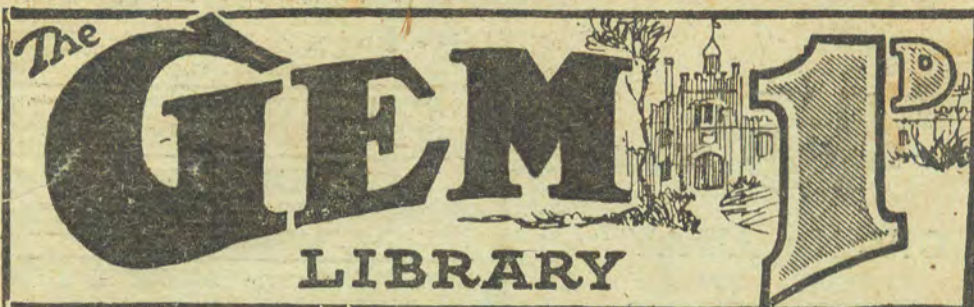


CAUGHT NAPPING!

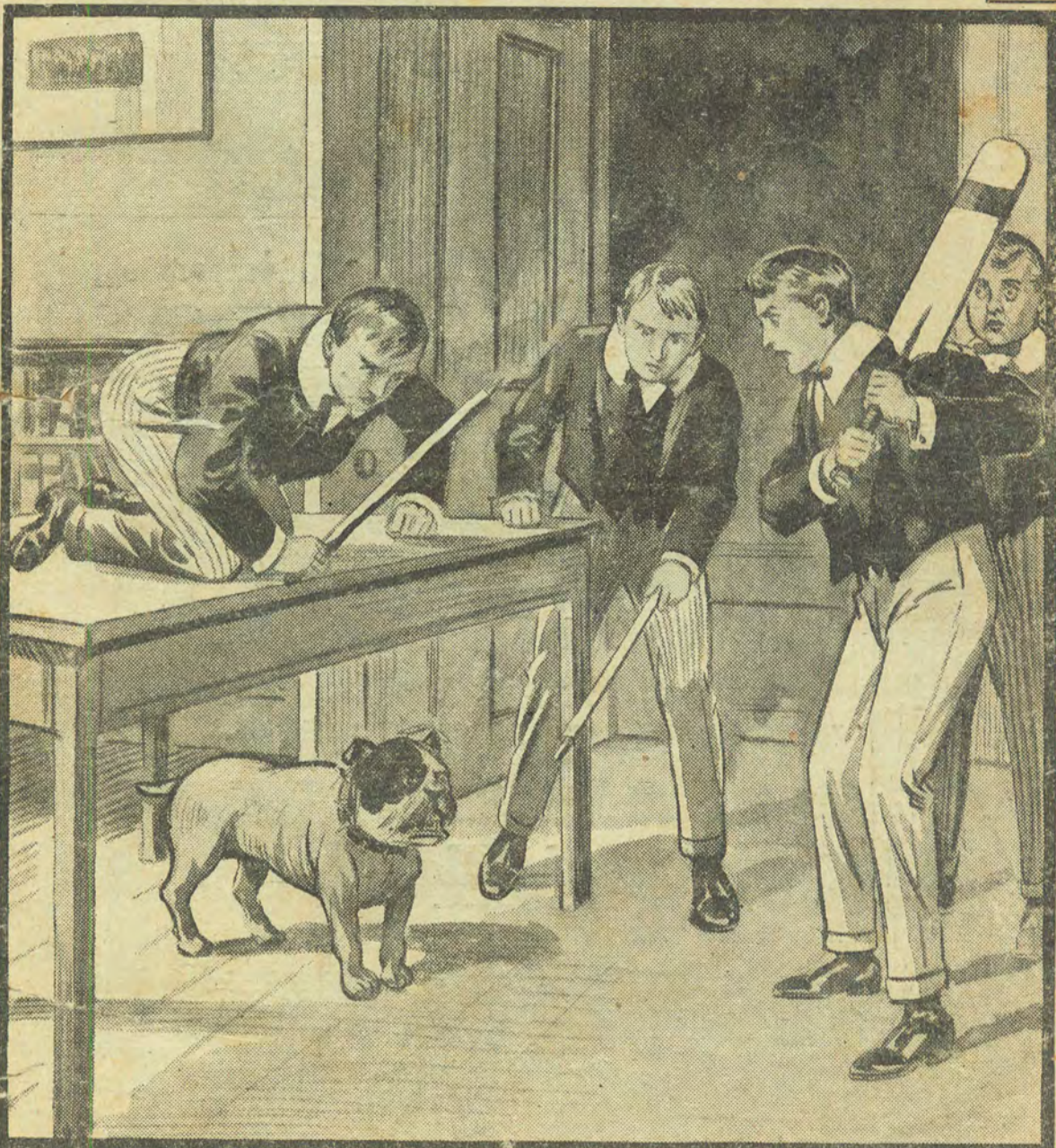
A Splendid, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and Their Rivals of St. Jim's.

Complete
Stories
for ALL,
and
Every
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in
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No.
307.

Vol.
8.



GLYN'S MECHANICAL DOG CAUSES TROUBLE!

(An amusing incident in "Caught Napping," the splendid, complete School Tale in this issue.)

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
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WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

CAUGHT NAPPING!

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. of
St. Jim's, and Figgins & Co.—their Rivals.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Tom Merry stepped to the door and turned the handle and pulled. But the door did not open. "What's the matter with it intirely?" asked Reilly. "Ahem! It seems to be fastened outside somehow," murmured Tom Merry. And from Blake & Co. there came a roar: "Who's caught napping now?" (See Chapter 3.)

CHAPTER 1.

Fatty Wynn Feels Hungry.

"THREE dozen jam tarts——"

"Hullo!"

"Two whole cakes——"

"What!"

"One seed and one currant. And two dozen ginger-beer——"

Figgins, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, stared at Fatty Wynn in astonishment. Fatty Wynn was standing outside the school tuckshop. There was a dreamy expression upon his face, and he was repeating his remarks in a dreamy sort of way, as if the enumeration of these delicious comestibles conjured up blissful visions before his mind's eye.

"What are you babbling about?" demanded Figgins.

"And a bag of biscuits," said Fatty Wynn, in the same dreamy tone. "And two tins of pineapple!"

"Dotty!" said Kerr, with a shake of the head.

"And a pound of doughnuts!" said Fatty Wynn, with a heavy sigh.

Figgins and Kerr grasped their fat chum by the shoulders, and shook him.

"Now, what are you rambling about?" Figgins demanded.

"Explain before we bunap you, you fat duffer!"

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"Leggo, you asses! I—I say, Figgins, I've got a suggestion to make—a jolly good suggestion. You know the New House has always been up against the School House at St. Jim's——"

"Of course it has," said Figgins; "and New House is cock-house, and always has been, and always will be!"

Figgins spoke with serene conviction. As chief of the New House juniors, he had no doubt whatever on that point.

"We've always been rowing with Blake, and Tom Merry, and the rest of the School House bounders," pursued Fatty Wynn.

"And we're always going to," said Kerr.

"What-ho!" said Figgins.

"That's where my idea comes in," said Fatty Wynn.

"Don't you think that these House rags have gone far enough?"

"What?"

"Don't you think the time has come to extend the right hand of friendship to the School House?" said Fatty Wynn, growing quite eloquent. "The lion and the lamb ought to lie down together, you know. Think how much better it would be for all St. Jim's to stick together, shoulder to shoulder, instead of having these blessed House rows. Don't you think so?"

Figgins and Kerr stared blankly at Fatty Wynn. Figgins & Co. of the New House were always "up against" the

Next Wednesday:

"NOT WANTED!" AND "SECRET SERVICE!"

No. 307. (New Series). Vol. 8.

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School House fellows; and Fatty Wynn had always been as keen as either of the other members of the Co. The change that had suddenly come over him was simply astounding.

"Don't you think so?" repeated Fatty Wynn earnestly. "Union is strength, you know. United we stand, divided we come a cropper. Why not chuck House rows and rags, and extend the right hand of fellowship—"

"I'll extend my right hand and give you a thick ear, if you talk rot to me!" said Figgins darkly. "What's come over you?"

Before Fatty Wynn could reply, three juniors came out of the tuckshop. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell—the Terrible Three of the School House, and the deadly, but friendly rivals of Figgins & Co. The Terrible Three were all laden with parcels, showing that their purchases had been extensive. They grinned and nodded to the New House fellows, and walked away towards the School House, and disappeared into its wide portals.

