to hand him over."

"Poof!"

"We'll give you a chance!" roared Figgins. "You hand the new kid over to us, or we'll take him by force."

"Weally, Figgins——"

"We're all here," said Figgins. "If you don't hand him over, we'll jolly well storm the place, and you can pay for the damage. We're going to have him, anyway."

"Dead or alive!" said Redfern, over Figgins's shoulder.

Tom Merry winked at his comrades. It was evident that the New House juniors had no suspicion of the truth, and did not dream for a moment that a mistake had been made. The fact that George Sanders had been carried off forcibly by Tom Merry & Co. was a sufficient proof that he was Cedric Lacy!

"Let's talk this over," said Tom Merry. "Of course, it's like the cheek of you New House chaps to bother us like this."

"Rats!"

"But being good boys, we don't want any more naughty fighting," said Tom Merry. "We're willing to make it pax."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You can make it pax, if you like," said Figgins, "but only on condition that you hand over that chap to us. He's coming into our House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at," said Figgins crossly. "That's how the matter stands. If you like to hand him over, we'll let you pass peacefully, and you can go to St. Jim's, or go to the dickens, as soon as you like. But we're going to have that kid!"

"Yes, rather!" came in a chorus from the New House fellows outside the shop.

Tom Merry appeared to reflect.

"Let's have it plain," he said. "If we leave the kid here for you, you'll all stand back and let us pass."

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you what: We'll let you ransom him!"

"H'm!" said Figgins.

"We'll sell him to you," said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Goodness gracious!" said George Sanders.

"You shut up!" murmured Blake in his ear. "If you say anything, we heave you into that box of eggs—see?"

George Sanders evidently saw. He nodded, and shuddered, and was silent. He felt very glad inwardly that he was going to Abbotsford, and not to St. Jim's. Not for worlds would he have gone to the school where these dreadful boys came from.

"We'll sell him at a reasonable price," said Tom Merry. "You want him, and you're such awful fellows in a scrap that we can't possibly get him away from you."

"That's true enough, though you don't mean it," said Redfern suspiciously. "What's the little game, Tom Merry?"

"I mean what I say," said Tom Merry blandly. "We can't be expected to take all this trouble for nothing. We've got the kid, and if you want him, you can ransom him for a hundred tarts."

"Twopenny ones," said Blake.

"Yes, twopenny ones, of course," said Tom Merry. "Otherwise, you can come and take him. We're in a strong position here, and we've got plenty of ammunition. Eggs at a shilling for two dozen, warranted to scent the whole neighbourhood——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it a go?" asked Tom Merry.

Figgins reflected. Although the New House fellows were very confident in their own powers as "scrappers," they knew that the result of a struggle for the prize would be doubtful. The odds were slightly on the side of Tom Merry. He had two or three more fellows with him than Figgins had. Certainly Tom Merry's offer was a good one; in fact, it was so good that Figgins couldn't help being suspicious.

"Look here!" he exclaimed, "what's the little game? Do you mean bizney?"

"Certainly."

"You'll clear out and leave the new kid here for us?"

"Yes."

"And won't pile on us till we've got him safe in the New House at St. Jim's?" asked Kerr, the cautious Scot.

"Agreed."

"Honour bright?" asked Redfern.

"Honour bright!" said Tom Merry solemnly.

"Well, that's all right," said Figgins, after a pause. "Of course, you wouldn't have any chance against us, but he's cheap at a hundred tarts."

"Dirt cheap!" said Tom Merry. "Now, it's a truce. All you chaps stay on the other side of the street till we're gone, and we leave the kid here. Is that fair?"

"Right as rain!"

"Figgy can come in here alone and buy the tarts, and hand them over to us," said Tom Merry. "That's agreed?"

"Done!" said Figgins.

"Honour bright, you know?" said Kerr, suspiciously.

"Honour bright!" said all the School House fellows together.

"Then it's a go!"

Figgins came into the tuck-shop. He had made a hurried collection from his followers. He laid down the money for the tarts, and Mrs. Murphy wrapped them in paper bags, and they were taken by the School House juniors. Tom Merry & Co. were very solemn about it. Then Figgins & Co. retired across the street, to leave a clear line of retreat for the enemy. Tom Merry led his followers forth from the tuck-shop, leaving George Sanders there.

Figgins & Co. watched them across the street, with suspicious eyes. They did not know what to make of the School House surrender. They had expected a most terrific struggle for the possession of the new boy—a struggle of which the result would have been very doubtful. If it was dread of their prowess that had brought about the surrender, that was all right—but Figgins hardly thought it was that. It must be that Tom Merry & Co. despaired of keeping possession of the new boy, now that the New House were fairly on the warpath! But even that explanation did not quite satisfy Figgins & Co. They simply could not make it out. But the School House party were keeping the agreement. Figgins & Co. watched them closely as they came out of the tuck-shop and walked away towards St. Jim's. The new boy did not go with them.

"It's all serene," said Figgins, at last, when the last of the School House party had gone down the street. "They've left him there for us!"

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Redfern. "It's not like Tom Merry and Blake to give in like this!"

"I suppose they realised that they hadn't a chance!" suggested Thompson of the Shell.

"Ahem! Perhaps!"

"Well, we've got Lacy, anyway!" said Figgins.

"Yes, we've got him right enough."

The New House Co. crossed the street again, and crowded into the tuck-shop. George Sanders had finished the tarts, and was debating in his mind whether it would be safe to run for it. He eyed the New House fellows dubiously, remembering the dreadful description D'Arcy and Reilly had given of them. Figgins came up to him in the friendliest manner in the world, however.

"Jolly glad to see you," he said. "You'll be glad that we've got you away from those spoofers, when you know them better, kid."

"Ye-ee-s," said George Sanders.

"Now you're coming with us to St. Jim's," said Figgins, linking his arm affectionately in the new boy's.

"B-b-but I—I say, you know, I don't belong to St. Jim's," faltered the other. "My name's George Sanders, and I'm going to Abbotsford!"

A bombshell dropping into the tuck-shop could not have astonished the New House juniors more. They simply jumped.

"George Sanders!"

"Abbotsford!"

"Then you're not Cedric Lacy?"

"My hat!"

"Did that bounder Merry know?" roared Figgins.

"Yes, please! I—I'm sorry—they wouldn't let me tell you," faltered George Sanders.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Spoofed!" groaned Redfern. "Spoofed and done! Oh, dear!"

"They got the wrong man, and now they're planted the beast on us," grunted Kerr. "A hundred tarts! No wonder they were willing to sell him! We're sold, too!"

"Oh, scissors!"

"The awful spoofers!"

"They've swindled us!"

"Let's get after them!" yelled Owen. "We can catch them up—and jam the tarts down the backs of their necks!"

But Figgins shook his head.

"We've made it pax!" he said, "we've been done—but we've made it pax!"

"The—the rotters!"

"Never mind," said Figgins, as philosophically as he could, "They've done us—but they were done first—and they haven't got Lacy, after all! And we'll take jolly good care that they don't get him to-morrow. As for you, you image!" said the indignant Figgins, shaking a big fist under George Sanders' nose, so close that George Sanders jumped, "I've a jolly good mind to squash you!"

"Oh, dear!"

"You—you mouse-coloured freak!" said Figgins. "You—you pass yourself off for a cricketer! You—you impostor! You spoofer! You apology for a worm! Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"But I—I say——"

"Yah! Don't say anything! Go and eat coke! Go to Abbotsford! Go to the dickens! Go to Tophet!"

And Figgins marched out of the tuck-shop, with his indignant followers at his heels. George Sanders gasped.

"Oh, dear! I'm so glad that I'm not going to St. Jim's. What dreadful boys! Oh, dear!"

CHAPTER 7.

The Plot!

"ANYBODY got any money!"

Tom Merry propounded that query, in the junior common room in the School House.

The juniors had had tea—garnished with the tarts Figgins & Co. had handed over in exchange for the worthless person of George Sanders of Abbotsford.

During tea, and after tea, the juniors had discussed one subject, and one subject alone; the coming of Cedric Lacy on the morrow, and the plans that could be laid for capturing him for the School House. Tom Merry had been thinking deeply, and he came out of a brown study to ask that pertinent question.

"Money!" said Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Money!" he replied.

"I've got ninepence," said Blake. "It's quite at your service."

The captain of the Shell sniffed.

"Blow your ninepence! I want pounds—and pounds—and pounds."

"My hat!" said Lowther.

"Anybody got any pounds?" asked Tom Merry, looking round encouragingly.

"That depends," said Lowther, thoughtfully.

"Eh! How does it depend, fathead? I suppose you know whether you've got any pounds or not, don't you?" demanded Tom Merry.

"It depends on what kind of pounds you mean," said Lowther, imperturbably. "If you mean pounds of butter, for instance, we can get as many as you like. We can get Lumley-Lumley to send word to his pal Grimes——"

"Oh, don't be funny," implored Tom Merry. "Keep that for the agony column in the Weekly—excuse me, I mean the comic column. Look here, I've been thinking——"

"So have I, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I think it is vewy pwob that there will be a complaint about the way we handled that chap Sandahs. You see, he must have been awf'ly late at Abbotsford, and his box went on in the twain. And he was wathah wuffly handled. I wemembah his jacket was split up the back, and his collah torn off. We hadn't time to think about his clothes. And he looked wathah a weak-kneed sort of blightah, you know. I shouldn't wonder if there's twouble about it."

"Never mind Sanders——"

"I don't, deah boy; but Dr. Gwiggs of Abbotsford is wathah a Tartah——"

"Blow Dr. Griggs of Abbotsford. If there's trouble over Sanders, we can face the music."

"Yes, rather," said Blake. "Blow Sanders."

"I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean, Gussy. Let's get to business."

"I mean——"

"Ring off!" roared a dozen voices.

"I wefuse to wing off. I mean that if there is any complaint, we may be detained to-mowwow aftahnoon, and that will leave the coast cleah for Figgins & Co. to collah Lacy!"

Tom Merry started.

"By James and James's aunt!" he exclaimed, "I didn't think of that! It's quite possible; old Griggs of Abbotsford is a regular coughdrop. You remember he complained to the Head once about being snowballed—a most unreasonable man. I only gave him one in the neck, and it was really an accident——"

"An accident?" grinned Lowther.

"Yes; I meant it for his ear!" explained Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He'll tan young Sanders for being late, and for being torn up," said Tom Merry, thoughtfully. "Of course, it's up to young Sanders to keep mum, and take his gruel—but he didn't look that sort. He'll explain that he was yanked out of the train by a pair of young ruffians, and——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"And all the fat will be in the fire. If we should be detained to-morrow afternoon, it's all up!"

"Bai Jove! It would be wotten!"

"And we couldn't explain to the Head that we specially wanted that half-holiday because we've got a row on with Figgins & Co.," Blake remarked, thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha! No, hardly."

"I've got an idea," said Blake, "If Griggy comes over to complain, Gussy shall go and confess."

"What!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"It's a ripping idea," said Blake, quite excited over it. "Gussy can go to the Head, and confess that he did it with his little hatchet. Then Gussy can be detained—and the rest of us will be all right. Of course, Gussy won't be able to take part in the campaign; but he can wish us success——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, we shall have a better chance if Gussy doesn't help us," Monty Lowther remarked, in a reflective sort of way.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, indignantly. "The mattah would go w'ong entirely if I am not there."

"It's up to you, Gussy," said Tom Merry with a shake of the head. "That will see us clear for to-morrow. Now that's settled——"

"But it isn't settled, Tom Mewwy."

"Your mistake; it is. Now about the matter in hand," said Tom Merry. "Do be quiet, Gussy, when your uncle's talking. Anybody got any quids?"

"If you mean soveweigns——"

"Sovereigns will do," grinned Tom Merry.

"I'm sowwy I haven't any——"

"Well, you ass——"

"But I have a fivah, which we can change," added Arthur Augustus.

"Now you're talking," said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, this isn't a time to be close with money. I vote that we spend D'Arcy's fiver without thinking of economy."

"Hear, hear!"

"But what's the game?" asked Blake. "You're not thinking of a feed, I suppose."

"Feed!" said Tom Merry, disdainfully. "Of course not. What rot!"

"What is it, then?"

"Lacy is coming to-morrow, and we've got to capture him. We know the train he's coming by. Figgins & Co. will be at the station, same as they were to-day; and there'll be a big crowd of them—and a battle royal if we turn up for Lacy."

"We jolly well shall!" said Manners.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, we sha'n't," he said.

"What!" roared Blake. "You're not thinking of giving in to those New House bounders! Why, you silly chump——"

"You see——"

"I see that you're a frabjous ass!" howled Blake. "You stay at home if you like. Leave this thing to the Fourth. You Shell bounders are more trouble than you're worth, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Listen to me——"

"I'm not going to listen to any rot about surrendering Lacy to the New House."

"But I'm not suggesting surrendering Lacy to the New House!" roared Tom Merry. "Don't jaw so much; use your ears instead of your chin for a bit. Every chap who comes to this station has to change at Wayland Junction for the local train. It's the local brings 'em to Rylcombe from Wayland. Now, my idea is to take the wind out of Figgy's sails by going to Wayland instead of Rylcombe, and catching the bounder on the bound, as it were."

"Oh, good!"

"I remember we did that once——" began Blake.

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Tom Merry waved his hand.

"This isn't a time for giddy reminiscences of your early youth," he said. "We meet Lacy at Wayland, and bring him to St. Jim's, not by rail."

"But Figgy will have his scouts out," said Blake. "They'll spot the wheeze before we get him to St. Jim's, and waylay us on the road."

"That's why we're going to have the motor-car."

"The—the what?"

"The motor-car," said Tom Merry serenely.

"Oh, my aunt!"

"That's what we want the quids for——"

"The soveweigns, deah boy——"

"Shurrup! If we can raise the tin, we can hire a car in Wayland. Gussy can drive a car. He's driven us in a car at his ancestral halls; I don't know whether it did the car much good——"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm a wathah wippin' dwivah, you know," said D'Arcy. "I'll dwive the cah, with pleasure."

"Better drive it with petrol," said Lowther. "You see——"

"Shurrup!"

"But that can't be done," said Blake. "Gussy's got to confess to the Head about Sanders, and be detained, to get us off——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Oh, that's all right! Reilly was in it, too, and he can confess to the Head instead of Gussy," said Tom Merry calmly. "He can confess to dragging Sanders out of the train, and the rest of it, and exonerate Gussy."

"Faith, ye cheeky spalpeen!"

"For the good of the cause, Reilly," said Tom Merry. "It's up to you, as an Ulsterman, to shove in and take the knocks."

"But sure I——"

"That's settled. Now——"

"Faith, but it isn't settled. I——"

"Now about the car. It will only cost a few quid to hire it, and Gussy's fiver will come in very useful. Gussy is a jolly useful chap in a lot of ways," said Tom Merry, with some enthusiasm. "Even when there's nothing doing, he saves us from going to the expense of a comic paper when we want something to smile at——"

"You uttah ass!"

"But we'll all contribute our little bit," said Tom Merry generously. "Never shall it be said that we failed to put up a shilling where Gussy puts up a pound."

"Hear, hear!"

"I am vewy willin' to stand the fivah, deah boys, for the good of the cause," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"We'll all get over to Wayland, but we'll go in twos and threes, so as not to be spotted by those New House bounders," said Tom Merry. "Figgy won't suspect anything; but that chap Kerr is awfully deep. I'm afraid of those blessed Scotchmen when I'm trying to do one. We'll arrange about the car to-night, and have it all ready for to-morrow afternoon. We capture Lacy at the station, explain to him that we're going to take him to St. Jim's in state, because—because—— Think of a reason, somebody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Because he's an Australian," suggested Digby. "Hands across the sea, and that kind of thing, you know, draw tighter the bonds between the colonies and the Mother country."

"Good egg! That's a jolly good reason. We're taking all this trouble about him because he's a giddy Colonial," agreed Tom Merry. "Only, mind, we've got to get the real Cornstalk this time, and not a spurious imitation."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "Now, make a collection for the cause. Hand me all the money you've got, and I'll buzz off on my bike for Wayland, and make the arrangements."

"Good!"

And Tom Merry, ten minutes later, was riding off to Wayland on his bicycle, in great spirits at the prospect of a victory over the New House. And at the same time Redfern, of the Fourth, looked into Figgins's study in the New House, and announced:

"There's something on."

"You've been scouting?" asked Redfern.

"What do you think?" said Redfern. "Tom Merry's gone out on his bike, and he's taken the road to Wayland. I don't suppose it's got anything to do with the Lacy affair, but you can't be too careful in dealing with those School House rotters."

"What-ho!" said Figgins. The chief of the New House juniors rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "Lacy will change trains at Wayland, of course, but he's not coming to-night, so I don't see what Tom Merry can want over there. But——"

"But it may be a dodge," said Kerr sagely.

"It may or it may not," said Figgins. "If it isn't, it doesn't matter; if it is, we've got to be on to it. Get out your bike, Reddy, and scorch over to Wayland, and keep an eye on him."

"Just what I was thinking of," said Redfern.

"Then buzz off."

And Redfern buzzed off.

CHAPTER 8.
Reilly a Hero.

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation.

"What's the trouble now, Gussy?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a gesture towards an imposing figure that was advancing across the quadrangle. It was that of a gentleman of middle age, of very stout build, with fierce-looking little eyes behind his spectacles, and a decided frown upon his face.

Jack Blake whistled.

"Griggs, by Jove!"

Dr. Griggs, the Head of Abbotsford School, strode into the house, disdaining to glance at the juniors.

Toby, the page, showed him to the Head's study, and the door closed upon him. The word ran through the house at once that Dr. Griggs had arrived.

"He hasn't lost any time," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wathah not!"

"He's with the Head now," said Blake. "What's going to be done?"

"Reilly is," said Manners. "Reilly, old man, now's your chance."

"Faith," said Reilly, "I'd rather face a lion in his den than that ould spalpeen in the Head's study! Look here, let Gussy go and confess, and I'll drive the motor-car to-morrow."

"Weally, Weilly——"

"It's up to you," said Blake. "Buzz off! You ought to confess at once before the Head sends for us. If we're all called in, we shall all get gated, and that will ruin everything."

"England expects every man to do his duty, you know," said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "The same applies to Ireland. Belfast expects every Irishman to do his duty. Go in and win."

Reilly groaned.

"Sure, if it's up to me, I'll go in," he said. "But I'm willing to leave it to any other chap that offers."

No one seemed eager to offer.

"You see, we'd all go in like a shot, and own up and take the medicine, only we're wanted on the warpath to-morrow," explained Blake. "If you're careful, you can get all the gruel yourself, and leave us out."

"Yaas, wathah! Mind you're vewy careful, Weilly, old man."

"You'll be like Horatius defending the bridge, you know," said Manners. "You'll be a giddy hero. After all, what is a licking?"

"Worse for me than for you, if I'm going to get it," said Reilly.

"You'll save the situation if you save us all from being gated," urged Kangaroo.

"Sure, I'm going."

And Reilly went.

He tapped at the door of the Head's study, and entered.

Dr. Griggs' deep, booming voice was audible in the passage.

"Most disgraceful conduct, Dr. Holmes! A new boy coming to my school, dragged by main force out of a railway train, his clothes ruined, his hat battered, left to find his way to Abbotsford! Most shocking!"

"Dear me!" said Dr. Holmes. "Are you quite sure that this was done by my boys, Dr. Griggs?"

"Quite sure. They told Sanders their names, and where they came from——"

"Plaze, sir——" said Reilly.

"Reilly, what do you want? Cannot you see that I am occupied?" said the Head severely.

"Yes, sorr," said Reilly. "But I've got something to confess, sir."

"You may return later."

"It's about Sanders, sir."

"Oh, indeed!" said the Head. "Perhaps you were one of the boys engaged in this—this—hem—disgraceful affair."

"I was the chap, sir."

"Aha!" exclaimed Dr Griggs. "I remember one of the boys, according to Sanders, spoke with an Irish accent."

"That's a mistake of his, sorr," said Reilly. "Sure, I don't remember any chap with an accent there, meself. I was the only Irish chap in the party, sorr, and sure——"

Dr. Holmes smiled.

"There were others, too," said Dr. Griggs. "I have come over to demand the punishment of all concerned in the outrage, Dr. Holmes. I demand justice on the offenders."

"Justice shall be done," said the Head, a little tartly. "So you were one of the party, Reilly?"

"I was the party, sorr."

"But there were others?"

"The others hadn't anything much to do with it, sorr,"

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The leader of the Remove descended swiftly, and had almost reached the ground when he heard a chuckle below. He stopped his descent——and as he did so, three pairs of hands reached up and grasped his legs. "My dear Wharton, pray do not resist!" came the gentle tones of Alonzo Todd. "Peter told us to wait here and seize you!"
(An amusing incident from the splendid long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled "THE IMPOSSIBLE FOUR," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

said Reilly. "I yanked Sanders out of the thrain, sorr. The others just walked along, that's all, sorr. It wouldn't be fair to punish them for what I did, would it, sorr?"

"Certainly not," said the Head. "Am I to understand that you take all the blame upon yourself, Reilly?"

"Intirely, sorr," said Reilly. "But we didn't mean any harm, sorr. We thought that it was Lacy, the new boy for St. Jim's, and we were going to bring him here, sorr. The silly spalpeen—I—I mean Sanders—didn't tell us his name till afterwards, sorr."

"You thought he was Lacy!" said the Head. "Indeed!"

"Yis, sorr."

"And is it a custom of yours to drag new boys by main force out of a train?" demanded Dr. Griggs, with grim sarcasm.

"Yis, sorr."

"What?"

"We didn't know he was an Abbotsford boy, sir, or we wouldn't have touched him with a telegraph pole, sorr."

"Boy, you are impertinent!" thundered Dr. Griggs.

"I'm sorry, sorr. But we took him for a chap for this school, sorr. It was a mistake. I'm sure I'm sorry I handled the spalpeen at all, sorr. But I did it."

"Two boys dragged Sanders out of the train," said Dr. Griggs. "There were a crowd of others fighting on the platform."

"That does not concern the matter," said Dr. Holmes sharply. "Your visit here, I understand, concerns only what happened to this boy Sanders?"

"Quite so. But I think——"

"Two boys, you say, interfered with Master Sanders," the Head went on. "Very well, those two boys shall be punished. Who was the other, Reilly?"

"If you plaze, sorr, I was the leader. The other one only helped. I'd have punched his head if he hadn't, sorr," added Reilly.

"Ha!" ejaculated Dr. Griggs. "This is blacker than I thought. This young ruffian not only acts in an outrageous

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"UNDER A CLOUD!"** A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

manner, but compels another by threats of violence to aid him in his lawless proceedings. Ha!"

"Yis, sorr!" said Reilly.

"It appears, then, that you are solely to blame, Reilly," said the Head.

"I hope you won't punish anybody else, sorr," said Reilly. "But it was a mistake, sorr. We took him for Lacy——"

"I do not believe any such nonsense," said Dr. Griggs angrily.

"Pardon me," said the Head, "I trust entirely to Reilly's assurance. A new boy was expected here, and the mistake was natural, though certainly that does not excuse the fact that the boy was roughly handled. If Reilly declares that he is ready to take the punishment for what happened, I have no resource but to conclude that he is the right person to take it. Reilly, I shall cane you, and you will stay in for the next three half-holidays."

"Yis, sorr!"

"And I may add that it is very frank and manly of you to come forward like this and take the blame which might have fallen upon others."

"Yis, sorr!"

Dr. Holmes picked up his cane.

"Very well," said Dr. Griggs, "I suppose I must be satisfied with that. If the boy were in my school I should flog him."

"Then it is fortunate for him that he is not in your school," said the Head drily. "I consider a caning and a gating quite sufficient punishment for a boyish prank, especially as a mistake was made. Hold out your hand, Reilly."

"Yis, sorr!"

Reilly received four cuts, and they were hard ones. He left the Head's study with his hands tucked under his arms. Dr. Griggs, only half-satisfied, took a very abrupt leave of the Head of St. Jim's. He had had a pleasant anticipation of seeing eight or nine fellows caned, and he was disappointed. Reilly rejoined the chums of the School House, with his hands tucked tightly under his arms, and a very wry expression upon his face.

"Caught it?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Ow! Yis! Ow!"

"How many?"

"Ow! Four! Ow! And gated three half-holidays! Ow!"

"Might all have been gated," said Blake, "and then Figgins & Co. would have captured the Cornstalk as easy as rolling off a form. Reilly, you're a giddy jewel; you're a prize hero; you're a prize-packet!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Erin go Bragh!" said Monty Lowther enthusiastically. "I don't know what it means, but Erin go Bragh!"

Reilly grinned.

"Come along to the tuck-shop," said Blake. "Come and be feasted like a giddy hero!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Reilly, in the admiration of the juniors, and the boys of the tuck-shop, forgot the caning and the gating. There was no doubt that Reilly had saved the situation. If all the fellows who had taken part in the expedition had been gated, the result would have been too awful to contemplate. So the juniors made much of Reilly, as indeed he deserved.

CHAPTER 9.
The Counter-Plot.

"HA, ha, ha!"

Redfern staggered into Figgins's study, yelling. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were having tea, but they left off tea at the sight of Redfern. It was evident that he had news. Even Fatty Wynn paused in his operations upon a gigantic cake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern sat down in the armchair and yelled.

"News?" asked Figgins eagerly.

"Yes. Ha, ha, ha!"

Lawrence and Owen followed Redfern into the study. They were grinning joyously. Apparently Reddy had imparted the news to them before coming in to report to his leader.

"Leave off cackling!" said Kerr. "What's the news?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern roared again and wiped his eyes.

"We've got 'em!" he said.

"Got whom?"

"The School House bounders!" Redfern went off into another explosion. "Oh, if they only knew! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come to the point, you chuckling image!" roared Figgins.

"Right ho! I biked over to Wayland after Tom Merry, and saw him stop at the Hotel Royal garage."

"The Hotel Royal!" said Figgins. "What on earth did he want there?"

"They hire out motor-cars there," said Kerr. "Surely he wasn't hiring a motor-car?"

"You listen to me," said Redfern. "Listen to your uncle, my infants, and I will a tale unfold. As soon as I spotted him going in there, I sloped, and he didn't spot me. I kept out of sight in a bun-shop to watch for him, and about a quarter of an hour later he came out and pedalled away."

"I saw him come in," said Lawrence.

"And then," said Redfern, with a fresh explosion—"then, my children, I hopped into the garage myself. I didn't say I was a scout on war duty, I asked if my chum Merry had left. He had."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I said how sorry I was to miss him—I should be sorry to miss him, you know, if it was a case of snowballing or chucking cushions——"

"Get on!" said Figgins, grinning.

"Well, I talked to the motor-man. He hadn't a single suspish, of course. I got it all from him. Tom Merry has engaged a car—a four-seater—for to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock."

"Engaged a car! My hat!"

"For three o'clock," grinned Redfern. "And if you know anything about the time-tables, you know that a chap coming to Rylcombe by the three-thirty train changes at Wayland Junction at three-fifteen."

"Oh, oh!" said Figgins. "I smell a rat! A motor-car, by Jove! They're going to catch the Cornstalk as he changes trains, and bring him to St. Jim's in a motor-car! Of all the cheek——"

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Kerr. "It must have cost them a lot of money."

"It would be worth it to capture the giddy Cornstalk," said Redfern. "Well, after I had jawed to the motor-man, I mentioned that my chum Merry—ha, ha, ha!—had made a mistake in the time. But, to make sure, I said I'd speak to Merry when I got back to the school, and then wire him if it was all right; otherwise, the correct time."

"Oh!"

"As soon as I got in I spoke to Tom Merry——"

"What!" roared Figgins. "You've told him we know! You ass! You frabjous ass!"

"Oh, you awful duffer!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Easy does it!" said Redfern calmly. "I told the man I'd speak to Tom Merry before I sent the wire, and I was bound to keep my word, wasn't I? But I didn't speak to him about any old motor-cars! I simply said to him, 'Where did you get that face?'"

Figgins & Co. chuckled.

"Oh," said Figgins, "I see!"

"Time you did," said Redfern politely. "Having spoken to Tom Merry——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I trotted down to the post-office and sent the wire to the Wayland garage. I wired: 'Car required at two-thirty—no mistake.—REDFERN.'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, I'd got it all schemed out in my head," said Redfern, with a chuckle. "We get to the garage at two-thirty and get the car. When Tom Merry & Co. get there they find the cupboard is bare, like Mother Hubbard——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will take some time to get another car ready; they don't keep a heap of them at a little place like that, you know. And while they're tearing their hair, we're off with the car. Now, we can't pick Lacy up at the junction, because the School House chaps will be there in a crowd, and we shouldn't get him away. There's a better wheeze than that. Suppose you pack the station with our chaps with orders to keep all School House rotters out by force. Then when Lacy comes, he changes trains as usual, they won't be able to get at him. He hops into the Rylcombe local without a suspish, and comes on to Rylcombe while the School House chaps are scrapping at Wayland. We're at Rylcombe Station with Tom Merry's motor-car to meet him. We take Lacy into the car and bring him to St. Jim's in giddy triumph."

Figgins jumped up.

He hugged Redfern to his manly breast.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "What a wheeze! What a sell! What a scorcher! Reddy, my son, you're worth your weight in jam tarts!"

"Ripping!" said Kerr. "I only want to see their faces when they get back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll all be at Wayland," grinned Redfern. "We shall have Rylcombe Station all to ourselves."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. roared. So did the rest of the New House juniors when they heard of Redfern's stratagem. It did not seem as if it could fail, so long as the secret was carefully kept. And the idea of capturing the School House motor-car and carrying off the coveted prize in it tickled the New House fellows very much.

Figgins breathed threats of fire and slaughter if a word were whispered about it on the wrong side of the quadrangle. But there was no danger of that. The New House fellows were

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all as keen as Figgins himself for that gigantic score over the School House.

The secret was well kept.

Over in the School House, Tom Merry & Co. had not the remotest suspicion of the counter-plot brewing in the New House. Redfern had kept carefully out of sight when he was scouting at Wayland, and Tom Merry did not know that he had been watched at the garage. Had he known that it might have made things run differently. But he did not know, and the New House fellows did not breathe a word. Tom Merry & Co. were very cheerful that evening, in anticipation of the triumph on the morrow.

And the next morning, to make assurance doubly sure, Figgins and Kerr allowed some careless words to drop in the hearing of the School House juniors. They discussed the matter as they went in to morning lessons in the Fourth Form-room.

"Mind you don't get detained this afternoon, Kerr," murmured Figgins, apparently unconscious of the fact that two or three School House juniors were hanging on his words. "The train gets in at three-thirty at Rylcombe."

"Right-ho!" said Kerr. "We'll be in Rylcombe by three to make sure. Mind, though—there's that bounder Blake! He'll hear you!"

And the New House chums went into the Form-room. Jack Blake winked at Herries and Digby.

"They're going down to Rylcombe this afternoon, same as they did yesterday," he murmured. "Oh, what a surprise for Figgins!"

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The sillay asses haven't a single suspish, you know."

"Not the shadow of one," said Blake.

Which was exactly what Figgins & Co. wanted them to think.

CHAPTER 10.

Taken In.

AFTER morning lessons, Figgins & Co. left the Form-room and walked over to the New House with pre-occupied looks. It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and cricket practice was going strong now; but Figgins & Co. were not thinking of cricket. There would be plenty of time for cricket later, when Cedric Lacy was a member of the New House, and playing in the junior House team. The pressing business of the hour was the capture of Cedric Lacy, that remarkable young Cornstalk for whose services as a cricketer both the Houses were competing. After dinner, Figgins marshalled his men, and the New House fellows crowded down to the gates, and took the road to Rylcombe. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were lounging in a casual sort of way at the gates, and they nodded and grinned at the New House fellows.

"Going for another little walk, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes; just down the road," said Figgins airily.

"As far as Rylcombe?"

"Don't ask questions, my son," said Figgins. "If you walk down to Rylcombe, you may get a licking there, the same as you did yesterday."

"When you captured Sanders!" grinned Redfern.

"Don't waste time talking to these School House bounders," said Fatty Wynn. "We can have a snack at Mother Murphy's if we get on. The train isn't in for some time yet, you know. Mrs. Murphy's jam tarts are ripping."

And the New House crowd went down the road. The Terrible Three looked after them with much amusement.

"Figgins & Co. are going to wait at Rylcombe Station!" grinned Tom Merry. "They'll be rather surprised when we don't turn up there—and Lacy doesn't either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three, having seen Figgins & Co. safely off for Rylcombe, returned to the School House to prepare for their own expedition. They would have been surprised if they had seen Figgins & Co. a little further. The New House crowd walked towards Rylcombe, till they were well out of sight of St. Jim's, and then they turned into the footpath through the wood, and headed for Wayland town.