"Look as if they've been shopping for a giddy siege," said Kerr. "I wonder what they've got there!"

"I know!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Eh! How do you know?"

"I heard 'em giving their orders," explained the fat Fourth-Former. "Three dozen jam tarts, two whole cakes, one currant and one seed, two dozen ginger-beer, a bag of biscuits, two tins of pineapple, and a pound of doughnuts."

"They must be going to stand a big spread in Tom Merry's study, and they've forgotten to ask us!" grinned Figgins.

"Unaccountable oversight!" chuckled Kerr.

"I say, you chaps," said Fatty Wynn earnestly, "don't you agree with me? Isn't it time that these disorderly House rags were stopped, and the right hand of fellowship was extended to—"

"To collar some of Tom Merry's tuck?" demanded Figgins, in disgust.

"Ahem! No! I mean—"

"You mean you want to go to the feed, and that's why you want to stop rows with the School House!" roared Figgins.

"Nunno—not exactly; but on an occasion like this—"

"Like what?"

"Well, like—the present occasion, you know," stammered Fatty Wynn. "If we buried the hatchet, you know, we could celebrate it by—by joining them—"

"And scoffing some of their tuck?" growled Kerr.

"Well, you see—"

Figgins shook a slim forefinger warningly at his fat chum.

"You fat duffer! You—you rhinoceros! You'd sell your giddy birthright for a mess of porridge, same as Jacob did—"

"It was pottage!" howled Kerr. "And it was Esau not Jacob."

"I don't care what it was, or who it was!" said Figgins.

"I know Fatty Wynn would go and do likewise. He's hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt, like the—the Assyrians—"

"Ha, ha, ha! The Israelites, you ass!"

"Well, he's hankering after them," said Figgins. "He would give away the proud position of the New House as cock-house of St. Jim's to have a whack in a School House feed. He is a disgrace to the New House!"

"Oh, Figg!"

"And I order him to be bumped, to bring him to a better state of mind," said Figgins severely.

"Here, I say—Yah!"

Bump!

Fatty Wynn, suddenly grasped by his two chums, was brought to the ground with a concussion that made him roar.

"Ow, ow! Leggo, you silly asses! Yaroooh!"

"We're doing this for your good, Fatty!" said Figgins

kindly. "Otherwise you'll get into the habit of selling the New House for a mess of porridge."

"Ow, ow!"

"Give him another!"

"Ow! I say—I'll slaughter you! I—I'll—Yah!"

Bump!

"Bai Jove!" said a sweet voice—the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House. "Touble in the family, eh?"

Figgins and Kerr looked round. Fatty Wynn sat on the ground and gasped. His devoted chums had administered that lesson with thoroughness. Fatty Wynn was trying to get his second wind, and seemed on the verge of apoplexy.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed him with a grin. The swell of the School House was clad in his best, and looked a dazzling picture, from the tips of his gleaming boots to the crown of his beautiful silk hat. When Arthur Augustus really took trouble with his clothes, then Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the swell of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! You'll make the school wock if you bump Wynn in the quad, you know," said Arthur Augustus.

"What's the mattah, deah boys?"

"Groogh!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"Discipline!" explained Figgins. "Fatty Wynn wants to sell his birthright for a fleshpot of Egypt!"

"Bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn scrambled up.

"I say, D'Arcy, old man," he gasped, "I—I was looking for you. I—I want to have a jaw with you. I—I want you to sing me a tenor solo."

"Weally, Wynn, you are vewy flattewin'. But I feah I am engaged this aftahnoon, as we are havin' a big feed in Tom Mewwy's studay."

"Oh, I don't mind—I'll just come—"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Imposs, deah boy. Owin' to a vewy special and particular weason, we are not havin' any New House boundahs."

"Look here—"

"Sowwy, deah boy—pway excuse me, as I have to ordah the west of the gwub for the feed!"

And Arthur Augustus walked into the tuckshop.

Fatty Wynn frowned at his comrades, and grunted.

"Why couldn't you back me up, silly assee?" he growled. "On an occasion like this, we ought to be civil to the School House kids. I don't hold with these blessed House rags, and rows, and things. The right hand of fellowship—"

"Shurrup!" said Figgins. "They're not having any New House chaps—that means that they're going to plot something over their blessed feed."

"Something up against us," said Kerr, with a nod.

"Yes, rather! We've given them the kybosh lately, and I suppose they are getting their little backs up, and want to get their own back," said Figgins, with a sniff. "But we're going to take the bull by the horns. This is where we come in!"

"Where?" asked Fatty Wynn, mystified.

"Here, fathead! When Gussy comes out of the shop—"

"Well?"

"Laden with tuck!" said Figgins impressively. "Then we jump on him, biff his topper over his ears, and collar the tuck. And that will show the School House that they'll have to get up very early in the morning to keep their end up against us!"

"Oh, good egg!" said Fatty Wynn enthusiastically. "I say, Figg, you're a giddy genius, you know. It's high time we squashed those School House bounders; they've been altogether too cheeky lately. It's time we really gave them the kybosh."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Fatty Wynn warmly. "Don't you agree with me that it's time we fairly jumped on the School House cads, and put 'em into their place for good?"

"Ha, ha, ha! What about the right hand of fellowship?" roared Figgins.

"Ahem! Well, you see—ahem—"

"Yes, I see! I see that so long as you get hold of the grub, that's all you care about!" growled Figgins. "Now, shut up, and wait for Gussy to come out—and when I say the word, jump on his neck!"

"What-ho!"

And the New House trio waited and watched.

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(See column 2, page 26 of this issue.)

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Tom Merry stared at the grate in wonder and alarm. Smoke was pouring out more densely now, and filling the room. Monty Lowther ran to the window and opened it wide. "What on earth's the matter?" ejaculated Tom Merry. "It's the first time the blessed chimney's gone like that." (See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER 2.

Baffled Raiders.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was giving orders on a liberal scale in the tuckshop. Dame Taggles, with a sweet smile on her face, was handing out good things galore. Evidently a celebration of unusual proportions was toward in the School House of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in funds, and the same good-fortune had befallen the chums of Study No. 6—D'Arcy, Blake, Herries, and Digby.

And the chums of the School House were evidently bent upon improving the shining hour while the funds lasted.

Outside the tuckshop the New House juniors could hear the cheerful voice of Arthur Augustus, giving orders. And they grinned blissfully. D'Arcy was ordering a feed for them, though he did not know it. Raids of this kind were not at all uncommon occurrences among the rival juniors of St. Jim's. It was all in the game, and the side that got "left" never thought of complaining. Figgins & Co. anticipated gleefully standing a spread in the New House to half the Fourth Form, with the good things that Arthur Augustus was ordering regardless of expense.

"Pway put them in a bag or somethin', ma'am!" said Arthur Augustus, when his long list of orders had been at length fulfilled.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy!"

"I am afraid I shall not be able to cawwy it myself, but my friends are comin' to help me. They ought to be heah."

Arthur Augustus stepped to the door of the tuckshop and looked out for Blake and Herries and Digby. But the heroes of the Fourth were not yet in sight. D'Arcy glanced at Figgins & Co., but they were talking football in deep, earnest

tones, and seemed to have forgotten all about him. Figgins & Co. could be very deep when they liked.

D'Arcy turned back into the tuckshop.

"Weady? How much, please?"

"Two pounds, five shillings, and threepence-halfpenny, please, Master D'Arcy!"

"Wight-ho! Change this fivah, please!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Fatty Wynn ecstatically.

"What a spread! What a gorgeous brew! Oh, my only Uncle Joseph!"

"Shurrup!" muttered Figgins.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared in the doorway with a large basket in his hand, the weight of which appeared to bother him. He looked again towards the School House through his famous monocle. Blake and Herries and Digby, busy with the preparations for the great feed in Tom Merry's study, had apparently forgotten that he wanted their aid. But just then he spotted them coming out of the School House.

Figgins and Co. spotted them, too.

"Buck up!" murmured Figgins. "We've got to collar that basket, and get it over to the New House before those bounders arrive! Follow your uncle."

And the Co. closed round D'Arcy.

"I'm going to carry that bag for you, Gussy!" said Figgins kindly.