Quite unconscious of the real destination of their rivals, Tom Merry & Co. made their preparations. Tom Merry and D'Arcy and Lowther were to call at the garage for the motor-car, the fourth seat in it was to be left vacant for the Australian when he arrived. The rest of the School House fellows were to cram themselves into Wayland Station, and take possession of the arrival platform from London. When Lacy descended from the train, he was to be collared, by persuasion or force, and brought out of the station and helped into the car. After all, a new fellow was not likely to object to being taken to the school in a motor-car, instead of going by a local train, and then taking an old hack from the village. Lacy was certain to be pleased; but pleased or not, he was coming in the car, and he would not leave the hands of Tom Merry & Co. until he had solemnly undertaken to become a member of the School House.

Figgins & Co. had been long gone when Tom Merry gathered his faithful followers for the expedition to Wayland. The thought of the New House fellows garrisoning Rylcombe Station made the juniors chuckle. Figgins & Co. might wait there long enough before the Australian junior arrived. They would have looked rather blue if they had known that Figgins & Co. were not at Rylcombe at all.

"Now, you know what to do, you chaps," said Tom Merry, as his followers gathered in array in the quadrangle. "While we three get the car round to the station, you're to fill up the arrival platform and get hold of Lacy. Mind, don't dig up any wrong man this time—we want the genuine article."

"That's all right," said Blake. "Gussy won't be with us."

"Weally, Blake——"

"And Reilly will be doing giddy lines in the Form-room," said Kangaroo. "We'll get the right man, never fear."

"You can talk to him as a fellow Cornstalk, Kangy, and point out his duty to him," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather; I'll talk to him like a Dutch uncle."

"Faith, and I wish I were coming wid ye," said Reilly.

Tom Merry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Never mind, my infant; you've helped as much as anybody, by being scapegoat and saving us all from being gated. Now, then, come on!"

So Reilly went into the Form-room, and Tom Merry & Co. departed from the school gates. There was hardly a New House junior to be seen about the school.

"The whole blessed family are down at Rylcombe—waiting for nobody!" grinned Digby. "I should like to see Figgins's face when the three-thirty comes in!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought.

"We're doing them brown," he said. "At the same time, I think we ought to keep an eye on that crowd. Never ought to leave anything to chance in warfare. I think we'd better send a scout on a bike down to Rylcombe, to keep an eye on them."

"That's a good idea."

"Dig can go on his bike," said Tom Merry.

"I'm ready," said Digby. "When the three-thirty comes in without Lacy, Figgy will guess that you've got him at Wayland, and the whole crowd will come over there, most likely. I'll keep an eye on them, and come over top speed and warn you."

"That's right."

Dig returned for his bicycle, and pedalled down to Rylcombe. Tom Merry & Co. walked through the wood to the market town of Wayland. They arrived in the old town, and Tom Merry and Lowther and D'Arcy went on to the garage, while the rest of the crowd proceeded to the station. It was close upon three o'clock now.

The man in charge of the garage touched his cap to Tom Merry, and was apparently a little surprised to see him.

"Nothing wrong with the car, I hope, sir?" he said.

"I jolly well hope not," said Tom Merry, surprised, too. "We've come for it."

The man stared.

"Bai Jove, isn't it weady?" asked D'Arcy.

"You arranged for three o'clock, didn't you, Tom?" asked Lowther anxiously.

"Yes."

"Bai Jove, where is the cah, my deah man?"

The man looked puzzled.

"Isn't it ready?" asked Tom Merry.

"Isn't what ready, sir?"

"The car!"

"The—the car!" stammered the man.

"Yes; the car I ordered for this afternoon!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We've come for it. What's the matter with you? Don't you understand?"

"No, I don't, sir. Ain't you had the car?"

"Had it?"

"Yes, sir. Your friend said he was going to take you in."

"M-m-my friend!"

"Yes; Master Redfern, from St. Jim's," said the man, in astonishment.

Tom Merry staggered.

"My friend Redfern, from St. Jim's!" he murmured faintly.

"Yes, sir."

"Gweat Scott!"

Tom Merry grasped the startled attendant by the shoulder.

"Do you mean to say that you've given my car to Redfern?" he roared.

"Yes, sir. Didn't I do right?"

"Right! Oh, my hat!"

"How on earth did Redfern know?" gasped Lowther.

"Master Redfern came in here yesterday evening, a few minutes after you had left, sir," said the garage attendant. "He explained that there had been a mistake in the time you ordered the car for. I—I thought naturally that he was one of the party going in it, as he belongs to your school, sir. He said he would speak to you and send a wire if the time wasn't right. We had the wire—making it two-thirty to-day for the car. Master Redfern called at two-thirty, and took out the car

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There was another young gentleman with him—Master Figgins, I think his name was."

"Figgins! Oh, crumbs!"

"They asked for a chauffeur, as it had been decided to take one, and I gave them a driver. Master Redfern said they were going to take you in later."

"Take us in!"

"That's what he said, sir."

Tom Merry groaned.

"The awful bounder! The spoofer! Take us in! He's taken us in, and no mistake!"

The man grinned, as the double meaning of Master Redfern's words dawned upon him.

"I'm sorry, sir! Of course, we hadn't a suspicion as he came from your school—and I understood from you that you had a party for the car. Of course, it wouldn't have been handed to him if we had known, and under the circumstances the bill will be sent to Master Redfern, at St. Jim's."

"The bill! Blow the bill! It isn't a question of bills!"

"Wathah not! Weddy would waise cash on his best twousahs, if neeessawy, to do us in the eye like this!" said D'Arcy.

"You can have another car, sir," said the attendant. "We have another one in the garage now, and it won't take a quarter of an hour to——"

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"No time," he said. "The train's in in less than ten minutes now. Look here, you can get the car ready, and if we want it we'll call for it. Come on, you fellows; we've got to find out what Figgins is doing!"

The three juniors hurried out of the garage. Tom Merry was doing some hard thinking.

"I'm blessed if I get on to it," he exclaimed. "Figgins has collared our car, but he hasn't got Lacy. Our chaps will get him at the station all the same, and we can hire another car or a trap to take him to St. Jim's. I don't quite see why Figgins and Redfern have taken the car after all."

"Let's get to Wayland Station," said Lowther. "I fancy that Figgins & Co. never went to Rylcombe after all. We may find them blocking the station here—as we were going to do. And the car outside waiting for Lacy!"

Tom Merry snapped his teeth.

"If the car's there, we'll jolly soon have it away from Figgins. Come on!"

The three juniors broke into a run. That the capture of the motor-car was part of some deep-laid plot on the part of Figgins & Co., they were assured. But they could not quite see yet where Figgins was going to score. If he had adopted Tom Merry's plan whole, to pick up the Australian at Wayland with the car, it would simply mean a battle royal for the possession of the car and the new boy. And there were enough of the School House fellows on the spot to assure victory—at least, they considered so. But Tom Merry felt vaguely that there was something more than that in it, though he could not see yet what it was.

The three juniors came up to Wayland Station at a run. There was no sign of a motor-car outside. The usual station cabs were there, but there was no motor vehicle at all in sight.

"Not here!" said Lowther.

"Look there!" roared Tom Merry.

"What is it—the car?"

"No—Blake—look!"

A form came hurtling through the doorway of the station. It was the form of Jack Blake of the Fourth. He rolled on the pavement. After him came whirling Kangaroo, of the Shell, and then Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. And after them came Vavasour and Kerruish, and Herries and Manners, and more School House fellows, all ejected by force from the station. Tom Merry rushed up desperately, and grasped Blake by the shoulder and dragged him up.

"What's happened?" he roared.

Blake panted.

"We're done! The station's crammed with New House chaps, and they won't let us in!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Where's the car?" gasped Blake.

"Figgy's got it—he was there before us!"

"Oh, my hat—Figgy! The—the villain! That's why the station's full up, then—it's simply swarming with New House rotters—nearly all the blessed New House! But Figgins isn't here—or Kerr, or Reddy!"

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"They're in the motor-car somewhere!"

There was a roar from the station vestibule.

"Yah! Come on!"

"Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"New House! New House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.
The Last Chance.

TOM MERRY felt like kicking himself and everybody else within reach.

He realised now how he had been done.

Figgins & Co., under the pretence of starting very early for Rylcombe, had gone over to Wayland, and taken possession of the station long before the School House juniors arrived.

Figgins, Kerr and Redfern had taken the car, and gone—goodness knew where! That part of the scheme was still unexplained. Fatty Wynn, and Lawrence and Owen, and the rest of the New House crowd, were in Wayland Station—ready for the arrival of the Cornstalk—and they had pitched out the School House fellows who tried to enter. And they were evidently prepared to hold the station vestibule against all comers.

Tom Merry ran towards the entrance.

Inside, in compact array, were the New House army, prepared for battle. Some of them had brought cricket belts and stumps, and stuffed socks, with them, in case weapons were needed. There were no porters to be seen, and Tom Merry strongly suspected that some heavy tipping had been going on, to prevent interference. The man in the ticket-office was grinning out of his little window. The few passengers who came by the afternoon trains were graciously allowed to pass, and they stared at the juniors in great astonishment. But a School House fellow from St. Jim's had no chance of passing.

A yell from the New House ranks greeted the appearance of Tom Merry. Fatty Wynn, who was helping himself from a bag of tarts, left off eating to give Tom Merry a jammy grin.

"Yah!"

"School House cad!"

"This way to the platform!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry shook his fist at the New House juniors.

"Look here, we're coming into this station," he roared.

"Come on, then," said Thompson of the Shell, invitingly.

"Come on, you School House waster!"

"Where's Figgins?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Figgins?" said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "I fancy he's gone off in a motor-car somewhere. I shouldn't wonder."

And the New House juniors roared:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're coming in, you cads!" yelled Jack Blake.

"You've tried it once," said Fatty Wynn. "Try it again! We're keeping goal here, and no outsiders are allowed."

"You—you rotters!"

"Yah! Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"New House! New House! Hooray!"

Tom Merry glanced at the station clock. It indicated three-fifteen. The train was due now which was to bring Cedric Lacy to Wayland Station. In a minute or two he would be changing into the local train for Rylcombe. And the School House Co. could not prevent it. So long as Fatty Wynn and his crowd held the entrance, they could not get in. The New House fellows might have been defeated in a pitched battle, but that would have taken too long; before they were beaten, the local train would have started for Rylcombe, bearing the Australian in it.

The New House were masters of the situation.

They knew it, and they chuckled and chortled with glee. There was a shrill whistle in the distance, from the incoming down train.

"Here comes the train!" gasped Blake.

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

The New House fellows drew closer together, facing the enemy ready for a rush. They expected an attack now. But it would have been useless. The train was stopping in the station; the passenger for Rylcombe must now be crossing the platform to the local train, which was always in the station in readi-

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D'Arcy and Reilly took an arm each of their new acquaintance and led him down the street. Arthur Augustus gasped breathlessly. "Done them, deah boys!" "Faith, and we've done them intirely!" grinned Reilly. "Hurray for us!" *(See Chapter 4.)*

ness. The School House fellows could never have got to him in time, even if they had beaten Fatty Wynn and his army; and that was doubtful, for the New House were in a strong position. The New House juniors chuckled, and cheered; and the School House fellows glared in at them with fury in their looks.

Tom Merry was debating in his mind the chances of a desperate charge, when there came the sharp ring of a bicycle-bell in the street outside.

Ting-ting-ting-buzz!

Tom Merry ran out of the entrance again. He suspected that it might be Digby, with news from Rylcombe; and it was.

Digby, crimson with exertion, and with the perspiration pouring down his face, flung himself breathlessly from his bicycle.

"They—they——" he stuttered.

"What's the news?"

"Figgins——" gasped Digby. "Figgy——"

"Well?" said Tom Merry anxiously.

"Figgins is at Rylcombe," gasped Digby. "When I got there there wasn't a New House rotter in sight—not one——"

"They're all here," said Blake. "Get on!"

"I looked into the station—I couldn't make it out," said Digby, panting. "Then Figgins and Redfern and Kerr came in sight—in a motor-car! They've got a four-seater, and a chauffeur driving—and they came buzzing up to the station. Figgy's got the car from somewhere, and he's waiting there for the Australian—I could see that—only—I guessed the rest of the rotters would be here, so I scorched over——"

"Right!" said Tom Merry.

"Have you got him?" asked Digby.

"Got whom?"

"Lacy, of course! Hasn't he come?"

"I suppose he's come," groaned Tom Merry. "Yes, of course he's come. He's in that train that's just going out of the station—the local for Rylcombe. The place is crammed with New House beasts, and they've kept us out, and we weren't able to see Lacy. He's changed trains—and started for Rylcombe."

"Oh, my hat!" said Digby in dismay. "Then Figgy had it all arranged—that's why he's waiting outside Rylcombe Station in a motor-car!"

"That's why!"

"We're dished!"

"Foiled, diddled, dished, and done!" said Monty Lowther tragically. "This is where we sit down and weep."

"It's wotten! There's only one thing I can suggest," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"What's that?" asked Tom Merry, not very hopefully. He did not think that Arthur Augustus would be able to let in much light on the situation.

"Pewwaps it would be bettah for you to place the mattah in my hands, that's all," said D'Arcy. "In a cwisis like this, what is wequired is a fellow of tact and judgment——"

"You ass!" roared Tom Merry, exasperated. "If you can't talk sense——"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort—I mean——"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy," implored Blake. "There's no time for your comic turn just now."

"I was speakin' sewiously, you ass—it's the only thing I can think of——"

"Then your thinker wants oiling," said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Done!" said Tom Merry. "Blessed if I ever knew Figgy was such a deep beast. He's a regular Machiavelli! He's got our car at Rylcombe; the train gets there in less than a quarter of an hour—we can't get there in the time. He gets the Australian, and—oh, my hat! I feel inclined to jump on somebody."

"Yaas, wathah! It's fwightfully exaspewatin'——"

"There may be a chance yet," said Blake hopefully. "We can't get across to Rylcombe before the train gets in, I suppose?"

"Impossible!"

"But we can get to the road between Rylcombe and St. Jim's. We may have a chance of stopping the car before it gets to the school."

"Stop a motor-car?" said Manners dubiously.

"Shove something across the road, if necessary," said Blake desperately. "My word, yes! We can get out a farmer's waggon or something, and block the road. The car will have to stop then, and we——"

Tom Merry's face lighted up.

"It's a chance," he said. "If Figgy delays a bit at Rylcombe—or the train's a bit late—we can intercept them. And if we can stop the car——"

"There's only three New House rotters in it, and we're a giddy army," said Lowther. "We can eat them, if we like!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll leave some chaps here to keep those bounders penned up in the station," said Tom Merry, with brilliant strategy. "We'll take all the best sprinters with us—nine or ten chaps will do—and leave the rest to keep Fatty Wynn & Co. busy in the station."

"Bravo!"

It was really a brilliant idea. Tom Merry was the leader in all the athletics in the School House at St. Jim's, so far as the juniors were concerned, and he knew the form of every fellow there. He called out nine or ten juniors by name, and rapped out orders to the rest to keep the station blockaded and make a prisoner of any New House juniors who tried to get out. And leaving two score of determined fellows guarding the station entrance, blocking in Fatty Wynn and company, Tom Merry and his chosen band started for the Rylcombe Road. Tom Merry, and Blake and Digby, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and D'Arcy, Herries and Lumley-Lumley, and one or two more, started off, running as if for a wager. They turned out of the Wayland Road into the wood, they sprinted along the footpath as if it had been a cinder-path, running as they had seldom run before. Upon their speed depended the last chance of the School House—and they ran for their lives!

CHAPTER 12.

The New Boy.

CEDRIC LACY stepped out of the train as it stopped in Rylcombe Station.

A handsome, athletic-looking lad, with a sunburnt face, and very bright and merry blue eyes—that was Cedric Lacy, the new boy for whom the juniors of the rival houses at St. Jim's were contending so obstinately.

Quite unconscious of the excitement his arrival was causing in his new school, Lacy stepped from the train and glanced casually round the platform.

Two juniors in St. Jim's caps came across the platform towards him, and they raised their caps very politely. Lacy looked at them rather hard, and raised his own cap in return, a little surprised by the excessive politeness of the two strangers. He guessed that they belonged to St. Jim's, easily enough, but he did not know why they greeted him with so much empressement.

"Cedric Lacy, I suppose?" said Figgins.

The Cornstalk nodded.

"The new chap for St. Jim's?" added Kerr.

"That's right!"

"Good!" said Figgins. "Jolly glad to meet you!" And Figgins held out his hand. Lacy shook hands with him cheerfully, and then with Kerr.

"Thanks very much," he said. "I suppose you belong to St. Jim's?"

"Yes, rather—New House!"

"It's very kind of you to greet me like this," said Lacy. "I suppose you haven't mistaken me for one of the governors of the school, or anything of that sort?"

The juniors grinned.

"We know you, you see," explained Figgins—"we've heard of you."

"Oh, I see!"

"You're the giddy infant prodigy—the kid who piled up a century before he was twelve years old—the fellow who took four wickets in a county match——"

Lacy laughed.

"I see you've heard all about it," he remarked.

"Yes, rather! We're a cricketing school, you know," said Figgins. "What St. Jim's doesn't know about cricket and footer isn't worth knowing. We're jolly pleased to have you at St. Jim's, I can tell you!"

"I'm pleased to come, for that matter," said Lacy. "I sha'n't be playing much cricket, though. You see, I——"

"Won't you?" grinned Figgins. "I say, we've got a car outside—we're going to take you to the school in state, you know. You'd like to come in a car instead of the station hack?"

Lacy grinned.

"I should rather say so!" he remarked. "But what are you making all this giddy fuss about me for? I didn't know——"

"This way to the car," said Figgins, taking the new boy's arm affectionately, and leading him out of the station.

The motor-car was waiting outside. The chauffeur was seated at the steering-wheel, and Redfern was beside him.

"This is Reddy, another of our chaps," said Figgins, and Lacy cheerfully shook hands with Redfern. "Seen any of the rotters, Reddy?"

"Not a sign of them," said Redfern.

"Good!"

"Not since Dig. whisked away on his bike," said Redfern. "I suppose he's taken the news to Wayland; but that won't hurt us."

"Ha, ha! No."

"May as well buck up, though," said Kerr, the cautious. "No good wasting time."

Lacy looked a little puzzled. He did not understand in the least what the juniors were talking about. Figgins opened the door of the car.

"There's room for three," he remarked. "Hop in."

"My box——" said Lacy.

"That's all right. The porter understands; it will be sent on to the school."

"Hadn't I better tell him——"

"No need; he understands."

"Yes, jump in," said Kerr.

"You fellows in a hurry?" asked Lucy.

"Well, yes, in a way," said Figgins, pushing Lacy into the car. "There are a lot of School House bounders out this afternoon, looking for a chance to rag us. We shouldn't like them to do anything of that kind now, and give you a bad impression of St. Jim's on your first day—ahem!"

"Go ahead!" said Redfern to the chauffeur.

"Yes, sir."

The car glided away from the station. The New House juniors swept the street with their eyes; there was no sign of the enemy. Some minutes had been lost at the station; the juniors could not very well have rushed Lacy into the car without even introducing themselves. Every minute was precious; but upon the whole, Figgins felt safe. If Tom Merry & Co. left Wayland immediately Dig reached them with the news of having seen Figgins in the car at Rylcombe, the School House Co. could never get across in time. And if they reached St. Jim's before the car—they couldn't very well stop a car that was going top speed ahead. Lacy was in the hands of Figgins & Co. now—they had him safe—and Figgins felt that all was well.

Figgins grinned cheerfully as the car ran lightly out of Rylcombe, and took the country road to St. Jim's. It was a bright spring afternoon, and the weather was glorious. Trees and hedges were gleaming with fresh green.

"Jolly place," said Lacy, with a glance of appreciation over the wide meadows, the shadowy woods, the purling streams and trim hedges.

"Oh, jolly," said Figgins; "and you'll find St. Jim's jolly, too! By the way, have you decided which House you are going into? I suppose you know there are two Houses—the School House and the New House."

"Yes, I've been told so."

"The School House is a regular old casual ward," said Figgins confidentially. "It's the older house of the two, you know—everything out of date and stick-in-the-mud—kind of mildewy with age, you know. It's masters here and masters there, you know—simply rotten! You wouldn't like the School House."

"You belong to the other House, I suppose?" said Lacy, with a grin.

"Yes, we're New House chaps. Much better show in every

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"Of course, you'd like to be in the New House, Lacy," said Kerr. "We should like you there, too. We haven't any Australians there now, and we should regard it as a real distinction."

Lacy grinned again.

"I must say you're flattering," he remarked. "I never expected to be made a fuss of like this. I don't quite see that I'm worth it, as a matter of fact."

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins. "We want you in our House—we shall be proud of you. I hope you'll decide to join us. The Head's left it to you. Decide now, there's a good chap, and it will save argument with the School House fellows."

"Do they want me too?" asked Cedric Lacy, in surprise.

"Well, yes; they'd be glad to get you into their mouldy old barn, if they could, just to give us one in the eye," said Figgins. "Awful lot of spoofers, you know—regular tramps, some of them. No New House fellow would be found dead in the School House, if he could possibly help it."

"I suppose not," said Lacy, with a chuckle. "I'd rather not be found dead anywhere, myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, seeing that this was a joke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Redfern dutifully.

"Oh, good!" said Lacy calmly. "I didn't know I was such a giddy humorist. I must say you fellows are making things very pleasant for a new chap."

Figgins nodded eagerly.

"That's just what we want to do," he said. "You see——"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kerr. "What are you slacking for, driver? Full speed ahead! We're in a frightful hurry!"

"Sorry, sir——"

"Drive on!" roared Figgins.

"Can't, sir! The road's stopped!"

"What!"

Figgins jumped up in the car. He glared ahead down the road. A farmer's waggon was in the middle of the lane, completely blocking up the road, and on the other side of it was a butcher's cart with a butcher in it almost raving. There were no horses to the waggon—it had been pulled out of a cart-track in the adjoining field by human hands, evidently, and left in the road. There was no danger of a collision—the waggon was certainly big enough to be seen. On one side of it the butcher's cart had halted, and on the other Figgins's motor-car came to a stop.

Figgins almost danced with rage.

"The careless asses!" he roared—"to leave a cart standing in the middle of the road! Why, it's dangerous, if it's left there after dark. We shall have to get down and shove it out of the way. The farmer ought to be prosecuted, stopping up the public road like that!"

"Charge!"

It was a yell from the hedge, and Figgins knew the voice.

"T-T-T-Tom Merry! My hat!"

Before the words were fairly out of his mouth, the hedge became alive with School House juniors. With a rush they surrounded the halted car, and clambered into it.

CHAPTER 13.

Bravo, School House!

FIGGINS gave a roar.

"Turn round! Drive off!"

"Get a move on!" yelled Kerr.

"Move, you ass! Move, you fathead!" bellowed Redfern, grasping the chauffeur by the shoulder, and shaking him in his excitement.

But it was of no use. The chauffeur was not likely to turn the car in a narrow lane, in the midst of a crowd of reckless juniors. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for the car to turn at that spot at all. And it could not have been backed away at sufficient speed to escape.

The car was captured—or, rather, recaptured!

The chauffeur sat quite still, leaving the juniors to fight it out as they liked, only determined upon one point—that he wasn't taking any risks with the car.

Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern put up a gallant fight.

But they had simply no chance. Nearly a dozen School House fellows were swarming into the car on all sides.

Monty Lowther and Manners grasped the mighty Figgins, and yanked him bodily out of the car into the road, struggling desperately. Kerr was seized by Blake and Herries and Digby, and rolled in the dust. Redfern knocked down three School House juniors in succession, and was then torn from his seat beside the driver, and Kangaroo sat on his chest in the grass beside the road.

The brief but excited struggle was over! Tom Merry & Co. had conquered!

Cedric Lacy sat in the car, with his hands in his pockets, looking on with an amused grin.

He could understand that these juniors who had waylaid the motor-car also belonged to St. Jim's, and he realised that it was a school row of some sort, with the cause of which he was unacquainted. It was no business of his, and he sat and looked on with perfect calmness.

"Done the bounders brown!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Hurray!"

"Huwway for us!"

"You rotters!" roared Figgins. "Ow! Gerroff!"

"No fear!" said Monty Lowther, settling down a little more heavily upon Figgins's chest. "I am quite comfy here, thanks."

"Oh! ow! You're squashing me, you fathead."

"Well, can't you be squashed quietly?" demanded Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep those bounders safe," said Tom Merry. "It's no good saying things, Figgy. We've done you this time."

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Figgins.

"Don't get excited, dear boy. You did us first; you collared our car, and did us brown," said Tom Merry. "We've had a fearful chase to get across here in time. We just did it—we'd only just got the cart out of the field into the road when we heard you coming."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Another three minutes would have done it."

"Oh, what rotten luck!" groaned Figgins.

"I guess you come out at the little end of the horn this time," chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "We've got the giddy prize."

"Hurray for us!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway!"

Tom Merry turned to the grinning Cornstalk in the car. He raised his cap very politely. Lacy nodded to him cheerfully.

"You're Lacy, I suppose?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, I'm Lacy."

"Good! I suppose these bounders got you at the station, and they've been talking some silly rot to you about going into the New House at St. Jim's."

"Well, yes, it's been mentioned."

"You haven't agreed to do it?"

"No."

"Oh, good," said Tom Merry, in great relief. "If the rotters had had time, they'd have got a promise out of you, and we should have been dished. You can't go into the New House, you know. It's a regular old casual ward—a rotten, mildewy old shed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the new boy.

Tom Merry looked at him suspiciously.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked.

"Nothing; only your description of the New House matches the other fellow's description of the School House," grinned Lacy. "It struck me as funny."

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "You—you see, opinions differ about the Houses, and—and——"

"Yes, I see they do!" agreed Lacy.

"Those New House bounders will never admit that we're cock-house of St. Jim's, but we are, all the same——"

"You're not!" roared Figgins.

"Here, you be quiet," said Lowther, jabbing Figgins gently with his elbow.

"Ow!"

"Time we got on," said Blake. "Those New House bounders will get out of Wayland Station sooner or later, and we want to be at St. Jim's before then. Chauffeur, this is our motor-car."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It is really," said Tom Merry, laughing as he caught the chauffeur's doubtful look. "I ordered it yesterday, but these bounders raided it. You remember my coming to the garage; you were there."

"Yes, Master Merry," said the driver, touching his cap. "But——"

"So you see it's all right. Anyway, we're going to have the car," said Tom Merry. "If it had belonged to Figgins, we should have shifted you out, and tied you to a tree if you objected. But as it's our car, all you've got to do is to drive us to St. Jim's; and we shall pay the hire of the car, as originally arranged. See?"

The chauffeur grinned; he evidently saw.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Good. Ready to go on, Lacy?"

"Certainly," said Lacy. "What about those chaps, though?"

"Oh, they're nobodies—only New House chaps," said Tom Merry. "Keep there till we're gone, you fellows, and then pitch them somewhere, and they can go."

"Right-ho!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Manners and Lowther can get into the car; there's room

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for us three as well as Lacy," said Tom Merry. "The other fellows sit on those New House bounders till we're gone."

"Pewwaps I had bettah come in the cah, Tom Mewwy——"

"Drive on, chauffeur."

"I was makin' a wemark, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, you can go on doing it," said Tom Merry. "I suppose it doesn't matter if we start before you've finished, does it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fwabjous ass——"

"Drive on!"

The School House juniors dragged the farm waggon out of the road. The infuriated butcher on the other side had driven round by another way long ago. The big waggon was backed into the cart-track in the field, whence the School House fellows had drawn it. Then the chauffeur set the car in motion.

Figgins and Kerr and Redfern made desperate efforts to get loose. After all their plotting and planning, after being within an ace of complete success, they saw the prize snatched from their grasp. They struggled with desperation; but it was useless. There were too many of the foe for them. They were sat upon heavily, and pinned down in the dust; and the motor-car glided swiftly up the road towards St. Jim's. It disappeared along the white road in a cloud of dust, followed by a cheer from the School House fellows.

"Bai Jove! this is where we score, and no mistake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Jollay lucky we got acwoss here in time, you fellows."

"What-ho!" grinned Blake. "Figgy, old man, I'm sorry for you—but we were bound to have the Cornstalk, you know. Woe to the giddy vanquished."

"Ow! We'll make you sit up for this," groaned Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha! This is where we smile!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake looked at his watch. He allowed ten minutes to elapse before the three New House juniors were released. True, there was little chance of Figgins and Kerr and Redfern overtaking the car; but it was best to be on the safe side in dealing with such redoubtable foes. Blake allowed ample time for the car to reach St. Jim's, before the prisoners were released.

"They'll be in the School House by this time, you chaps," said Blake, putting away his watch at last. "Those rotters can clear now, if they like. Let 'em go!"

And the three New House fellows were released. They rose to their feet, dusty and dishevelled and breathless. They gave the School House fellows glances that were far from loving. But Blake and his comrades only chuckled. There were too many of them for the New House trio to tackle, so vengeance had to be postponed. Blake & Co. walked off towards St. Jim's, on the track of the motor-car, in the happy certainty of finding Cedric Lacy in the School House.

Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern looked at one another grimly.

"Well, we were jolly near it," said Kerr. "The luck turned. But we haven't anything to blame ourselves for."

"We did our giddy best!" said Redfern.

Figgins grunted.

"It was rotten luck!" he said.

"Rotten isn't the word—it was disgusting," said Redfern. "But they've got him now. They won't let him out of the School House till he's sworn a solemn swear to become a School House chap!"

Figgins's jaw set grimly.

"So you think we're done?" he asked.

Redfern nodded.

"Looks like it to me," he said.

"Well, we're not done," said Figgins, grimly. "Lacy isn't a School House fellow yet—and we're going to have another whack! Come on—let's get back to St. Jim's."

And the dusty juniors tramped down the road to the school; Figgins turning over in his mind various desperate schemes for yet tearing the prize from the hands of the School House juniors.

CHAPTER 14.
By Main Force.

"WHERE'S the kid?"

Jack Blake asked the question as he entered the School House. The Terrible Three were in the doorway, smiling cheerfully and looking out into the quadrangle.

"I twust you haven't let him out of your sight, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, anxiously.

"He's all right," said Tom Merry.

"But where is he?" asked Kangaroo.

"In Mr. Railton's study. He's had to go and report himself to the Housemaster, you know; and we couldn't very well go in with him," said Tom Merry. "We're just lounging in the door here to keep an eye open for him. If he had a fancy to stroll out of the house, he would have to be persuaded—ahem—not to!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But hasn't he made up his mind to join the School House yet?" asked Blake anxiously.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. It was Kangy did it."

"I did?" exclaimed Kangaroo, in astonishment. "How did I do it?"

"We told him there was another Cornstalk in the House," explained Tom Merry, "and as there isn't one in the New House that settled it. You see, he's glad to have another chap from his own part of the world round about, and when I told him about Kangaroo, that settled it. He had the cheek to say that he didn't care twopence which House he was in; but if there was an Australian in the School House, he'd come in too. So it was Kangy did it."

"Good egg!" said Kangaroo. "It doesn't matter much what did it, so long as he's decided to come into the School House. But I'll chum up with him like a long lost brother; so long as he sticks to our side."

"It's settled now," said Manners. "He's going to ask Mr. Railton to give him a study in this House, and he will have a bed to-night in the Shell dorm. It's settled."

"Hurray!"

"Bai Jove! we've weally got the boundah, then," said D'Arcy.

"Yes. The Head will have to say something about it; but it's really settled; it was understood that Lacy was to choose which House he'd go into. All the same, we won't let him out loose to-day. May as well keep an eye on him till Figgins & Co. understand how things are," grinned Tom Merry. "We're not going to run any risks."

"Good egg!"

"We'll stand him a feed in the study, too," said Lowther. "Nothing like a good feed to cement a friendship."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite so," said Tom Merry. "There's still some of Gussy's fiver left, luckily. I've sent the motor-car back; Figgins & Co. can have it now if they want it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway blue what is left of the fivah in a feed, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, "and some of us had bettah awwange to keep an eye on Lacy for the west of the aftahnoon. If those New House boundahs get a chance at him, they may persuade him to change his mind. Has he pwomised?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No; he's simply said he's coming into the School House; but it doesn't amount to a promise. He can change his mind

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if he likes—only he's jolly well not going to have a chance. We'll take care of that!"

"What-ho!" said Blake, emphatically.

"Some of you fellows go and get the tuck, and the rest can get the study ready," said Tom Merry, "we'll stay here to meet the chap after he comes out from Railton's study."

"Wight-oh!"