"Thank you vewy much, Figgay!" said Arthur Augustus, as the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors lifted the basket from his grasp. "You are vewy vewy good, and I'm sowwy I cannot ask you to the feed!"

"Oh, that's all right—we're going to ask ourselves!"

"Weally, Figgins! I say, deah boy, you're goin' in the wong direction!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in great

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

astonishment. "That basket is to be cawied to the School House—not to the New House, you ass!"

"Your mistake!" Figgins called back cheerfully. "Au revoir! Lend a hand, Kerr!"

"Bai Jove! You awful wottah, is it a waid? You feahful burglah! I command you to bwing that basket back at once!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter floated back from the New House frior, as they rushed the captured basket away towards the New House raiders.

Arthur Augustus waved a frantic hand to Blake & Co., who were running towards the spot. They had seen what had happened.

"Wescue, deah boys!" yelled D'Arcy. "Those wottahs have collahed the gwub! Wun like anythin'!"

And D'Arcy dashed after the New House raiders.

Figgins & Co., laden with the heavy basket as they were, covered the ground in great style. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy panted furiously after them, and some distance behind him came Blake and Herries and Digby at top speed. But Figgins & Co. had a good start, and with common luck they would have escaped with the prize. Fatty Wynn, in his mind's eye, was already munching tarts and cakes and buns. But it was not to be—Figgins's luck was out. Ahead of the fleeing raiders, a sturdy junior appeared in view—Harry Noble of the Shell, otherwise known as Kangaroo, and one of the leading lights of the Lower School in the School House. Kangaroo was sauntering across the quad, carelessly, with his hands in his pockets, when a yell from Jack Blake warned him of the state of affairs.

"Kangy! Look out!"

"Stop thief!"

Kangaroo jumped into the path of the raiders with an activity worthy of the animal from which he derived his nickname. Figgins & Co. were three to one, but there was rescue close behind. Kangaroo grasped Figgins, and brought him down, and the basket dropped on the ground.

"Get the loot away, Kerr, and leave me to squash this silly ass!" roared Figgins.

Kerr hesitated a moment, loth to leave his chum in the grip of his enemy; but he obeyed. Grasping the basket, he rushed on. Figgins grasped Kangaroo, and they rolled on the ground, and Arthur Augustus, as he rushed up, stumbled over them, and rolled over, too. But he was up in a second and dashing on. Kangaroo had delayed the raiders long enough to give the pursuers a chance, and D'Arcy, with a spurt, came up with Kerr and Fatty Wynn as they rushed on with the basket.

"You uttah wottahs! Stop!"

Arthur Augustus was hatless, and his eyeglass was floating at the end of its cord. Never had his manners so conspicuously lacked the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. But D'Arcy did not care. He was fairly on the war-path now, and at such moments he could forget completely that he was the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and swell and leader of fashion in the Lower Forms of St. Jim's.

He hurled himself on Kerr, and grasped him round the neck, and Kerr came to the ground with a heavy bump.

"Grooh!" gasped Kerr. "Ow! Gerroff! Ow!"

"Wescue, deah boys!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"Hold him!" panted Jack Blake. "We're coming!"

"I've got the wottah—"

"Collar the grub and get on, Fatty!" Kerr yelled.

"Right-ho!"

Fatty Wynn had turned back to his chum's aid, but it was evidently more important to save the captured basket from recapture. Fatty Wynn made a dive for it, and grasped it, and rushed on towards the New House. But the basket was heavy, and Fatty Wynn had no chance. Like an arrow from a bow, Jack Blake of the Fourth was after him, and he tackled Fatty Wynn in Rugby style, and brought him down.

Bump!

"Ow! Oh! Yah!"

"Got him!" chortled Blake triumphantly. "Collar the basket, Herries—quick, before any more of the cads come round!"

"Right-ho!" chuckled Herries.

Herries and Digby picked up the basket and bore it off in triumph. All three of the members of Figgins & Co. were captured now, and struggling in vain in the grasp of their captors. Tom Merry & Co. had hurried out of the School

House to help—and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were each grasped by two pairs of sturdy hands.

Figgins grinned and gusted painfully.

"Done! Rotten! Chuck it, you chaps—we're done!"

"Bai Jove! Look at my toppah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, as he looked at D'Arcy's beautiful topper—beautiful no longer. It had been rolled upon, and it looked now far more like a concertina than a silk hat. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to cackle at, you duffah! My toppah's wuined—"

"Gerroff my neck!" gasped Fatty Wynn, addressing Blake, who was sitting there. "You've got your old basket. Gerroff my neck!"

"You cheeky New House bounders!" said Tom Merry severely. "You have forgotten that the School House is cock-house of St. Jim's, and you have the awful nerve to raid our tommy! What have you to say before you are sentenced to be hanged, drawn, quartered, and bumped?"

"Go and eat coke!" replied Figgins undauntedly.

"Roll 'em over, and push some jam-tarts down their necks!" said Tom Merry sternly.

"Ow—ow!"

"Oh! Yah!"

"Gerrooogh!"

And the School House juniors walked away laughing, leaving Figgins & Co. "grooghing" wildly, in a state of stickiness and exasperation impossible to describe.

CHAPTER 3.

A Little Celebration.

TOM MERRY'S study was crowded.

It was one of the largest studies in the Shell passage in the School House, but all its space was severely taxed by the convivial party that had gathered there.

They were all School House fellows, members or allies of the famous Co., that waged warfare upon the juniors of the New House.

There were Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy from Study No. 6, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell, and Reilly of the Fourth.

The table was spread in an unusually festive style.

In the wide, open grate blazed a huge fire, piled high, for it was a bitterly cold winter's day, and there were ridges of snow on the windowsills and on the branches of the old elms in the quadrangle.

The study looked very cosy and comfortable, and the viands displayed on the table were, as Monty Lowther remarked, grateful and comforting.

The chums of the School House looked round the study with great satisfaction. Study brews often took place in the School House, of course, but seldom upon so handsome a scale. Sometimes, when D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel came to the school, the juniors exerted themselves to make their little celebrations more imposing than usual. But though Cousin Ethel was not expected now, it was an important occasion.

Both studies being in funds, the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. had combined resources for that handsome spread, and footer practice had given them keen appetites to enjoy it.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, as soon as the last guest had arrived—"Gentlemen, the festive board is spread!"

"Hear, hear!" said the gentlemen.

"Pile in!" added Blake.

"What-ho!"

And the gentlemen piled in.

For some little time few words were spoken, few sounds being heard beyond the clatter of knives and forks and plates, and the clinking of cups and glasses. Such remarks as were made mostly in this wise:

"Pass the ham, Herries!"

"Jam-tarts this way!"

"Another slice of cake, Kangy?"

"My cup's empty! Thanks!"

But when the keen edge had been worn off their appetites, conversation divided the attention of the juniors with the viands.

Tom Merry coughed emphatically, to show that he had something to say. And the tea-party were all attention at once, it being understood that the meeting was for business as well as pleasure.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "we have met upon a rather important occasion—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, polishing his eyeglass. "I shall wise to make a few remarks—"

"You sit where you are," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to make the remarks."

ANSWERS

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Gentlemen, it has been admitted for hundreds of years that the School House is cock-house at St. Jim's. It is universally recognised that it is the first duty of every School House chap to stand up for his House, and put the New House bounders in their place, and keep 'em there."

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting cordially.

"Passed unanimously!" said Kangaroo. "Shove the jam this way!"

"For that reason," said Tom Merry, "this raceting has been called. It is necessary for all School House fellows to stand shoulder to shoulder in the great cause. We have wasted our energies in civil war—"

"Oh!"

"Study No. 6 up against this study," explained Tom Merry. "We have ragged one another when our duty was to rag Figgins & Co. bald-headed. When I lick Blake, or Lowther bumps D'Arcy, it practically amounts to civil war—"

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as wathah uncivil."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake rose to his feet, a gleam in his eye.

"Sorry to interrupt the honourable chairman," he said. "But I should like the occasion to be specified when I have ever been licked by anybody. I may have a bad memory, but I certainly don't remember anything of the sort."

"Order!"

"Figure of speech," Tom Merry explained. "I mean, we've wasted our time shoving your study into its place instead of shoving Figgins & Co. into theirs."

Herries rose.