And the Terrible Three remained on guard. They did not mean to run any risks with the prize they had captured after so much trouble. The fellows were beginning to arrive from Wayland now; tired and dusty, and many of them with signs of conflict. But the School House fellows were in great spirits. They had won! But over in the New House there were dismal faces and mutterings of vengeance. The New House had been defeated, and that made all the difference. When Fatty Wynn and the gallant band who had held Wayland Railway Station arrived, and learned what had happened, they were furious; and Fatty Wynn even forgot that it was nearly tea-time in his dismay.

"They've got him!" Figgins told them, and that was all.

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn. "Simply rotten; to be done at the finish like this!"

"We're not done yet!" said Figgins, quietly.

Figgy's brain was busy.

The Terrible Three kept one eye on the quadrangle, ready to spot any New House juniors who approached the House. There was no telling to what desperate expedient Figgins & Co. might resort, to retrieve their defeat. Lacy came out of Mr. Railton's study with a grin on his face, and nodded to the chums of the Shell.

"Settled with Railton?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Lacy. "I'm a School House chap now."

"Bravo!"

"We're going to have tea in the study—something extra special," said Tom Merry, hospitably. "You're coming, of course."

"Pleased!" said the Cornstalk. "I'm jolly hungry after my journey, I can tell you."

"It will be a regular brew," said Manners. "Sort of feast of celebration over the victory, you know. We've done the New House in the eye this time."

Lacy laughed.

"Blessed if I know why you should take so much trouble over me," he said. "I suppose it's really just to have a bone of contention, isn't it—without regard to the value of the bone?"

"Well, there's something in that," Tom Merry admitted. "We wanted to give the New House a fall. But we wanted you too—we wanted you badly. We know your record, you know—the School House will be proud of you."

"Thanks awfully," said Lacy, laughing.

"Besides, hands across the sea, you know—draw tighter the bonds of empire, and all that," said Monty Lowther, solemnly.

"I see," said Lacy, gravely, "though the bonds of empire would have got on just as well, I suppose, if I'd been in the New House. I think I'll take a stroll round the place till tea's ready."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances.

"Ahem! Tea won't be long," said Tom Merry. "The chaps are all busy getting it now. It won't be more than ten minutes."

"That's enough to have a look round," said the Australian.

"Like to see the library?" asked Tom Merry. "Down this passage——"

"I'd rather see the quad. and the gym., if you don't mind, and the cricket ground," said Lacy, in surprise. "They were playing cricket out there when I came in. I'm interested in cricket, of course."

"There's the Form-room. You might see that——"

"I shall see that to-morrow in class, and I'm not gone on Form-rooms, anyway," said Lacy, with a grin. "Look here, what are you fellows getting at? Why shouldn't I take a walk round the quadrangle if I want to?"

"Ahem!"

"You—you see——"

"I don't quite see," said Lacy.

"H'm! The fact is, those New House bounders might make a rush. They're awful spoofers, you know, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lacy. "Do you think I'd let them carry me off? I'm a School House chap now. My name's down on the books. That settles it."

"Figgins will want a lot of convincing that it's settled," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "Better stay in——"

"I'll show you round the library and the laboratories," said Manners.

Lacy grunted.

"Blow the library and bust the laboratories! I want to have a look at the cricket. It's some time now since I played, owing to the twist I got in my last match, and I want to see it. You chaps can come out with me if you like, and I won't let the New House fellows abduct me like the giddy heroine of a novel. It will be all right."

"Well, if you really want to——"

"I jolly well do," said Lacy.

"We'll call up some fellows in the quad. and make a party of it," said Tom Merry. "Come on, then, kid."

And the new boy and the Terrible Three strolled out into the quadrangle together.

Tom Merry called to several School House fellows as they went down to the cricket-field. He was feeling uneasy in his mind. He would greatly have preferred to keep Cedric Lacy within the walls of the School House; but Lacy seemed likely to prove rather restive in the hands of his kind friends. He was very much flattered by their great desire to have him in their House, but he had a will of his own. That was plain.

Kildare of the Sixth was batting against Monteith of the New House, and Lacy looked on with keen appreciation. Kildare was a splendid batsman, and no fellow in the school could judge his form better than Cedric Lacy.

"You've got a good man there," said the Australian.

"That's Kildare," said Tom Merry.

"Who's Kildare?"

"Captain of the school," said Tom Merry impressively.

"He's a good bat," said Lacy.

"I should say so. He— Hallo! Look out! Ware! New House cads!" yelled Tom Merry.

There was a rush of feet. A swarm of New House juniors came tearing round from behind the pavilion. Under cover of the pavilion the deep-scheming Figgins had gathered his forces immediately the new boy was sighted in the quad. by a New House scout. Round from the back of the pavilion came twenty-five or thirty fellows with a terrific rush, and the group of School House juniors were surrounded in a moment.

"Line up!"

"Rescue!"

"Back up, School House!"

"Collar him!" roared Figgins.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn laid violent hands upon Lacy, while the rest of the crowd piled on Tom Merry & Co. School House fellows came dashing up to the rescue on all sides, and Figgins & Co. whirled Lacy off his feet, and rushed him off bodily towards the New House.

Redfern and the rest covered their retreat, meeting the furious charges of the School House fellows and keeping them off, while Figgins & Co. bore away the prisoner at a run.

Lacy struggled in the grasp of his captors.

"Let me down, you asses!" he roared.

"It's all right, Lacy!" gasped Figgins. "We're rescuing you from those cads!"

"I don't want to be rescued, fathead!"

"That's all right. We'll rescue you all the same."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Kerr. "Buck up! Don't wriggle like that, Lacy!"

"Lemme go!"

"Sorry! Can't be did!"

"I'm a School House fellow now!" roared Lacy, exasperated.

"Your mistake. You're not!" panted Fatty Wynn.

"I am. It's settled!"

"Then it's got to be unsettled."

"Look here——"

"Bring him in!" gasped Figgins, as they reached the steps of the New House. "Get him up to the study! Quick! Before any rotten prefects come nosing round!"

And Lacy, in the strong grip of three athletic juniors, was rushed up the stairs, and plumped down in Figgins's study.

There was a roar of voices in the quadrangle. Tom Merry and strong reinforcements of School House fellows had pursued the raiders to the very doorway of the School House. In the doorway the New House juniors massed for defence and they would have charged but for the arrival of a prefect on the scene.

"Hallo! More House rows!" said Darrel, the prefect, a School House fellow. "All School House boys get across the quad. sharp!"

"Weally, Dawwel——"

"I say, Darrel——"

"Clear!" rapped out Darrel. "If Mr. Ratcliff hears you, and comes out, you'll be sorry you came over this side. Clear off!"

There was no help for it. Tom Merry & Co., raging, retreated across the quadrangle, Darrel shepherding them back to their own side. They gathered in the School House simply writhing with rage.

"Figgy's got him!" panted Tom Merry. "Got him! Got him! Oh, it's rotten! Oh, my hat!"

"Yaas, it was vewy unfortunate that I wasn't pwesent——"

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You shouldn't have let him go out into the quad." said Blake. "You might have known Figgins was waiting for a chance, you awful ass! Poof!"

"But he would go out——"

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"Br-r-r-r! Better have tied him to the giddy banisters by the neck than have let those bounders swindle us out of our Cornstalk like this."

"He's a School House fellow, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley. "We'll have him back."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll raid the New House! We'll pull the blessed place down but we'll get him," said Herries.

And the School House juniors raged and talked, and talked and raged. But over in the New House there was rejoicing without limit.

CHAPTER 15.
Methods of Barbarism.

CEDRIC LACY sat up in the armchair in Figgins's study in the New House, and gasped for breath.

The raiders had not meant to handle him roughly, but they had not had much time to waste. They had been bound to get Lacy into the New House, and they had got him there. They had bumped him down in the armchair like a sack of coke. They crammed the study between Lacy and the door, and they chortled triumphantly.

There was great glee in Figgins's study, but the Cornstalk did not share it. He was an easy-going fellow, but the easiest-going fellow might be excused for getting "wrathy" at being dragged and yanked about like a bag of potatoes, and dumped down like coal or coke.

The New House juniors chortled, and Lacy glared.

"Got him!" sang Figgins.

"Hurray for us!"

"Good egg! Bravo the New House!"

"Look here, you silly asses!" gasped Lacy.

"Hope you're not shaken up at all," said Figgins, with solicitude.

Lacy snorted.

"Did you think you could drag me up and bump me down without shaking me at all?" he demanded.

"I'm sure we're sorry," said Figgins. "We didn't mean to be rough. You see, we were bound to rescue you from those cads."

"Had to stand by you, you know," said Kerr. "We couldn't let those worms sneak you into their wretched House."

"Couldn't think of it," said Redfern; "but you'll get your second wind soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going to stand a good feed," said Figgins. "You must be hungry after your journey."

"That's a jolly good idea," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll cut down to the tuck-shop——"

"And Lacy can come down with me to the Housemaster and sign his name," said Figgins. "You have to put down your name for the House list, you know."

Lacy grinned.

"But it can't be done," he said. "I'm awfully flattered, and so forth, but I belong to the School House now."

Figgins shook his head.

"Can't be did, Lacy. We want you. Now, let me take you to Ratty, our Housemaster, and it will all be settled in a jiffy. It was understood that you should choose your own House."

"But I've done it," said Lacy.

"You've chosen the School House?" demanded Figgins wrathfully.

"Yes."

"What for, you silly chump?"

"Well, there's another Australian chap there," said Lacy, "and I had to choose one or the other, and there wasn't a pin to choose between them."

"But this is the cock-house of St. Jim's," said Figgins, in eager explanation. "It's an honour to belong to the New House. It's a disgrace to belong to the other show."

"The fellows there seem to stand it all right."

"Ahem! You see——"

"You'd better let me out," said Lacy, laughing. "I'm sorry. If I could halve myself I'd belong to both Houses, but it can't be done."

"You can't go back," said Figgins decidedly. "We'll talk to you till we convince you. That is all I can suggest."

"But my name is down on the House books now," said Lacy. "I've seen Mr. Railton, the Housemaster over there, and he's assigned me a study, too."

"That's all right. You can tell him you've changed your mind. Railton's a very good sort, and he won't make any trouble."

"But I haven't changed my mind."

"No; but you're going to."

"I'm not going to," said Lacy calmly.

The New House fellows looked at one another darkly and dubiously. This was a somewhat unexpected difficulty. All their efforts hitherto had been directed towards getting possession of Cedric Lacy. They had got possession of him now, but he was proving intractable. Still, one thing there could be no doubt about at all—they weren't going to let him return to the School House. That was quite decided.

"Let's get the feed ready," murmured Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn had a great faith in the powers of a feed as a persuader. If anything could have induced Fatty Wynn to change Houses, it would have been the prospect of a big feed.

"Go ahead, Fatty," agreed Figgins. "Now, look here, Lacy, I want to put it to you fairly. You look like a sensible chap. You're going to belong to the New House."

"I'm afraid it can't be done."

"We're going to keep you here, anyway. We sha'n't let you go back to the School House. We don't want to adopt rough measures, do we, chaps?"

"Certainly not," said all the chaps at once.

"We'd much rather persuade you——"

"Much rather!" came the chorus.

"But you've got to stop here."

"You've got to stop here."

"And if you don't listen to reason, I'm afraid there's no other way but by bumping you till you promise to join the New House, honour bright."

"Honour bright!" said the chorus.

Lacy pushed back his cuffs.

"You won't bump me!" he said.

"We don't want to," said Figgins gently; "but we shall, unless you give us your word to join the New House."

"Rats!"

"What!" roared Figgins.

"Rats! And many of 'em!" said Lacy. "Blow your old House! I'm a School House chap, and you can go and eat coke."

The New House crowd glared at the Cornstalk. This was a little too much.

"I'm afraid there's nothing else for it," said Figgins, regretfully. "Collar him, and bump him when I give the word."

"Yes, rather!"

"Hands off!" roared Lacy. "Hands off, you New House bounders."

"Oh, collar him!"

Biff! Biff! Kerr and Redfern rolled over under Lacy's doughty blows, but then the rest had their grasp on him, and he was swept off his feet, still struggling. Redfern jumped up with his hand to his nose.

"Ow!" he exclaimed. "The beast hits like a sledgehammer! Lemme gerrat him!"

Figgins waved him back.

"It's all right, Reddy——"

"Is it all right?" roared Redfern. "Look at my nose!"

"It's all in the day's work! Now, Lacy, are you going to give your solemn promise to join the New House, and abandon the School House and all its works?"

"No!" roared Lacy.

"Then we shall have to bump you."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Bump him!"

Bump!

"Yarooh!"

"Now, then, my infant, are you going to——"

"No!" yelled Lacy.

"Then we shall—— Hallo, what's that?"

There was a tap at the study door, and it opened. Kildare of the Sixth came in. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was a School House fellow, and the Co. looked at him in surprise. They were surprised to see him in the New House. The juniors gathered round Lacy to screen him as much as possible from view. Kildare grinned.

"You've got Lacy here," he said. "Yes, I can see you have. I've come for him."

Figgins gave a gasp.

"You—you don't mean to say Tom Merry's asked you——"

"Tom Merry hasn't spoken to me," said Kildare. "Mr Railton asked me to come over here and see if Lacy was here. He saw you carry him off from his study window."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"You shouldn't rag a new fellow, you know," said Kildare. "You should keep House raggings for fellows who know the ropes."

"But Lacy isn't a School House fellow, and this isn't ragging," Figgins explained eagerly. "Mr. Railton has made a mistake. We didn't buzz Lacy off because he was a School House chap, but because he wasn't."

"I don't quite see," said Kildare. "His name is down on the House books; Mr. Railton says he is in the School House by his own choice."

"He's changed his mind," said Figgins. "I—I mean he's changing it now."

"We're helping him," said Redfern.

Kildare laughed.

"Oh, I see!" he said. "You want him in this House. Mr. Railton had the impression that it was a House rag, and he sent me over here to fetch him."

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"You see, it was a mistake," said Figgins. "You—you can mention to Mr. Railton that it's all right—and—and leave Lacy here."

"I'm afraid I must do as Mr. Railton asked me," said Kildare. "Come, Lacy!"

Lacy grinned, and came over to Kildare. The juniors could not interfere now. It was no use thinking of backing up against the captain of the school. Dismay fell upon Figgins & Co. If Lacy returned to the School House with Kildare now, he would be a School House fellow for good and all. There was no doubt about that.

"But—but, I say, if Lacy doesn't want to go?" urged Figgins.

"Do you want to stay here, Lacy?" asked Kildare.

"No fear!" said Lacy. "I'm a School House chap! I wouldn't be found dead in this rotten old casual ward!"

Kildare chuckled. Lacy was evidently getting into the way of things at St. Jim's already.

Figgins & Co. glared at him. That finished it! Lacy walked out of the study with Kildare. He turned in the passage to kiss his hand to the enraged New House juniors, and then disappeared.

"Well," said Figgins, with a deep breath, "that's rotten! It's the finish! They've got him!"

And the New House juniors agreed that it was rotten. But there was evidently nothing more to be done.

CHAPTER 16.

Figgins & Co. Laugh.

"HERE he is!"

"Hurray!"

The School House juniors gathered joyously round Cedric Lacy as he came into the School House once more. They shook hands with him, and patted him on the back, and thumped him on the shoulders, and crowed over him. He was marched up to Tom Merry's study, in the midst of the rejoicing juniors. Tom Merry & Co. had hardly expected to get him out of the hands of the raiders, and they rejoiced accordingly over their good luck. Lacy explained how it had happened.

"Well, it was a bit of luck Kildare chipping in like that," said Tom Merry. "Of course, we shouldn't have dragged a prefect into it—still, I can't say I'm sorry Kildare dropped in. It's all right now. And they had the cheek to bump you for not wanting to join their dismal old show!"

"The awful cheek!" said Blake indignantly.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Augustus D'Arcy. "Of course, we should have bumped him if he had wefused to join us, but that's a diffewent mattah. I weally considah that Figgins is a cheeky ass, and——"

"Oh, you'd have bumped me, would you?" said Lacy.

"Shut up, Gussy!" exclaimed Blake, stopping those indiscreet revelations. "Of course, we knew that you'd come into this House, as a sensible chap, Lacy. We really hadn't any doubt about it. Is tea ready, you fellows? Lacy's hungry, aren't you, Lacy, old man?"

Lacy grinned.

"Yes, I could eat a bit," he said.