"I beg to point out that our study has never been shoved into its place," he said. "And I further remark, that if the honourable chairman is going to talk out of the back of his neck, the sooner we elect another honourable chairman the better."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Peace, my infants!" said Tom Merry pacifically. "Haven't we agreed that this is to be a meeting of peace, to consolidate our alliance, and to lay plans for the defeat of the New House rotters?"

"Well, that's all right," said Blake. "I agree to that. But if you talk rot—"

"I call upon the chairman to withdraw all offensive remarks," said Digby.

"Oh, rats!"

"That's not a Parliamentary expression," said Kangaroo. "The chairman is off-side. Pass the doughnuts!"

"Gentlemen, I was merely pointing out that we have wasted time in mutual warfare," said Tom Merry gracefully.

"Well, we can let it go at that," agreed Blake. "But when you talk piffle about having licked me, or putting Study No. 6 in its place, then—"

"Exactly! At this feed the hatchet is buried, and from this hour forth we march in alliance against the common foe."

"Hear, hear!"

"I do not exactly approve of that expression," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "Figgins & Co. are New House wottahs, of course, but I should not chawactewise them as common. That is a wathah wuff expression to use."

"Ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. And I wepeat—"

"Fathead!" roared Tom Merry. "When I say the common foe, I don't mean that the foe are common."

"Bai Jove! Then what do you say so for?"

"I don't say so, ass!"

"But you say you say so—"

"Sit on his head, someone! Now, gentlemen—"

"I wefuse to let anybody sit on my head—"

"Gentlemen, we are now going to lay plans in common to defeat the New House bounders, to confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks, and give them the kybosh generally."

"Hear, hear!"

"Study No. 6, having seen reason, and decided to follow our lead—"

"What's that?" exclaimed Blake sharply.

"Study No. 6 having agreed to follow our lead—"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wemark 'Wats' to that statement, Tom Mewwy, and many of them!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

Tom Merry glared.

"Didn't you agree to back us up, and line up with us against the New House, and isn't that what we're having this blessed feed for?" he demanded.

"Quite so," said Blake. "But we understood, of course, that we were going to lead."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry. "This study leads, of course. Now, the Fourth Form chaps here, having agreed to follow our lead—"

"Rats!" said Blake and Herries and Digby, with unanimity; and Arthur Augustus was equally unanimous, only he said "Wats!"

"Looks as if the civil war wasn't over yet, don't it?" chuckled Kangaroo. "Pass the ginger-beer!"

"We have met together," said Tom Merry, with a glare at the Fourth-Formers, "to discuss the plans against the enemy. This meeting represents all the important part of the Lower School in the School House, only one or two fellows couldn't come. Glyn is busy on some beastly invention, and Hammond has gone home to see his people. But there are enough of us to give the New House the giddy kybosh."

"Hear, hear!" said the tea-party all together. They could be quite unanimous on that point, at least.

"Figgins & Co. have been on the war-path lately. Only half an hour ago they actually had the cheek to raid our grub—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And if there hadn't been some Shell chaps round, they'd have got it away all right."

"Oh, blow the Shell!" said Blake. "Gussy let himself be collared, that was all. We can't help Gussy being a duffer. He was born like that."

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a duffah, Blake!"

"The New House wouldn't catch us napping, as they did Gussy," said Tom Merry. "The New House would have to get up very early in the morning to take a rise out of this study."

"B-r-r-r!"

"You see, we are up to their little games," Tom Merry explained loftily. "Why, if this very feed was being held in Study No. 6, I shouldn't wonder if Figgins & Co. got up to some little game to muck it up."

"And they'd succeed too," said Manners, with a solemn shake of the head. "But here they wouldn't have any chance, and they know it."

"They'd screw us all up in the study, or something," remarked Monty Lowther. "But they won't try it on with us. They know better."

Blake snorted.

"Well, let's have a little less gas, and get to business," he said.

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses!" suggested Kangaroo. "And would you mind passing the jam again? That jam is good!"

"I was only pointing out that this study has a natural right to lead, for the general good," Tom Merry explained. "As it is impossible for the New House bounders to catch us napping, you see—"

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Clifton Dane, looking round towards the door.

"What's what, ass?"

"Somebody at the door."

"Come in!" called out Tom Merry.

But the door did not open. The handle, however, was seen to move a little. Somewhat mystified, Tom Merry stepped to the door and turned the handle and pulled. But the door did not open.

"What's the matter with it intirely?" asked Reilly.

"Ahem! It seems to be fastened outside, somehow," murmured Tom Merry, reddening a little.

And from Blake & Co. there came a roar:

"Ha, ha, ha! Who's caught napping now? Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 4.

On the War-Path.

"ROTEN!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"Beastly!" said Kerr.

"Quite the rotten limit!" said Figgins.

The New House Co. were in Figgins's study. They were looking and feeling decidedly "rotten." Their raid upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's basket of provisions had not been a success, and they had been very roughly handled in the course of it.

They had changed their jammy collars and washed off the jam in the dormitory, surrounded by a grinning and unsympathetic crowd of juniors of their own House.

Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, their rivals for supremacy in the New House, had chuckled without limit over Figgins & Co.'s misadventure. Thompson of the Shell had inquired politely whether it wasn't time they went out

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of business—in fact, all the New House juniors laughed and grinned over their defeat, and hinted that Figgins & Co. were on their last legs.

Fatty Wynn felt the defeat most of all. It was not only the defeat, but the loss of the feed, that worried Fatty Wynn. He had been counting upon a tremendous spread in the study after spoiling the Egyptians. But the Egyptians had declined to be spoiled, and Fatty Wynn had gained nothing but a swollen nose and a thick ear.

Figgins was sitting on the corner of the table, swinging his long legs. His hands were plunged into his trousers-pockets, and his brow was wrinkled in thought. The mighty brain of the great Figgins was at work.

"All the fellows are chipping us!" growled Kerr. "It would have been better to leave the rotten tommy alone!"

"It wasn't rotten tommy; it was jolly good tommy!" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "And there isn't such a thing as rotten tommy. There's good grub, and better and worse grub, but there's no bad grub."

"And now they're feeding on the fat of the land——"

"Our fat of the land!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"And grinning at us——" pursued Kerr.

"And out of our reach!" said Wynn. "It's no good trying to raid them in their own House, I suppose? We should have a giddy hornets' nest round us in no time!"

"The laugh's up against us!" said Kerr. "We can't even muck up their feed. That would be some satisfaction."

Figgins brought down his palm upon his knee suddenly with a slap that sounded through the study like a pistol-shot.

"We'll do it!" he exclaimed.

"Do what? We're done!" growled Kerr.

"We're not going to take a defeat lying down, I suppose?" said Figgins. "Besides, we must do something to keep up our prestige. Young Pratt asked me whether I was going to hand over the leadership to somebody who could lead."

"And what did you say?"

"Oh, I didn't say anything! I hit him on the nose," said Figgins. "But it's clear that we must do something. Something's got to be done, and we've got to do it. And I've got a wheeze."

"Hear, hear!" said Kerr and Wynn simultaneously.

"Pile in!"

"We're going to muck up their feed," said Figgins.

"We're going to make them sorry for themselves."

Kerr shook his head.

"We can't get into their House," he replied. "We could get in, of course, but as soon as they saw us they'd call up a horde of their blessed hooligans and chuck us out on our necks. No go, Figgy!"

"I'm not talking about raiding the study. There are more ways of killing a kangaroo than feeding it on molasses," said Figgins. "Now, how many ways are there on a study?"

"Two, I suppose," said Kerr, with a stare—"the door and the window."

"Three!" said Figgins. "There's the chimney!"

"My hat! Are you thinking of coming down the chimney on them?" howled Kerr. "Why, they'll have a fire in the grate—and a big one too, most likely!"

"I know that. That's my little game."

"Blessed if I see it!"

"Then don't jaw till I've explained," said Figgins politely. "I suppose you know there's a trap in the roof of the New House in case of fire?"

"Of course!"

"So it's quite easy to get on the roof, and by getting across the roofs of the gym. and the library and the museum we can get on the roof of the School House?"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"And what's to prevent us from jamming something in their chimney?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And if one of us could sneak into their House and fasten the door of their study on the outside——"

"My hat!"

"I rather think they wouldn't enjoy our feed—for it really is our feed, as we had raided it," said Figgins triumphantly.

"Jolly risky!" said Fatty Wynn.