And Cedric Lacy took his seat in the place of honour at the tea-table in Tom Merry's study, and cast an appreciative eye over the well-spread board. The table groaned, as the novelist would say, under the goodly viands. The Co. had certainly done very well in providing for their guest. And Lacy started on the viands with a keenness which showed that the exciting experiences of the day had not robbed him of his appetite. And the triumphant School House juniors backed him up nobly.

"Faith, and we've won!" said Reilly. "Sure, I'm not sorry I was detained now. We've given the New House the kybosh this time, me darlings!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What-ho!" said Kangaroo. "And we're going to give 'em a regular series of kyboshes this summer, on the cricket ground."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The study was crammed with juniors, all in the best of tempers. They had beaten the New House, and were in possession of the prize. And the prospect of playing Cedric Lacy in the junior House eleven was simply gorgeous, as Blake described it. When Lacy began batting and bowling against Figgins & Co., the New House eleven would have to hide its diminished head. Even Fatty Wynn, the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's, would have to take a second place now. The cricket season would be a long history of triumph for the School House juniors.

No wonder they rejoiced.

"We'll put your name down as a member of the School House Junior C.C. after tea, Lacy," Tom Merry remarked.

Lacy nodded.

"Thanks!" he said. "I should like to belong to the club, though not as a playing member."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You'll jolly well be a playing member, too," he said. "My dear chap, do you think we don't know your record?"

"Yaas, wathah! You're goin' to be our big gun this season, deah boy!"

Lacy stared at the juniors for a few moments, and then burst into a laugh. It was a loud and hearty laugh, and it rang through the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at him inquiringly. They could see no cause for this sudden and irrepressible mirth of the new junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lacy. "Oh, my only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!"

Lacy wiped his eyes.

"I wondered what the dickens you wanted me so much for," he gasped. "Do you mean to say that you've taken all this trouble so that I can play cricket for you?"

Tom Merry coloured a little.

"Well, not only that," he said. "We wanted you as well!"

"Hands across the sea!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"But—but, of course, you'll play cricket for your House," said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, what are you cackling at?" demanded Tom Merry, with an uneasy feeling in his breast.

"I'm awfully sorry!" gasped Lacy. "It's a shame to disappoint you, as you've been so flattering! I feel that I've got this feed under false pretences—but I didn't know. You didn't explain, you see, that you wanted me as a cricketer."

"But—but what's wrong? We can't have made another mistake, and got another blessed George Sanders!" exclaimed Blake in bewilderment. "You are Cedric Lacy, ain't you?"

"Oh, yes, I'm Cedric Lacy!"

"The Australian—the infant prodigy at cricket?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Chap who took four wickets against county batsmen!"

"Certainly."

"Well, then," said Tom Merry, with a breath of relief, "it's all right, then."

Lacy burst into a chuckle again.

"I'm afraid it isn't all right from your point of view," he said. "You see, I'm not playing cricket this season."

"But you must!" said Tom Merry warmly. "Cricket is compulsory here, for one thing—and a chap like you can't want to give the game a miss for a season."

"I don't want to," said Lacy; "but I've got to."

"Got to! Why!"

"If you'd told me what you wanted, I'd have explained, and saved all the trouble," grinned Lacy. "But you didn't tell me. You see, I had an accident some time ago, and my wrist is damaged. I can't hold a bat or bowl a ball. I'm under strict orders from the surgeon not to try even to play cricket this season. I can bowl a bit with my left, but nothing out of the ordinary. I'm sorry, but there it is!"

"Oh!"

The School House juniors uttered that monosyllable together, in varying tones of dismay, and then there was silence.

They looked at Lacy, and they looked at one another.

They had beaten Figgins & Co.! They had got the famous cricketer into the School House. And now that they had got him, he couldn't play cricket.

It was the ghastliest frost in their experience.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Monty Lowther at last. "Sold! You—you awful fraud! You've sold us a pup! Won't Figgins & Co. chuckle when they hear!"

"Bai Jove—wathah!"

"You—you spoofer!" said Blake.

Lacy laughed.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "I'd have told you if you'd asked me! But you didn't—it's not my fault. I'm booked for the School House now; but I'm afraid I've got this feed on a misunderstanding, and I'll clear out, if you like."

But Tom Merry rose to the occasion.

"No, you jolly well won't!" he said. "Of course, it's rotten—simply rotten! But we're glad to have you in the House—you're the kind of chap we want, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah."

So Lacy sat down again.

* * * * * * * * * *

Monty Lowther was right—Figgins & Co. did chuckle when they heard.

They chuckled loud and long.

The School House had captured the wonderful cricketer, but as he would not be able to play cricket for them the triumph was discounted—indeed, Figgins & Co. considered that the laugh was on their side. And they laughed!

THE END.

(Another splendid, extra long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "UNDER A CLOUD," By Martin Clifford. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library, in advance. Price One Penny.)

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NOT A LONE TRAIL.

By half-past ten the cashier at a certain establishment was seized with influenza, and departed for his house. At 11 a.m. the bookkeeper gasped, collapsed, and also retired.

For a time business was ably conducted by the greatly reduced staff; but at 11.30 the ledger-keeper announced that he must go and put his feet in hot water, or the consequences would be serious.

He was duly given permission; but at 1 p.m. three of the clerks were taken ill. They attributed the attack to some fish of which they had partaken at breakfast.

Left alone, the manager and the office-boy gamely struggled to cope with the work; but presently the former rose, and put on his hat with an air of great determination.

"William," he remarked, "I think you and I had better go to the cricket-match, too!"

And they went.

THE CAT DID NOT COME BACK.

The great detective eyed his visitor thoughtfully.

"Yes, Mr. Blake," sobbed the grief-stricken woman, "many attempts—eight in all, I think—have been made on his life, but he was so strong and handsome that he foiled them all."

She buried her face in her hands, and her shoulders hove.

"You say your husband wears a green trilby hat and long ginger side-whiskers?" asked the great detective gently.

"Y-y-y-yes, sir!" stuttered the woeful one, wiping her eyes with her gloves.

Mr. Blake thought sadly of the man he had seen by the river-bank only that afternoon, and of the strange bundle the said man had borne. Then he bent gently towards the woman.

"I am sorry, madam, believe me," he said softly, "but it is too late! Your cat is dead!"

HARD LUCK.

It was a cold winter night, and the wind was howling round the trees. The weary wayfarer was wandering along without knowing, and not much caring, where he was. He had lost his way for hours.

Stop! What is that? A signpost for certain!

The weary wayfarer fumbled in his pocket, and brought out his box of matches. Luckily there was one left.

Carefully and slowly he toiled up the signpost, and at the top struck the match to see what was written thereon. The flickering glare of the match showed these words: "Try Poot's Pills."

SCARCELY ENGLISH.

It was the lunch hour at the big draper's, and the bookkeeper had contrived to have five minutes' chat with the girl who kept the petty cash. He was in love with her, and had summoned up sufficient courage to propose.

"Marry you?" exclaimed the girl. "Good gracious, no! I don't want nothing to do with you. I wouldn't marry you, not if you was the last man on earth. Is that plain English?"

The bookkeeper was mortified.

"It is certainly plain enough," he admitted, "but I'm afraid I can't conscientiously call it English."

"Tommy," said his brother, "how can you eat so much?"

"Don't know; it's just good luck," replied the youngster.

HAD HAD SOME.

"Yaas," yawned Algy, as he stretched himself full length on the sofa at the club—"yaas, he's a very careful man."

"What man?" asked a chorus of loungers.

"That man I was just talking to," replied Algy.

"How's that?" demanded his friends.

"Well, I asked him to change me a beastly ten-pound note, dontcherknow, and what do you think he did?"

"What?"

"He made me show him the note before he'd commit himself. Said he'd been done for a fiver that way before now. Rotten! What?"

She: "Just look at the trouble money can get you into."
He: "Yes, but look at the trouble it can get you out of."

QUESTION FOR QUESTION.

While on sentry-go a soldier was bitten by a valuable retriever dog, and in self-defence drove his bayonet into the animal.

The dog's owner promptly sued him in the county court for damages, and in the evidence it came out that the soldier was not so badly bitten, after all.

"But, my good man," said the learned judge, "why didn't you hit the dog with the butt-end of your rifle?"

And the Court rocked with laughter when the soldier calmly replied:

"Well, your honour, why didn't he bite me with his tail?"

Assistant-Editor: "Here's a farmer writes to us asking how to treat sick bees."

Editor: "Tell him he'd better treat them with respect."

IT HAD TO LAST.

Excitement prevailed on the local cricket-field. Smasher, the visiting team's demon batsman, had already sent the ball whizzing over the hedge for a boundary, and now he had done it again with great effect.

"Hout!" roared the umpire, the village butcher, as he pointed an accusing finger at the slogger.

"Out!" gasped the budding Jessop. "What for?"

"Hout, I sez, and hout you goes!" replied the umpire firmly. "But, if you must know the hins and houts of the case, we shall want that there ball for our next match!"

"I hear you actually encourage your boy to send poetry to the magazines. Do you want your son to become a poet?"

"No; I merely want him to get the conceit knocked out of him."

A CRUEL VENGEANCE.

Merry and gay had been the evening party. Everybody had done their share in entertaining the company except Jenkins.

At last, about midnight, when there was no one else left, the daughter of the house approached Jenkins, and asked him to oblige.

Jenkins was only too willing, but he thought it good manners to protest.

"Oh, Miss Clara," he said, "won't the next-door neighbours object to my singing so late?"

Clara shook her bonny golden head.

"That doesn't matter," she replied. "We don't care what they think. They poisoned our dog last week!"

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WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

A revolt against the methods of the headmaster breaks out, but after much excitement the boys are defeated, and the leaders are compelled to leave Greyhouse.

During the Christmas holidays "Parsnip," whose proper name is Carew, comes to spend the vacation with Sir Billy. It is also arranged that the German-master, Professor Pulmeyer, shall stay with them. This learned man is very pleased at the idea, as he is in love with a certain Miss Dappy, an inhabitant of the village.

Parsnip and Sir Billy attempt to "fool" the professor, but come off "second best."

"No good trying to get quits with him!" declare both.

Read on from here.

Introducing J. O. Jones.

They made an interesting little gang, these friends—Wardour, Hallam, Sir Billy, Parsnip, and J. O. Jones. J. O. was, in a way, introduced to the others by Billy, who made his acquaintance through meeting him so often in the library, where they both went after the same books. Billy was a devotee of Scott, and, J. O. Jones being a devout admirer of that wizard, it came about that one day they both applied for the same work, the "Fair Maid of Perth."

They both asked the librarian for it, and in virtue of J. O.'s seniority, it was handed to him; but he had overheard Billy's request and pushed it into his hands.

"Go on, young 'un—I can wait," said J. O., in his gruff way.

Billy, equally polite, said that he could wait, too; but it ended in Billy's having it.

It was reading weather—snow and rain mixed—about a fortnight after the conclusion of the Christmas holidays, so Billy got through the "Fair Maid" at a rare pace.

Meeting J. O. in the library a week later, he handed him the book, and notified the fact to the librarian.

"I say, Jones," said Billy, "you'll like it no end. There's an awfully strong fellow in it—just like you, you know."

"Is there?" said J. O. modestly, and fell a-talking to Billy straight away about the works of the wizard whom they both loved. Thus, by degrees, J. O. and Billy got to be rather chummy—at least, as chummy as it was possible for anyone to be with J. O. who, throughout his school career, had never made a particular friend of anybody, being by nature a lonely customer, caring not a button what other folks thought or said of him so long as he was left to himself.

For all that, J. O. Jones was a Greyhouse celebrity. It was with immense pride that Greyhouse juniors pointed out his huge, slouching form to visiting sisters and cousins, and fierce was the wrath of the same juniors when the visiting sisters and cousins uttered disparaging criticisms anent J. O.'s appearance and attire. It then became necessary to explain how this ungainly youth had achieved immortal fame; but long ere this J. O. had roamed through the quad. and out into the country that was the truest comrade he possessed.

J. O. formed part of the tail of the Upper Fifth, and it may as well be admitted at once that he was the extreme tip of that tail. The masters gave him up as a bad job. He remained with rocklike persistency at the bottom of the Upper Fifth, and he was still there when he left Greyhouse.

Not that he was idle; he slogged away at his work desperately, but very little came of it. It was because he worked so hard that the masters never interfered with his rural strolls by keeping him in. Besides, he was J. O. Jones.

Who, then, was J. O. Jones, that his name should be uttered by juniors with awe, and by seniors with profound respect? Well, he was, of all the mighty men of muscle that had passed through the school, the mightiest. He was naturally endowed with tremendous strength. He was never once seen with dumb-bell or Indian club, nor did he ever seek to enlarge his muscles in the gymnasium. He was the heaviest forward in the Greyhouse pack, and an invaluable member of the fifteen; but he did not indulge in cricket, fives, tennis, or any other game. In the summer months he took long walks and read books.

Opportunity must have been kind to him, for he certainly never went out of his way to exhibit his extraordinary powers. Yet chances came. There once befell him that very ordinary adventure which the writers of novelettes love so. It was a pretty girl, a dogcart, and a maddened horse outside the very gates of the school. J. O. got the horse by the hair, and their tussle was a sight for gods and men. J. O. won, and the pretty girl thanked him in the nicest way imaginable, but all he muttered (so deponent saith) was, "Not at all!" She discovered his name, and wrote, thanking him again, but he shoved her pink little letter into the pocket of his shabby old coat as if it had been a tailor's bill. Not even a blush!

So let us now tell of the greatest deed of all—a deed that was done during the summer term whose end witnessed Wardour's battle with Eccles, of which pugilistic encounter J. O. Jones had been an interested, though silent, spectator.

Middle House—to which J. O. belonged—was an imposing, compact mass of stone, gabled and turreted, with a big round tower in its midst surmounted by a dome and a cross—emblems of the school's holy origin.

Now, the main staircase of Middle House started at the top of the tower and wound its way down to the ground floor in an absurdly narrow fashion. At the foot of it, opening on to the corridor on the left of the tower, was a huge door, decorated with iron studs and nails. It was such an aged and peculiar door, that it took ancient precedence over all other doors, and was, in fact, known as "The Old Door."

When everybody was in bed it was the duty of the school porter—Cripps—to lock the Old Door, and at 6.30 in the morning to unlock it. If, for some special reason, anybody was up very late, or wished to be down particularly early, he used another staircase which was ordinarily reserved for masters and monitors, and which led into the music-room, situated on the right of the tower.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "UNDER A CLOUD!" A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

It was a great sight of a morning to watch Middle House tumbling downstairs and through that doorway in order to reach its seat in the big school-room in time for early roll-call—often in a sad state of disarray, buttoning waistcoats, or braces, or collars; noosing up the tie, or dabbing desperately at the scalp with the idea of making some sort of a parting in the hair. Sometimes a particularly untidy boy would be sent back to his dormitory, and counted late; but, as a rule, the master on duty did not allow himself to be too critical regarding the average boy's toilet.

At 7.30, sharp, the monitor on duty shut the door of the "Big" with a bang and an inexorable expression on his face, deaf to all such pleadings as: "It wants ten seconds yet to the half-hour," or "Oh, Maggs, let me in! I say, I've been late twice this week; I shall be sent to the Head," or anything of that nature. J. O. Jones wasn't often late—if he was, he did his lines without a murmur, but once an especially unpopular monitor (the sort of specimen that liked getting fellows into a row) shut the door a full minute and a half before time. The angry mob of still-dressing fellows outside increased in volume, and loud was the outcry. J. O. appeared, and, in a slow way consulted his watch. He saw that an injustice had been done by the monitor, who had unwisely put his foot against the door. J. O. cleared the way and tilted at the door, and the legend is that the monitor inside flew twelve yards through space, yelling for "Help!" Anyhow, he never shut the door again before it was time to do so. But, mind you, J. O. was not in the habit of defying the authority of master or monitor. The big man "noo 'is place," as Cripps would say.

Well, it had been one of the hottest days of that summer—a regular toaster of a day. Greyhouse was reduced to an unpleasant state of languid stickiness by the time the sun went down. Prep. was got through somehow, and Greyhouse wended its weary way into chapel, emerging fifteen minutes later, feeling quite too done up to have any energy left for humbugging about or ragging. The air was close and oppressive—not a breath of breeze came to the relief of panting mortals. Greyhouse went off and lolled on its bed until somebody in authority roused it off and made it undress. Then it lay with one sheet over it, courting slumber, every now and again getting up to drink tepid water out of a tooth-mug.

The weather, however, never affected him (J. O.) He got into bed at his usual time on this particular night, and went off to sleep like a top.