"If you are afraid of the risk——"

"Rats! If you want a thick ear, Figgy——"

"Look here, Fatty Wynn——"

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Order!" said Kerr. "Don't begin chipping now, for goodness' sake! We'll try it. It won't hurt us if it doesn't come off. I'll get into the School House and fasten up their door. I can do that, as I've got most brains——"

"You can do it," said Figgins. "It won't require much

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brains, so you can do it all right. I'll get on the roof. And if Fatty thinks it's too risky, he can go and eat coke."

"Rats!" said Fatty Wynn. "I shall come with you, of course. You would make a bungle of it without me."

"Then buck up," said Figgins.

And the trio left the study, their preparations being quickly made.

"Hallo!" called out Redfern of the Fourth, as they came out into the passage. "Are you raiding the School House again? Mind they don't catch you and make you jammy!"

"Oh, go and eat toffee!" growled Figgins.

And the Co. separated, Figgins and Fatty Wynn making their way to the top of the house, and Kerr descending the stairs. Kerr sauntered out into the quadrangle in a careless sort of way, and strolled over to the School House.

Ray and Kerruish and Levison of the Fourth were chatting on the School House steps, and they gave Kerr a suspicious look.

"Kildare in his study?" asked Kerr carelessly.

"Yes," said Kerruish.

"Good!"

And Kerr walked calmly into the House.

The juniors, supposing that he had been sent over from the New House with some message for Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, allowed him to pass without question.

But, once inside the School House, Kerr did not make his way to the Sixth Form passage. He scudded up the big staircase, and reached the Shell quarters. Fortune favoured him now.

Tom Merry's study door was closed, and Kerr could hear the voices of the party within. There was no one to be seen in the passage, most of the juniors being out of doors.

Kerr paused outside the study.

He took a dog-chain, with a padlock attached, from his pocket. The chain was long enough to extend across the passage. Kerr slipped a loop at the end of the chain over the handle of Tom Merry's door silently, and drew it tight.

Then he stretched the chain across the passage to the door-handle of the room opposite. He wound the end of the chain round the door-handle, slipped the tongue of the padlock through the links, and clicked it shut.

It had not taken him a minute, but the study door was fast enough now. No amount of pulling from within could have broken the chain, and even from outside it could not easily have been unfastened without a key to the padlock.

Kerr chuckled softly. But he had not been wholly unheeded, as we know. He heard the handle of Tom Merry's door turn, and there was a pull. The chain clicked slightly.

"It's fastened!"

The roar of laughter from the Fourth-Formers within the study was echoed by Kerr in the passage.

Tom Merry shouted through the keyhole:

"Hallo, there!"

"Hallo!" replied Kerr cheerfully.

"My hat! That's Kerr!"

"Right first time!" said Kerr calmly.

"You rotter! You've fastened my door!"

"Right again!"

"We'll come out and scalp you!" shouted Tom Merry, tugging at the door.

"You've got to get the door open first!" chuckled Kerr.

"We'll jolly soon do that! Lend a hand here, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Who's caught napping?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Who's caught nappin' this time, Tom Mewwy, deah boy?"

Tom Merry granted.

"Oh, rats! You're caught napping as much as I am," he said. "Leave off cackling, and lend a hand with this door."

Tom Merry and Lowther grasped the door-handle. Three or four fellows took a grasp upon them in turn, to lend their weight to the pull. They dragged away together, and the pull on the door was really terrific. But the door did not budge. It yielded perhaps half an inch, as the chain was drawn quite taut, but then it held fast.

"Pull away!" said Kerr encouragingly. "I don't think you'll be able to break the chain. But you're welcome to try."

"The chain! Oh, my hat!"

The pull ceased. Tom Merry & Co. realised that it was no use. Tom put his mouth to the keyhole and bawled:

"New House cads! Rescue!"

His voice rang along the Shell passage. Kerr beat a hurried retreat. His work was done, and he did not want to be caught there by a crowd of School House fellows. He descended the stairs by the simple and rapid method of sliding down the banisters, and hurried to the door.

"Hallo!" said Levison. "Have you seen Kildare?"

"No, I haven't seen Kildare," said Kerr cheerfully. And he knocked Levison's hat off and fled.

Levison gave a yell, and dived for his hat. Kerr scudded across the quadrangle, and waved his hand to a fellow who was looking down over the parapet of the New House. It was the signal to Figgins. Kerr's part of the work was done, and it remained for Figgins and Fatty Wynn to do the rest. Kerr chuckled as he strolled into the New House. But his chuckle died away as, happening to glance towards the school gates, he caught sight of the graceful figure of a girl entering there.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Kerr. "Cousin Ethel!"

And he whistled.

Cousin Ethel walked across the quadrangle towards the School House.

CHAPTER 5.

Smoky.

TOM MERRY & CO. had all risen from the tea-table now.

The Fourth-Formers were still grinning, and the Terrible Three were looking quite cross.

"Fairly caught!" grinned Blake. "Never mind; we can finish tea with the door shut. Somebody will come along and open it, I dare say."

"Yaas, wathah, as soon as the fellows discovah that Tom Mewwy has been caught nappin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "You make me tired! I believe those bounders have got some other trick up their sleeve. We must get this door unfastened."

He hammered on the study door with his fist. Monty Lowther hammered on the wall adjoining the next study, where Gore and Skimpole were having their tea.

George Gore came out into the passage. He stared at the chain stretched across, and chuckled.

"Hallo!" he called out. "What's the row?"

"Is that you, Gore? Get the door open, will you?"

"Can't!"

"Why can't you?" roared Tom Merry, whose temper was growing exasperated.

"There's a giddy chain and a padlock!" yelled Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole, blinking at the chain through his big spectacles. "It certainly seems impossible to unfasten that chain, Tom Merry."

"Get a crowbar, or something, and break it, fathead!"

"Thanks," yawned Gore. "I'm having my tea. Skimmy can go and hunt for a crowbar if he likes. You fellows should keep your eyes open."

"Look here, Gore—"

Gore went back to his study and shut the door, laughing. It did not matter to him how long the Co. remained imprisoned in Tom Merry's room.

"Skimpole!" called out Tom Merry. "Skimmy!"

"Yes, my dear Merry!" said Skimpole.

"Get something and break the chain, Skimmy, old man."

"Certainly," said Skimpole, blinking at it. "I will consider how it may be done, my dear Merry." Skimpole was a scientific youth, much given to deep thought. "If I had a crowbar, I could perhaps force the padlock."

"Buck up, then!"

"Unfortunately, I haven't a crowbar, my dear Merry, and I am quite ignorant of where to obtain such an implement," said Skimpole calmly. "Perhaps I could break one of the links of the chain with a pair of pincers. Do you think so, Merry?"

"Yes, yes! Try!"

"I am sorry, however, that I have no pincers," said Skimpole. "It would be best, perhaps, to find a key that would fit the padlock."

"Find one, then."

"Ahem! I really do not know where I could find such an article. The difficulty appears to me to be insuperable, my dear Merry."

"You—you ass!" said Tom Merry sulphurously, through the keyhole. "Go and call some of the fellows who've got more sense than you, then."

"I should be extremely pleased to oblige you, my dear Merry, but I am convinced that there is no one in the School House who answers such a description," said Skimpole, with a shake of the head.

"Ass! Fathead! Go and call Glyn!"

"Certainly, my dear Merry."

And the amiable Skimpole trotted along the passage towards the end study, where Bernard Glyn, the genius of the Shell, was at work upon one of his valuable inventions. Tom Merry turned from the door, breathing hard.

"May as well finish tea," he remarked. "No hurry to get

out, after all. Glyn will soon get the door undone. My hat! How smoky it is!"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"Yaas, wathah! I was just noticin' it, deah boy. It is vewy smokay indeed in this studay. I am afwaid there is somethin' w'ong with the chimnay."

The fire had certainly become extremely smoky all of a sudden. Smoke, instead of going up the chimney as usual, poured out into the room. Tom Merry rubbed his smarting eyes.

"That chimney wants sweeping!" grunted Herries.

"It was all right five minutes ago."

"Well, it isn't all right now."

Tom Merry stared at the grate in wonder and alarm. Smoke was pouring out more densely now, and filling the room. Monty Lowther ran to the window and opened it wide. But it made little difference. The room was so thick with smoke now that all the imprisoned juniors were coughing and sneezing.

"What on earth's the matter?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"It's the first time the blessed chimney's gone like that, that I know of."

"Tare and 'ounds!" gasped Reilly. "Sure, ye might have the chimney swept before ye have a tea-party in yer study! Groogh!"

"Oh, bai Jove! I'm weally suffocatin', deah boys!"

"Great Scott!"

The juniors made a rush for the window and crowded there. They were coughing, sneezing, and their eyes and noses were smarting. Tom Merry gave a sudden shout of wrath.

"Oh, my hat! Figgins!"

"Figgins! What about Figgins? Blow Figgins!" snorted Blake.

"It's Figgins!" yelled Tom Merry. "That's why that bounder Kerr has fastened us up in the study. The rotters have got at the chimney!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, crikey!" groaned Blake. "We served them a trick like that once. Ow! One good turn deserves another. Yow-ow! My eyes!"

"My nose—ow!"

"Oh, cwumbs! This is weally awful! I am smothahed with blacks! My linen will be howwibly dirtay! Our clothes will be wuined!"

Tom Merry rushed desperately to the door and hammered upon it. It was only too clear now why the door had been chained up. The atmosphere of the study was becoming unbearable. Smoke was pouring out of the open window, and curling out in little threads under the study door.

"Glyn!" roared Tom Merry. "Skimpole! Skimmy!"

"My dear Merry—"

"Buck up with the door!" shouted Tom Merry. "We're being smoked out!"

"Dear me!" said Skimpole sympathetically. "I am very sorry indeed, my dear Merry. How very distressing!"

"Have you told Glyn, fathead?"

"Yes; but he declines to open his study door. It is locked. He said he did not want to be interrupted. He also added some impolite expressions which I will not repeat."

"Oh, you—you ass! Go and call somebody else—quick!—if you haven't sense enough to get that chain off!" howled Tom Merry.

"I have sense enough, I trust, my dear Merry; but it appears to me to be an impossibility," explained Skimpole. "I am truly distressed by the discomfort you must be enduring, but it is scarcely feasible for me to remove the chain. Otherwise—"

"Ass! Idiot! Go and call somebody!" yelled the captain of the Shell.

"Whom shall I call, my dear Merry? Pray do not get excited. Excitement will not improve the matter at all. It can be scientifically demonstrated that—"

"Call Ray, Kerruish, Vavasour—anybody—but be quick!"

"I was going to say—"

"Buzz off!" roared Tom Merry.

Skimpole departed at last. Inside the study the atmosphere was thick—almost thick enough to be cut with a knife. There was an incessant chorus of coughing, sneezing, grunting, and snorting.

"Oh, crikey!" groaned Blake. "Catch us coming to this study again!"

"Oh, gweat Scott, this is simply fwightful, you know."

"Groogh!"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"It's not getting any thicker," said Tom Merry hopefully.

"No—they don't want to suffocate us," growled Manners. "It's only to muck up our feed, and make us as black as sweeps. Oh, my aunt!"

"Put the fire out!" gasped Kangaroo.

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"Swamp water on it, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struck by that really brilliant idea.

"Let it alone!" roared Tom Merry. "That'll only make it worse."

"Wats! It's the only way, deah boy. You wely on me."

And Arthur Augustus, before he could be stopped, seized the kettle and emptied it into the fire. There was a terrific fizzing, and sputtering, and a cloud of steam, and D'Arcy jumped back with a yell. The atmosphere in the study had been terrible before. It was simply poisonous now. The juniors clung round the window, all of them trying to get their heads out at once. Blacks settled upon them in thick clouds—their faces and hair and clothes were smothered with them, and they were grimed all over with smoke. If Arthur Augustus could have seen himself then, the sight would have given him a shock. Fortunately he could not see himself.

"When is that silly ass Skimpole coming back?" groaned Tom Merry. "Fancy being shut up like this! The New House chaps will grin us to death over it. Ow!"

Tap!

"There he is!" exclaimed Digby, as the knock came at the door of the study.

Tom Merry plunged through the smoke towards the door.

"You silly fathead!" he shouted, through the keyhole. "So it's you, is it? You silly, frabjous apology for a burbling cuckoo—"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed an astounded voice. "Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry almost fell on the floor.

For the voice that replied was not the voice of the inexpressible Skimpole. It was the soft, clear voice of Cousin Ethel—in tones of great astonishment, which was quite natural, considering the manner in which Tom Merry had addressed her!

CHAPTER 6.

Not Nice!

"COUSIN ETHEL!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, Tommy, you ass! Groogh! You fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wegard it as wotten bad form to call my cousin a fwabjous cuckoo—"

"Fathead!" gasped Tom Merry. "Do you think I knew whom it was? Ethel! Is that you, Ethel?"

"Yes," came the soft voice outside the door.

"Oh, I didn't know."

"I looked into No. 6, and Arthur was not there, so I came on here."

"I am heah—heah, deah gal!"

"I—I—I'm sorry! I—I—I was saying things," stuttered Tom Merry. "I thought it was Skimpole who was outside the door, Miss Cleveland. You—you see, we've been chained in here by a frabjous ass, and Skimmy hadn't sense enough to let us out, and—"

"Bai Jove! I can hear her laughin'," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wondah what she is laughin' at."

"Us!" growled Monty Lowther.

"But there is nothin' funny in this extwemely painful posish—"

"I'm so sorry, Ethel," Tom Merry was saying, through the keyhole. "So sorry! Of course you understand I didn't know you were there."

"Oh, of course," said Ethel cheerily. "I should not really think that you would address me as a frabjous—what was it?"

"Ahem!"

"A frabjous apology for a burbling cuckoo," said Ethel.

"Poor Skimpole!"

"Ahem! You see—"

"Perhaps I can remove the chain," suggested Ethel.

"Oh, good! We're being smoked out in here! Some awful beast has got on the roof and stuffed something into the chimney!"

"Bai Jove! I can hear her laughin' again! It seems to swike Ethel as funny," said Arthur Augustus, in wonder.

"Some gals seem to have a vewy peculiah sense of humour."

"Get the chain loose if you can, Miss Ethel," groaned Blake. "We're being suffocated."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I will try," said the girl.

Ethel bent over the chain, and examined the padlock. It was certainly strong enough to defy all her efforts. There were a good many juniors collecting in the passage now, and they were all grinning. Spirals of smoke crawled out from under the study door, and through the keyhole, and explained the state the study was in. And all the fellows who were

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outside the study, regarded it as funny—a view that was not at all shared by the fellows inside the study.

"Perhaps I can help you, Miss Cleveland," said a quiet voice.

Ethel turned her head, and smiled at Kerr of the Fourth.

Probably a suspicion darted into her mind that Kerr knew more about that chain and padlock than any of the School House fellows there. Some of the latter were looking grimly at Kerr; but they would not collar the New House boulder in the presence of Ethel Cleveland. Kerr was quite secure, and he knew it.

"Can you get the chain unfastened?" asked Ethel doubtfully. "It looks very strong, and the padlock is locked."

"Perhaps I could find a key to fit it," said Kerr.

"Really?"

"I think so."

Kerr groped in his pocket, and found a key, which, surprising to relate, turned out to fit the padlock exactly. He unlocked it, and the chain clinked loose.

Cousin Ethel opened the door of Tom Merry's study.

Then she started back with a cry.

A heavy volume of smoke rolled out, and the girl coughed, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, dear. Oh, oh!"

"Don't go in!" exclaimed Kerr anxiously. "Keep back, Miss Cleveland. Something seems to have gone wrong with the chimney."

"Kerr, you wottah—"

"Kerr, you beast—"

"Looks rather smoky in there," said Kerr calmly. "Does your chimney want sweeping?"

"Bai Jove!"

"You—you—you—"

"I undid the chain for Miss Cleveland," said Kerr. "Lucky I happened to have a key that fitted the padlock, wasn't it?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry, realising that he could not slaughter Kerr while Cousin Ethel was there. "Very lucky—awfully lucky! M-m-m-much obliged!"

"Oh, don't mench," said Kerr airily.

The unhappy tea-party came streaming out of the study, followed by volumes of smoke.

Cousin Ethel, and Kerr, and the juniors in the passage, had retreated some distance to elude the smoke. The tea-party, as they streamed out of the study, were greeted with chuckles galore. They certainly looked very queer. Their faces were almost black, their eyes red with smarting, and blacks covered them from head to foot. A grimmer and dirtier and more woebegone crowd had never been seen within the classic precincts of St. Jim's.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Cousin Ethel. "My poor Arthur!"