Soon after eleven the school was hushed—most of the fellows had dropped into the slumber which exhausted Nature claims even on the sultriest of nights. Cripps, after locking The Old Door, retired to his sleeping den, and made wassail with a big jug of beer that he had persuaded out of the cook.

By this time all Greyhouse was asleep, and asleep Greyhouse remained for half an hour, but no longer, for of a sudden there came a crack of thunder that caused half the fellows to sit up with a start and peer round at each other in amazement.

S-s-s-s-s-s! A long, jagged flame of forked lightning illuminated the gloom, and then, with hardly a pause, the thunder boomed out again with an explosion as loud as that of a hundred Long Toms. Once again the blinding sheet of angry electricity, and again the roar of Heaven's artillery, and then a flood of rain such as had not fallen all that year. With it came a gale of wind, howling and shrieking like a mad thing round the turrets, so that, what with the rattle overhead and the jagged flashes, and the furious sweep of wind and rain driving against the windows together, it was a thunderstorm with a vengeance!

The more timid of the boys put their heads under the clothes, and listened, open-eyed and open-mouthed, to the wild music of the raging elements. The stouter-hearted composed themselves for slumber again. But worse terrors were in store for them. There came a flash of lightning ten times more vivid than anything preceding it, and then a roar as of a thousand howitzers exploding simultaneously. Following sharp on this came an altogether different sound—more human, more earth-like—a sound of falling timber, and stone, and mortar. The dome over Middle House had been struck by a thunderbolt.

Out of his bed, like a stone from a catapult, shot every boy in the long dormitory, situated immediately beneath the dome—out of his bed and down the room, and out into the corridor—for some of the masonry had crashed on to the roof of the Long, and the noise made the scared inmates imagine that the school was crumbling up. They raced out, jamming and jostling against each other in a wild dash for The Old Door down the corridor to the staircase, and down the staircase like a flock of frightened sheep.

And here lay the danger. Those in front were forced down by those above, and at length the foremost of all reached The Old Door. But The Old Door was fast locked.

Shouts for Cripps issued from the foot of the staircase, a place which was now becoming unpleasantly packed. For inmates of other dormitories, hearing the quick patter of bare feet outside, had joined the passing throng. On every side pale-faced, half-awake boys were asking questions which nobody troubled to answer. It was a selfish, headlong stampede; each for himself; sauve qui peut!

Monitors and masters, half-dressed, were mingled with the crowd, and doing all in their power to stem the flood of fugitives. But they were brushed past and shaken off. There is nothing so terrible in its irresistible strength as a frightened, unreasoning crowd. It will not pause to think, but it runs in one direction, bearing all before it.

These night-shirted beings, by sheer force of custom, were making for one goal—The Old Door. Safety, they imagined, lay beyond it, and by dint of daily habit they found themselves pushing along, and then down towards the familiar means of exit.

Still from below came strenuous calls for Cripps, and the very necessary key on the porter's bunch. Moans and sobs pitiful to hear swelled the babel. The pack down by The Old Door was enormous, and was increasing in density every moment. It was a turbulent, fighting mass, those below striving to get up the stairs again, and those above striving to get down to The Old Door. And the weight and advantage were with those who were above.

Matters were approaching a crisis. The captain of the House consulted hastily with the most clear-headed master near at hand.

"This means murder, sir. What are we to do?"

"Well, we must prevent any more from going down. Look here, get all the big fellows you can, form a line at the top of the staircase, and stop the rush. Then you must begin to pull the fellows up by main force We'll help you all we can."

So now the masters and the seniors began to act on a definite plan, and the rush down was arrested. It was hard work doing that, and harder work still pulling them up.

Hovering round, endeavouring to lend a hand, but really getting very much in the way, was Mr. Kitt, his mild eyes wide open with horror.

This being no time to stand on ceremony, Mr. Kitt was abruptly requested to keep out of the way by one of his colleagues, a brawny rowing blue from Oxford. Somewhat hurt, Mr. Kitt complied with this request. And then an idea struck the little music-master.

Where, all this time, was that monarch of muscle—J. O. Jones?

J. O. slept in a little dormitory with three other fellows. Mr. Kitt made his way thither as quickly as possible, and managed to get there all right in spite of the fact that he was knocked down and trampled on twice in the course of his journey.

There, in his bed, lay J. O., slumbering as peacefully as a little baby.

"Jones—get up!"

Mr. Kitt shook the drowsy giant, and at length J. O. sat up and blinked at his disturber.

"Get up, sir?"

"Yes, slip on something and follow me. You're wanted badly."

In a dazed way J. O. pulled on his light grey flannel bags—the everyday leg attire at Greyhouse during the summer—and followed Mr. Kitt.

They soon reached the staircase, and something of the truth came home to the bewildered senses of J. O. when the captain of the House grasped him roughly by the shoulder.

"You're the very man, Jones. Just stand here and begin chucking the fellows back, and we'll pass them into the passage. You needn't mind about hurting them. It's life and death. We must clear a way down to the door."

Only dimly understanding that something very bad was taking place, but realising that some hard work was wanted from him, J. O. promptly began picking the fellows off the stairs and hurling them to the group of monitors and masters above him.

One-two-three-four-five-six! Before a frightened junior quite knew what was happening he felt himself clutched in a grip of iron and whirled through the air, then grabbed by half a dozen pairs of hands, and shoved into the corridor.

Seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven-twelve!

By this time he had J. O. was warming to his work. stripped his sleeves up and tightened his belt. Certainly he looked more like a butcher than a schoolboy, but that didn't matter.

Twenty!

J. O. drew a deep breath, and continued his work of rescue with an energy worthy of the highest praise. He didn't much mind where he got hold of his victim, so long as he got hold of him somehow. Every now and then, in his

panic, a fellow would endeavour to resist J. O.'s nurse-like attentions, and one even drew blood from J. O.'s nose, but J. O. merely mopped the injured organ on the sleeve of his night-shirt and went on with his work looking more like a butcher than ever.

In spite, however, of J. O.'s efforts, and those of the masters and seniors behind him, the fellows at the foot of the staircase were in a horrible predicament. They were jammed and squeezed together like sardines; some had fainted and would have fallen had they not been supported by the close-pressing bodies of their companions.

The House captain approached J. O.

"We must get that door open somehow, Jones. Think we can burst it?"

"Where's the key?" blurted out J. O.

"Cripps can't be found—he has it. We must do something or the chaps below will be suffocated. Look here—you see these two ledges—they run parallel all the way down. Couldn't you hoist yourself over the heads of the chaps and get your shoulder against the top of the door? You'll have to get one foot on one ledge and one on the other."

"I'll try," said J. O.; "got anything I can use as a lever?"

Mr. Kitt heard the question, and scurried off like a rabbit. He returned quickly with his bed-room poker and tongs.

"These may do," said J. O., and commenced his descent, getting along by means of the ledges, and at times finding a resting-place for his feet on the shoulders of the mob beneath him.

At the foot of the staircase the air was so thick and hot that he could hardly breathe. But the sobs and groans of the poor boys beneath him gave him new vigour.

The Old Door was very substantial, but it was very old. He pushed the top of it with all his might, and at length got Mr. Kitt's poker through. Then he squeezed the tongs through. Then he forced both to the right, and they bent like wands.

"This won't do," muttered J. O., and paused for breath.

Next he put his great shoulder against The Old Door, and pushed for dear life. At last—at last—he got his left arm through. Then he got his elbow against the corner and doubled it, and The Old Door gave a little. The corner of it was buried in his flesh, but he hardly noticed that.

Now he let poker and tongs drop outwardly, and pressed with his elbow until he could squeeze his other arm through. The old lock was creaking in torment, but it still held out.

J. O. then used both arms, and put his whole weight against the top of the door. He shoved and strained, panting and sweating with his exertions, but the door grimly resisted him. He was growing weaker. He looked down, and shuddered at the sight of that helpless mass of white-clad beings. Their safety—their lives, indeed—depended on his exertions.

"Now or never," he thought, "'cos I'm about done. Here goes!"

Those above were listening—listening with straining ears. They couldn't get down far enough to see.

And while they were listening they heard a great rending and cracking of timber, and then a thunderlike crash and a thud.

The boys above melted away downstairs. There was room now. Masters and monitors followed. When they reached the foot of the staircase they discovered The Old Door lying prone along the corridor, and J. O., bleeding from head and arms, picking up inanimate forms.

Then followed a brisk half hour's ambulance work, all the men and women in the school lending a hand.

When it was done the Head went over to J. O.

"Jones, all our thanks are due to you. You saved many lives. In the name of everybody, I thank you very much indeed!"

"Not at all, sir," muttered J. O.

* * * * * * * * * * *

That was J. O.'s mightiest deed. When the fellows came to survey the scene by the early morning light they found that J. O. had burst The Old Door off its lock and hinges!

And great was the wonder thereat. It was celebrated in verse and prose in the Greyhouse magazine, but J. O. didn't take the trouble to read these efforts.

The Head and everybody clubbed together and gave him a gold watch. J. O. put it in his locker alongside his cricket boots, as he preferred his old silver turnip to this gorgeous timepiece.

And you should have seen what an ovation J. O. got on Speech Day.

But he seemed very much bored by it all. That was just like J. O. Jones.

A Friend's Good Name.

FitzClarence Dewberry was a very well-to-do young gentleman, and fond of letting people know it. In addition to a generous supply of pocket-money, he appeared to possess a number of relatives who seemed eternally anxious to heap gifts upon him. He owned a superfluity of rings, scarfpins, studs, shirt-links, and other valuable articles, and in addition, a massive and patriarchal gold watch.

It was a pity that FitzClarence Dewberry, having so much that was worth money, did not keep a stricter eye upon his treasures. Anyhow, whilst he was engaged in a game of football one afternoon in the Lent term his gold watch was stolen from the waistcoat in which he left it. The theft was committed in the changing-room that opened into the gym.

Needless to say, FitzClarence Dewberry was greatly perturbed by this loss, for the watch was a valuable and quaint one, having descended to him from a bachelor uncle.

Mr. Dewberry bemoaned his loss in the seniors' room of North House at great length. But nobody felt at all sorry about the watch.

A fortnight later, whilst Mr. Dewberry was strolling aimlessly through the town of Belsert, he happened to halt before the window of One Moses, a jeweller, and observed, exposed for sale amid a variety of other goods, his gold watch. He knew it, as he afterwards explained to the bored seniors of North House, by its rum old face.

He went in. One Moses, recognising the Greyhouse cap, was all bows and smiles.

"Here, I say, you know," began Mr. Dewberry, "that's my watch you've got in your window, you know."

One Moses saw that this was not a purchaser, so his manner changed.

"What d'yer mean?" he demanded roughly.

"I want my watch," explained Dewberry. "It's in your window. It was stolen from me."

One Moses now grew very angry.

"Stolen! Get out with you! Nothing here's been stolen! The watch you mention was sold to me by a very respectable young gentleman who knew how to keep a civil tongue in his head."

"Tongue be hanged!" shouted Mr. Dewberry, whose choler was rising. "I tell you that curious-looking gold watch in your window is mine; and before it was mine it belonged to my uncle, Lord Tanhurst; and before it was his——"

"Pity it wasn't buried with one of 'em!" interrupted the jeweller, with a sneer.

"If you're not very careful I'll call the police in," was Dewberry's warm rejoinder.

"Call away!" laughed the Jew.

"A month's hard labour would teach you manners, you impertinent scoundrel!" cried the exasperated visitor.

By way of reply the Jew nipped round the counter, gripped Dewberry by the collar, and ran him out of the shop.

"We'll transact any further business you may have with me in the open!" shouted Mr. Moses, who was red with fury. "There won't be anything except your blooming head broken then! I suppose, because you are at a swell school, and don't work with your 'ands, you think you can say anything you like to an honest tradesman!"

"It all depends," spluttered Dewberry, in a white heat, "whether the tradesman tries to sell a watch which has been stolen from me!"

Moses was about to make another angry retort when it struck him it would be as well not to be too cocksure over this matter. After all, the watch might have been stolen.

"Come into the shop," he said; "it's too windy for talking out here. Now then," he continued, when they had resumed their former positions on either side of the counter, "let's be reasonable. You're a Greyhouse schoolboy, ain't you?"

"I belong to Greyhouse School," was Dewberry's way of putting it.

"Very well, then. You go back to your school, and tell your master that your watch is in my shop window, and that it was sold to me by one of his pupils—feller wearing same sort of cap as you—name of Wardour."

"Wardour?"

Dewberry fairly gasped in his astonishment.

"Ah!" cried Moses. "You knows him, then? Yes, Wardour. I was out, but he sold the watch to my assistant for six-pound-ten."

"It's worth fifty guineas!" exclaimed Mr. Dewberry.

"I dare say it is," returned the jeweller, "but you can have it again for seven pound. My boy fancied the young gent must have been a bit hard up, and would come and buy it back; but he didn't, so I put it in the window."

Dewberry gaped at the jeweller, and the jeweller smiled.

"You can have it for seven pound," repeated Moses. "That's ten bob for our trouble."

NEXT WEDNESDAY: "UNDER A CLOUD!" A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's, By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I hav'n't seven pounds on me. But keep it till to-morrow, will you?"

"I'll save it for you," said Moses suavely.

Dewberry went out in a sort of trance.

"Wardour? Impossible!"

He got back to Greyhouse somehow, and at once repaired to the captain's study and told him his tale.

"Of course," concluded Dewberry, "I don't suppose for a moment, Wardour, that you——"

"Of course not," said Wardour. "The jeweller has fudged up the tale. However, I'll go over with you on Monday and teach him to tell the truth."

Dewberry, being a weak, indiscreet youth, babbled to the weary seniors of the North about the event of the afternoon, and soon the story was public property. There are ill-natured fellows in every school, and a conscientious captain can't be popular with everybody, so here and there remarks were let drop concerning Wardour's poverty, and that this year he was being paid for by an old friend of his father's, and all that sort of thing. No decent chap attached any importance to such mutterings; even the fellows who were not well-disposed towards Wardour did not believe in their hearts that he was capable of stealing anything.

However, the excitement increased when it was babbled forth by Dewberry—who couldn't keep anything in—that he and Wardour had visited the jeweller's shop together, and that Wardour had been confronted by the jeweller's assistant, who swore that Wardour had sold him the watch.

The account of their visit, as given by Dewberry to the seniors of his House, was listened to with high delight.

Never the most placid of individuals, Wardour fairly boiled over when the shifty-eyed assistant calmly told his tale. There and then, in plain language, Wardour told the assistant what he thought of him.

Encouraged by his previous success with poor, flabby Dewberry, the jeweller strolled round the counter and looked Wardour up and down.

"D'you know what I does to people who talks like that there to a lad I employ?" he asked.

"No...nor care!" said Wardour.

"I chucks 'em out of my shop!" said the jeweller truculently.

"Suppose you begin chucking, then?" said Wardour.

Moses thereupon made a grab at Wardour's collar, but, just as his chest was temptingly exposed, Wardour hit him over the top buttons of his waistcoat with such neat directness that the jeweller staggered back on to the glass top of a stud, chain, locket, and ring-case, smashing the glass with his elbows, and inflicting several minor injuries on the treasures within.

Gasping for breath, with his hand pressed against his waistcoat, the jeweller glared at the young gentleman he had intended to put into the street. He didn't want a second blow of that quality, so he retired behind the counter, still rubbing those particular buttons.

"Now," said Wardour, "I'll go on where I left off. This assistant of yours is an unmitigated liar. I have never been in this shop before in my life, and I hope never to be in here again."

The jeweller hoped as sincerely that he never would.

"I did not sell that watch to your assistant," said Wardour. "There, that is all I have to say!"

"Well," said the jeweller, becoming civil all of a sudden, "you can't blame me for taking the word of my assistant. I'm sure," he went on, still caressing his waistcoat with a painful expression on his face, "no one regrets this business more than I do. I'll swear the money was paid over the counter to somebody, or the watch wouldn't be here. So you see how it stands. If a common man had brought that watch in, my assistant would probably have communicated with the police; but when a gentleman wearing the Greyhouse cap wanted to sell a ticker——"

"Do you still say that I sold you that watch?" demanded Wardour of the lad.

"Yes," said the assistant; "it was you!"

But his lips as he spoke were white and dry, and the words came thickly.

"My assistant naturally took him to be 'all right,' and gave him what he thought was fair," concluded Mr. Moses deferentially.

Dewberry was really a good-hearted fellow, and he interfered at this juncture in what was (for him) a very business-like way.