"Bai Jove, I feel wathah wotten, deah gal!" confessed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I feel howwibly dirtay. Do I look dirtay?"

"You do."

"Howwible! Bai Jove, I will give those beasts a feahful thwashin' all wound."

"How did it happen?" asked Kerr.

"What?"

"Did something go wrong with the chimney?" the Scottish junior inquired innocently. "You seem to have had quite a lot of smoke in the study."

"Why, you fwightful wottah—"

"Arthur!" said Ethel gently. "Kerr opened the study door for you."

"Yaas, the—the—he did, did he?" gasped D'Arcy.

"Yes, he happened to have a key in his pocket that fitted the padlock."

"He—he happened to—"

gasped D'Arcy. "Kerr, if it were not for the pwesenec of my Cousin Ethel, I would—"

"You would wash yourself, I suppose?" suggested Kerr.

"Well, the best thing you can do is to buzz off out of the presence of Cousin Ethel, and get that wash. You need it."

"Gweat Scott! You—you—you—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Blake, grasping his aristocratic chum by the arm. "This way to the dorm. Excuse us, Cousin Ethel, we're rather too dirty to be seen, owing to the way Tom Merry gets his chimney in order when he has visitors."

"But it was those wotten—"

"Come on!"

"And it was Kerr who—"

"This way—"

And D'Arcy was dragged away, and the rest of the smoke-blackened tea-party followed, and Cousin Ethel walked out into the quadrangle with Kerr. Outside the New House, Figgins and Fatty Wynn were sauntering, wondering what had become of Kerr. As they caught sight of Kerr and Cousin Ethel, Figgins suddenly came sprinting across the quadrangle, as if hurled from the mouth of a cannon.



"I undid the chain for Miss Cleveland!" said Kerr, smiling blandly at the blackened and wrathful juniors. "Lucky I happened to have a key that fitted the padlock, wasn't it?" "Oh!" gasped Tom Merry, realising that he could not slaughter Kerr while Cousin Ethel was there. "Very lucky! M—m—much obliged!" (See Chapter 6.)

He dragged off his cap, with a grin of pleasure, and Cousin Ethel smiled very sweetly as she shook hands with him.

"I didn't know you were coming, Miss Cleveland!" Figgins exclaimed. "I heard D'Arcy expected to see you this week, but if I'd known—ahem!"

"There's been some sort of accident in Tom Merry's study," said Kerr solemnly.

"You don't say so!" Figgins ejaculated.

"Yes; something wrong with the chimney."

"The—the chimney?"

"Yes; it smoked a very great deal. And somebody had chained the door up outside, and they couldn't get out."

"You—you don't say so!" murmured Figgins. "What a pity it should happen just when Miss Cleveland was coming! The fellows couldn't have known."

"Luckily, I had a key that fitted the padlock, and I let 'em out," said Kerr, with refreshing coolness. "They looked a lovely set of guys—didn't they, Miss Ethel?"

"They looked very smoky," said Ethel.

"J-j-jolly lucky you h-h-happened to have a key!" gasped Figgins. "W-w-wasn't it, Miss Cleveland?"

"Very lucky indeed!" said Ethel seriously.

And Figgins hastily changed the subject. And when Arthur Augustus—clothed, and in his right mind again, so to speak—came out of the School House to look for Ethel, he was intensely exasperated to find her chatting with the obnoxious Figgins, and apparently quite enjoying it.

CHAPTER 7.

Caught in the Trap.

"I SHALL dwive Ethel!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's chums looked at him.

They were in Study No. 6, and Arthur Augustus was selecting driving-gloves. Cousin Ethel had gone into the Head's house to see Mrs. Holmes. The moment she had disappeared, Figgins & Co. had disappeared, too, in the direction of their own House. They did not want to remain at close quarters with Tom Merry & Co. just then.

"Off your rocker again?" asked Jack Blake.

"Certainly not, deah boy! I am goin' to dwive Cousin Ethel."

"You utter fathead! What are you babbling about?" Blake demanded. "How are you going to drive Cousin Ethel?"

"In a twap!"

"You're goin' to drive her in a trap?" said Herries, in wonder. "I object to anything of the sort! I don't believe in playing japes on a girl."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You can drive the New House bounders into as many traps as you like, and catch 'em there," said Herries; "but not Cousin Ethel. I'm really surprised at you, D'Arcy!"

"You feahful ass!" said the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "When I remark that I am goin' to dwive Cousin Ethel in a twap, I mean that I am goin' to dwive her in a twap—not dwive her in a twap."

"Lucid, I must say!" Digby remarked.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"

"You may be aware," said D'Arcy, "that Ethel is stayin' at Glyn House, with Bernard Glyn's sister Edith. She is goin' back there after seein' Mrs. Holmes. I am goin' to dwive her in a twap."

"Oh, I see!" said Herries. "Why couldn't you say so before? Hadn't you better let me drive her? I can drive, you know."

"Do you mean to imply that I cannot dwive, Hewwies? I wogard you as an ass! Now, I am goin' to telephone for a twap. Ethel leaves here at six o'clock, and they can send down a twap from Wylcombe by six, and have it weady at the gates. I— Bai Jove! How dare you put your extremely disagweeable face into this studay, Figgins?"

Figgins grinned into the study.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Rats!" said Blake warmly. "You cheeky sweep—"

"Pax, while Cousin Ethel is at St. Jim's, you know," said Figgins, holding up his hand in sign of peace.

"Ethel's in the Head's house now, and we're going to bump you for your cheek, you New House outsider!" roared Herries. "I haven't got the smoke out of my eyes yet, you sweep!"

"I fancy you chaps must have looked more like sweeps," chuckled Figgins.

"Collar him!" shouted Blake.

Figgins slammed the door and fled.

Blake and Herries and Digby dashed out into the passage, but the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors was gone. They returned into the study, breathing hard.

"The uttah wottah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I dare say he would like to make it pax while Cousin Ethel is heah. He seems to wogard Ethel more as his cousin than as my cousin, bai Jove! I have a jollay good mind to go ovah to the New House, and give him a feahful thwashin'."

"Well, what about that trap?" asked Blake. "We can easily get leave out of gates to take Cousin Ethel back to Glyn House. I suppose I'd better drive?"

"Wats!"

"Now, look here, Gussy; be reasonable," urged Blake.

"Wats! Two of you fellows can come, if you like, as there will be woom in the twap for two as well as Ethel and me," said Arthur Augustus.

"Shall I bring Towser?" asked Herries.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon his chum with a withering look.

"Towsah! Certainly not! That wotten bulldog has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs! Besides, there will not be woom in the twap. Pewwaps Blake and Dig had bettah come, and you can go and talk to Towsah."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries.

And Arthur Augustus marched off to the telephone. Expense was no object to the noble Arthur Augustus. Meanwhile Figgins, having escaped from the School House, had hurried over to his own side of the quadrangle, with his eyes gleaming with excitement. Kerr and Fatty Wynn met him outside the New House. Fatty Wynn was looking a little lugubrious.

"Rather a rotten failure, that wheeze of yours, Figgy!" he remarked, with a doleful shake of the head.

"Why, what do you mean?" exclaimed Figgins warmly. "It worked like a charm."

"I mean that there isn't much chance of being asked over to the feed. They're bound to have a feed now Cousin Ethel's come."

"Cousin Ethel's having tea with Mrs. Holmes," growled Figgins; "and if you talk to me about feeds again, I'll biff you! Blessed if you ever think or talk about anything but feeds, as if a feed was the most important thing in the world."

Fatty Wynn raised his eyebrows.

"Well, isn't it?" he demanded.

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Figgins, in disgust. "Shurrup! Look here, I've just dropped into Study No. 6 to tell them we'd make it pax, under the circumstances—"

"Did you go out on your neck?" inquired Kerr.

"Well, jolly nearly," confessed Figgins. "They don't want to make it pax till they've got their own back. Just as I got to the study, Gussy was saying that he was going to 'phone for a trap to drive Miss Cleveland over to Glyn House. She's staying with Bernard Glyn's people, you know. The trap's coming to the gates about six, and Gussy is going to drive Ethel home."

"Well, he won't ask us to go with him," grinned Kerr.

"We needn't wait to be asked," said Figgins calmly. "My idea is that we're the proper persons to drive Cousin Ethel home."

"Oh!"