"Well, now, look here, you," he said, casting a withering glance at the assistant. "I don't believe a word of your yarn, but it's my watch, and as Mr. Moses says he'll let it go for seven pounds—well, here's the money. There—that ends the matter."

"For the present," said Wardour.

Thus the watch got back to its rightful owner, and the two Greys left the shop.

"I must give you that seven pounds, Dewberry," said Wardour.

"Not at all, old man."

"Oh, but I must! I insist! That miserable little beast of an assistant swears that I sold him the watch, and the worst of it is that on the day he mentions I was in Belsert, and must have been passing the shop even about the time he says I called. Yes, I'll refund you that seven quid, Dewberry."

Dewberry wouldn't hear of it.

"As you know," said Wardour, rather bitterly, "I'm never very flush, but I'll write to my guv'nor for the cash to-night."

And in spite of poor Mr. Dewberry's protestations, Wardour wrote for the money, and paid it over to him.

"Look here," said Dewberry, gazing disconsolately at the seven sovereigns, "I'll put these in my desk, and I'll get to the bottom of this matter, and when the real thief's found I'll pay the money back to you. You'll agree to that—eh?"

"Yes, I'll agree to that," said Wardour, readily enough.

FitzClarence Dewberry was a man of means, so he went to the Head, and asked if he might put the affair into a detective's hands.

The Head, needless to say, was greatly disturbed by the news which Dewberry brought to him.

"This is a very serious matter," he said. "I, like you, cannot believe for a single moment that Wardour had anything whatever to do with the watch. Somebody resembling him must have sold the watch, and given the name of Wardour, of Greyhouse School. I cannot allow you to employ a detective—it would never do. These mysteries can generally be solved without professional assistance. At present leave the matter to me, Dewberry, and—yes, tell Wardour that I should like to see him. Pray don't mention this conversation to your schoolfellows."

But Dewberry couldn't hold his tongue, and everybody knew all about the interview by evening chapel. Many were the curious glances cast at Wardour as he walked to his seat in the choir, where all the monitors sat, whether they could sing or not. Nobody believed he had taken the watch, and yet—how came the jeweller's assistant to make such a statement?

To be brief, the Head spared no pains in his endeavour to find the thief. He called on the jeweller, and cross-examined the jeweller's assistant (whose name was Cable), and, in short, did everything in his power to clear Wardour. But the youth Cable stuck to his story. Wardour, and no other than Wardour, had sold him that watch, he declared. Matters were at a deadlock—when, lo! going into the changing-room to fetch Hallam's sweater one Saturday afternoon, Sir Billy came plump on Mike Smith, the general odd-job boy of the school, calmly rifling the pockets of Hallam's coat.

(Another long instalment of this splendid public school story again next Wednesday. Order your "GEM" in advance. Price One Penny.)

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Miss Hazel McKinnoh, 1037, Sixteenth Avenue East, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in England, age about 17.

B. N. Burtens, 264, Jones Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers, aged about 17.

Harry Taylor, care of Choremi Benachi & Co., Zagazig, Egypt, wishes to correspond with girl readers in Gt. Britain.

Thomas Kelly, P.O., Box 271, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers of any country except South Africa.

Pieter J. Klem, Fourth Avenue, Seventh Street, Melville, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy readers living in England, age 17.

A. Bone, 46, Elgin Street, Hong Kong, China, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Scotland, age 16.

J. Solomon, P.O., Box 2225, Johannesburg, Transvaal, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 16.

F. Syms, 172, Lippincott Street, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in any British Colony.

F. Courtland, 337, Victor Street, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and postcards.

F. Courtland, care of Post Office, Preston, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Yorkshire, age 19-20.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

For Next Wednesday.

"UNDER A CLOUD!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

In our next grand complete tale of the juniors of St. Jim's Tom Merry has an extremely serious accusation brought against him by Figgins of the New House, with whom he is usually on such friendly terms. The hero of the Shell flatly denies Figgins's charge, but the New House junior persists, with the result that a battle royal ensues between the two champions.

Even this, however, fails to clear the air. And then a startling series of circumstances occurs which makes the case against Tom Merry look blacker than ever. The matter is eventually cleared up through an astounding discovery which Cousin Ethel makes, and St. Jim's realises an injustice has been done to Tom Merry.

"UNDER A CLOUD!"

is a story that I am confident will appeal to all my readers as one of the most interesting they have ever read, and, in addition, it will be two pages longer than usual.

FROM A KEEN KENTISH READER.

The following little note reached me just in time for insertion in this week's Chat:

"Dear Editor.—I am writing at last to let you know how I like the 'Invincible Trio.' I have taken in 'The Gem' and 'The Magnet' since Christmas, 1911, and the 'Penny Popular' since it came out. I must remark that they are the three most splendid weeklies I have ever read, and you can always rely on my being a loyal reader. I am especially pleased with 'The Magnet' Portrait Gallery, and I hope you will have one in 'The Gem.' I have read in the Chat pages letters from enthusiastic readers forming 'Gem' and 'Magnet' Leagues, and I have decided to form a 'Gem' Amateur Theatrical Society. Would you please insert the paragraph on the paper enclosed? I should be very much obliged to you if you would do me this favour. I must close now.—Wishing your papers every success,

"I remain,

"AN EARNEST READER (F. B.)."

Thank you, Master F. B., for your pleasant little note! I have pleasure in publishing herewith the notice you enclose. Here it is:

"Will readers, age 11 to 14, in the Ramsgate locality, and keen, join a 'Gem' Amateur Theatrical Society? Apply to Fred Burton, 47, Winstanley Crescent, Ramsgate, Kent."

SPECIAL NOTE.—Hugh Campbell, of Victoria Place, Barrhead, Scotland, would be glad to hear from Miss D. Watt, of Hobart, Tasmania.

Replies in Brief.

F. Ewins (Bristol).—Thanks for your letter. With regard to your suggestion, I think the Exchange Coupon has now established its right to its own particular corner of page 2.

If B. C., of Bradford, will forward his or her full name and address I shall be pleased to insert request.

D. Adam (Surrey).—The "Back Numbers" column is now closed, so I am afraid I am unable to grant your request.

"A Reader of Portman Square" (London).—I certainly advise you to purchase the book. It is a good method.

"Anxious" (Whitehaven).—I must thank you for your letter. Have you seen the doctor? If not, I think you will find it best to do so. Have you seen our other two companion papers—"The Penny Popular" and "The Magnet Library"?

"Two African Readers."—Alonzo Todd is returning to the school very soon. If you watch the "Magnet" weekly you will be able to renew your acquaintance with him.

R. A. J. (Plymouth).—If you answer one of the advertisements appearing every week in our "Correspondence Exchange," you will find that there will be no need to insert the announcement in the Canadian paper.

J. Naughton (W. Australia).—Wung-Lung is still at Greyfriars, and more will be heard of him anon.

H. M. Stewart (Africa).—Monty Lowther, of the School House, is still mentioned in our stories, as you will see by reading the last few numbers.

F. S. Sells (Lincs.).—You should attend classes until your drawings are sufficiently good, then submit them to the papers you find are most suited to the work you produce.

C. H. C.—The stuff you are thinking of is a solution of bitter aloes. It is obtainable at any chemist's.

C. Y. F. (Montreal.)—I am afraid I am unable to supply you with the information you require.

"S'il-vous-plait" (Leeds).—The answer to your question, as they say in Parliament, is in the affirmative.

THE EDITOR.

Please Help Your Editor By Filling In This Form.

Dear Editor,—I believe that if you sent a Specimen Copy of "THE GEM" Library to

(Here fill in your friend's name and address.) .....

you would be likely to obtain him, or her, as a regular subscriber.—Yours truly,

Name .....

Address .....

To the Editor, "THE GEM" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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WORLD'S RECORD
166,000 MILES

ON A BIKE SUPPLIED BY ME.

You can't make any mistake if you buy a bicycle from me. I sell the finest cycles that are built in Coventry—the hub of the cycle industry. Ask anybody who has purchased a cycle from me for an opinion about their mount; I know that they will fully endorse the testimony of thousands of my customers that **"O'Brien is unbeatable for value."** Here is absolutely convincing proof. Mr. William Revell, of Middleton, Suffolk, bought a cycle from me ten years ago, and his voluntary evidence, sworn on oath before a Commissioner for Oaths, reads:—"I never rode a better running machine in my life than the cycle I purchased from you nearly ten years ago. During most of the time I had it I rode over **400 miles** a week by myself, and I can assure you that the total distance I and my friends covered was no less than **166,000 miles.**" Are you convinced? Could you possibly desire a better [illegible] than Mr. Revell's, easy running, safe, reliable, strong, and **good for 166,000 miles?** Beware of cheaply constructed machines that are not worth [illegible] alone riding. This season I have placed colossal contracts with leading Coventry manufacturers, and having obtained exceptional terms, I am able to sell the finest grade, Coventry Cycles at **Pounds Below Makers' Prices.** I supply

HIGH-GRADE, COVENTRY CYCLES,

£3 10s. Cash.

(Makers' Price, £6 6s.).

Also BEST QUALITY, FINEST-GRADE COVENTRY CYCLES, guaranteed for [illegible] (Makers' Price, £9 9s.), similar to Mr. Revell's, for [illegible] and 18 monthly payments of 7/11. I sell

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Don't be without a reliable cycle this season. Bike it to work instead of paying train and tram fares, you'll be pounds in pocket, and your health will benefit. Make up your mind now to cycle and accept this generous offer

I WILL SEND YOU A GENUINE HIGH-GRADE, COVENTRY CYCLE ON TEN DAYS' FREE APPROVAL,

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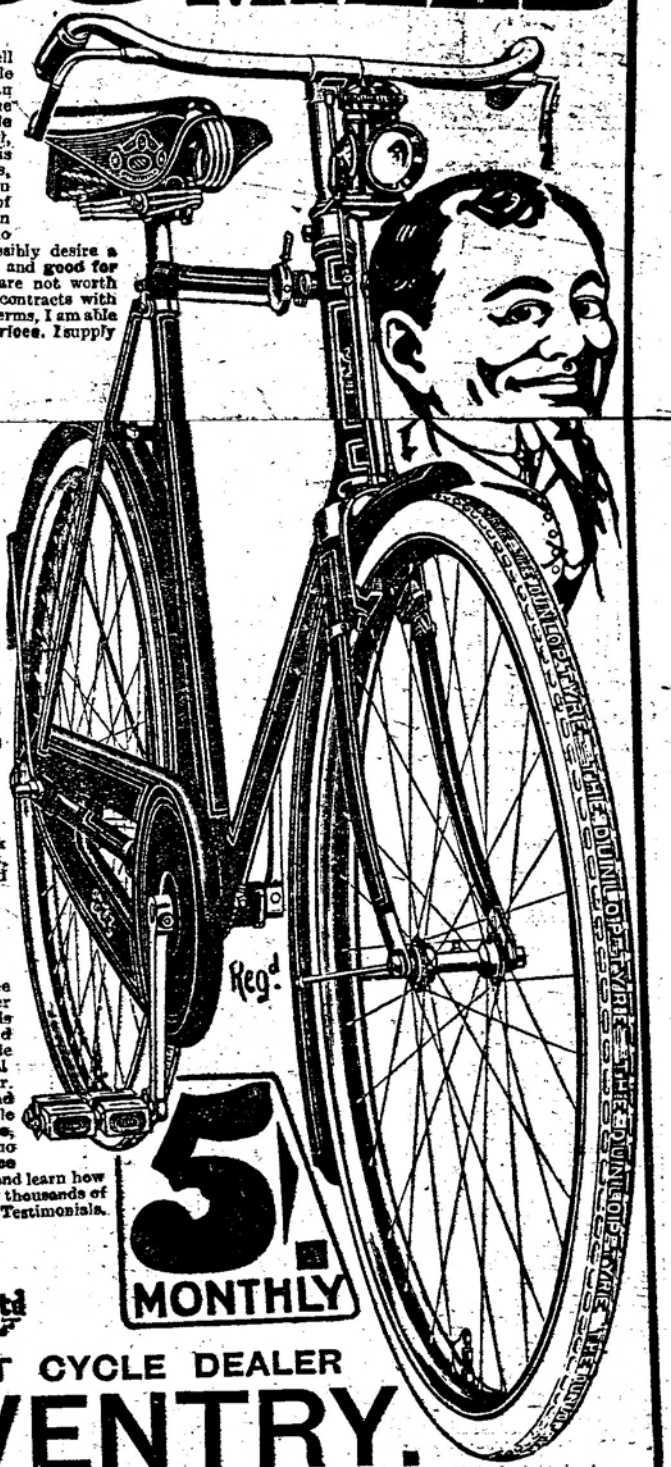

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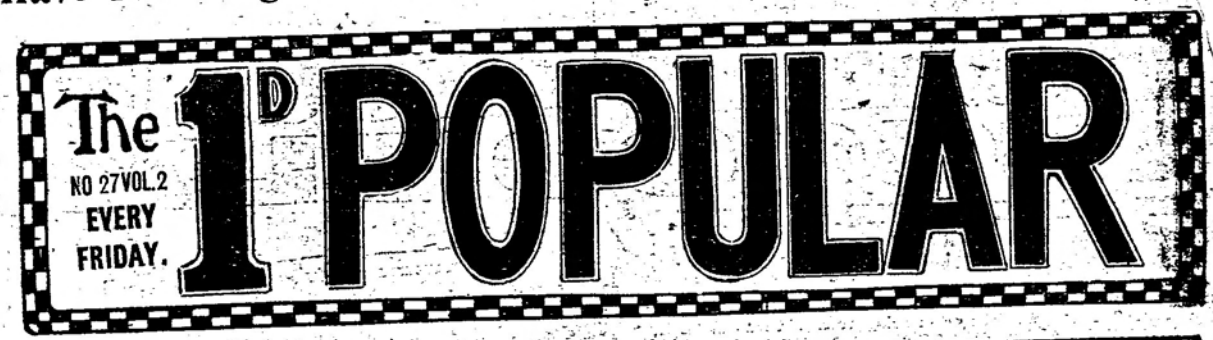

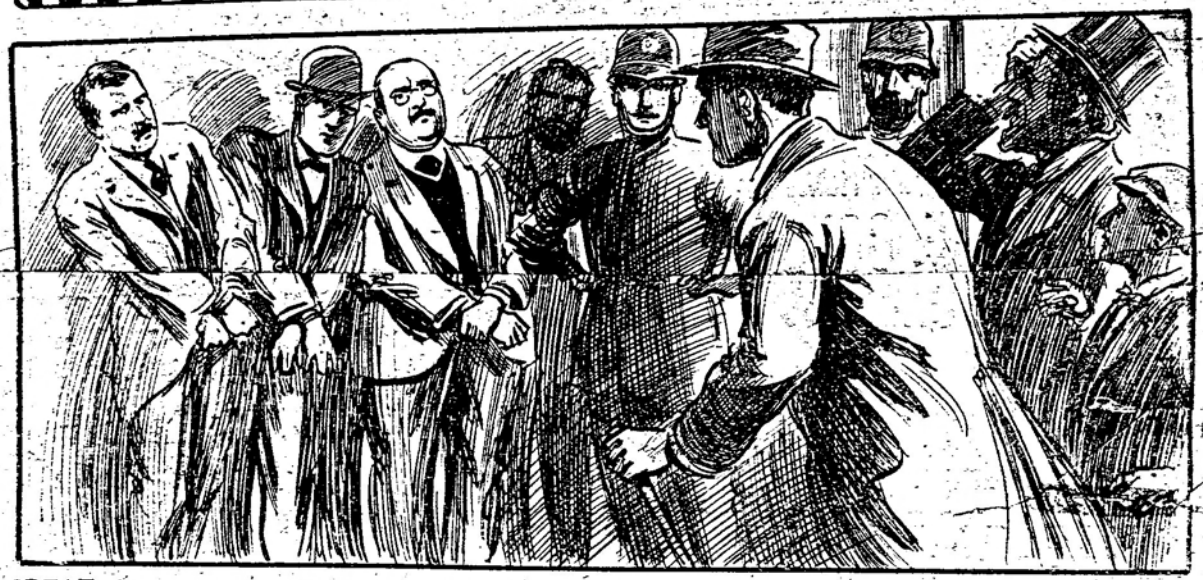

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An Amusing Incident in our Splendid Complete School Tale:
"TOM MERRY'S EXCURSION!"

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"THE BOXER OUTCAST!" By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

15-4-16