"They have a jolly good table at Glyn House," said Fatty Wynn.

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Wynn, with a reminiscent twinkle in his eyes. "They might ask us to stay to supper."

"Shut up!" roared Figgins.

"Well, I was only supposing—"

"Ring off, you fat porpoise! Now, it being our duty to drive Miss Cleveland home, of course, we can't leave the job to Gussy. He would very likely get the trap turned over. You know what an ass he is. It will be quite dark before six, and it's as easy as winking to lay in ambush in the lane, if we get out before the gates are closed. We can take three or four fellows in case they're wanted."

Kerr opened his eyes.

"But with Miss Cleveland there, Figgy, we can't rush the bounders—"

"We shall have to be diplomatic, of course," agreed Figgins. "I'm only particular about one thing, and that is, to shift the School House bounders out of the trap, and drive Miss Cleveland home to Glyn House."

"But if they won't let us—"

"They've got to let us."

"If they resist—"

"We'll squash 'em!"

"But we can't squash 'em without a row, and Miss Cleveland—"

"We won't have a row if we can help it. Of course, Miss Cleveland mustn't be allowed to see that there's anything on."

"But how are you going to avoid it? You see—"

Figgins snorted.

"What a fellow you are for arguing, Kerr! I must say you might try to help, instead of starting difficulties all the time."

"Oh, all right; but I don't see—"

"Come on, then. Call Reddy and Owen and Lawrence—they'll help."

Redfern and Owen and Lawrence willingly agreed to lend their aid, and six juniors started for the gates in the dusk, and slipped out before Taggles the porter locked up.

The winter evening had fallen upon the old quadrangle of St. Jim's when the trap arrived at the gates, and the groom in charge rang the bell, and Taggles opened the gates to him.

"Wait 'ere," said Taggles.

And the groom waited with the trap. He did not observe six lurking figures in the shadow of the trees on the other side of the road, but they were there. Figgins & Co. were ready.

At six o'clock Arthur Augustus D'Arcy presented himself at the door of the Head's house, and found Miss Cleveland ready for him. Blake and Digby were with him. The Terrible Three met them in the quadrangle. They were in Norfolk jackets.

"Going for a spin on the bikes," Tom Merry explained. "Kildare has given us passes out. We're going to escort you to Glyn House, in case of—of accidents."

"I twust you do not pwesume that accidents could happen to the twap when I am dwivin', Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly not!" said Monty Lowther; "only—only the horse might look round and see your face, you know, and then—"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Let's get the bikes out," said Tom Merry. "We'll be after you like a shot, Gussy."

"Yaas, deah boy!"

Miss Cleveland and the Fourth-Formers walked down to the gates together. The trap was waiting outside, with a really handsome horse between the shafts. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a really good judge of horseflesh, and the lively stable-keeper never tried to palm off "corks" on him.

"Heah we are!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Thank you, Wilkins! Quite a weally nice geegee, isn't he Ethel?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Ethel.

"I'll let you dwive if you like, deah gal!" said Arthur Augustus generously. "Yaas, I insist—you shall dwive. Pway let me hand you in!"

Cousin Ethel was handed into the driver's seat, and she smiled and gathered up the reins. Arthur Augustus had his foot upon the step to follow her, when there was a sudden mutter of voices, a rush of footsteps in the dark lane. Arthur Augustus felt himself seized round the body and whirled away from the trap. At the same moment Blake and Digby were collared, each by two pairs of hands, and rushed down the road at top speed, before they could even yell.

Cousin Ethel looked round—a junior jumped up beside her, and another jumped into the back of the trap. A pair of hands gently relieved her of the reins, and the horse started as the reins were shaken. The trap bowled away down the road, and from the distance behind a voice died away faintly:

"Bai Jove! You wottahs! I—I—I—"

Cousin Ethel looked at the junior beside her in amazement. It was Figgins.

"Dear me!" Ethel exclaimed.

The darkness concealed Figgins's blushes.

"I—I—I excuse me, you know!" he stuttered. "I—I—some of the chaps have a very important appointment with Gussy, so I've taken his place. I hope you don't mind!"

"But—but—"

"It's rather a dark road to Glyn House, you know," murmured Figgins. "We felt we were bound to take you home, in case of—of accidents. There was a man robbed in the lane once, you know."

"But Arthur—"

"Ripping horse this is, isn't it?" said Figgins.

"I think we had better go back for my cousin," said Cousin Ethel very gravely.

"Rather difficult to turn in this narrow lane, don't you think?" suggested Kerr, from behind. "We can pick him up after taking you home, Miss Cleveland."

"But Arthur will be angry!" said Ethel doubtfully.

Figgins shook his head.

"Oh, no; he's the best-tempered chap in the world, your cousin is!" he said reassuringly. "Besides, Fatty Wynn and Reddy want him."

"Do they really?"

"Yes, they do really. It's very important," said Figgins, "and we're halfway to Glyn House now. Better keep on, don't you think?"

There was a sudden ringing of bicycle-bells behind the trap, and a well-known voice shouted:

"Stop, you bounders! Stop, you brigands! We'll slaughter you!"

CHAPTER 8.

Many Punctures.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY struggled in the grasp of the juniors who had collared him. A fat hand over his mouth choked the remarks he wanted to make—very emphatic remarks. His silk hat rolled in the road, and his necktie came off, as he struggled. The trap was dashing away, and its lights disappeared down the lane.

"Gwoogh! You wottahs—ow—"

"Let him go now, Fatty!" said Redfern's voice cheerfully. "Figgy's gone!"

Arthur Augustus was released so suddenly that he sat down in the road with a bump.

He sat there and gasped for breath.

"Ow—ow! Oh, you wottahs! You wascals!"

"This is where we smile!" chuckled Redfern. "Who's cockhouse at St. Jim's—eh?"

"New House!" chortled Owen and Lawrence and Fatty Wynn together.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" cooed Redfern; and the New House juniors vanished into the gateway, just as three bicycle-lamps came gleaming into sight.

Blake and Digby picked themselves out of a bed of ferns in the dry ditch and crawled into the road.

"Done!" growled Blake. "It was Figgins & Co., of course!"

"Diddled!" grunted Digby.

Arthur Augustus jumped up.

"Aftah them, deah boys! They've cawwied off Cousin Ethel! Aftah them! Wun like anythin'!"

"Ass!" growled Blake. "They're half a mile away by this time, and if you can run as fast as a horse, I can't!"

"Hallo, what's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three wheeled their machines out. "Where's the trap? Where's Cousin Ethel?"

"Figgy has collared the trap!" growled Blake.

"Oh, my hat!"

"The uffah wottah has cawwied off my cousin!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Pway lend me your bike, Tom Mewwy, and I'll wun him down, as soon as I've found my hat—"

"Leave it to us!" said Tom Merry. "We'll run him down. Put it on, you chaps!"

"Right-ho!" said Manners and Lowther.

And the three Shell fellows pedalled down the road at top speed.

"Fancy Figgins turning kidnapper in his old age!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Once aboard the lugger and the girl is ours. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shove it on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I can see the lights."

"Here goes!"

The Terrible Three scorched on as if they were racing on the cycle-track. It was perhaps fortunate that there was no

traffic in the lane. The lights of the trap gleamed ahead, and they heard the patter of the hoof-beats. Tom Merry shouted to the New House juniors as they whizzed behind the trap.

Figgins looked back.

Three cyclists loomed up in the gloom.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Those Shell bounders!" muttered Kerr. "Never mind, I'm ready for 'em! I spotted them in their Norfolk, and I guess there would be some bikes along, and I got ready!"

"Stop, you kidnappers!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Stop, you bandits!"

"Is Arthur following us?" asked Ethel.

"No; only some Shell bounders," said Figgins. "Better drive on."

"But surely—"

"They're going at top speed, and the lane's narrow," explained Figgins. "If we stopped, they'd run into the trap."

"Dear me!" said Ethel.

"There—there appears to be a—a misunderstanding," murmured Figgins. "They—they can't know that we arranged to see you home."

"Oh," said Ethel, "you arranged it?"

"Yes, yes, certainly!"

"You arranged it with Arthur?"

"Those chaps are really riding beyond the speed limit," said Figgins, apparently not hearing Ethel's last question. "Lucky for them P.-c. Crump isn't about. If we stopped the trap now, or tried to turn round, there would be an accident, I'm afraid."

That was evidently true, and Ethel made no further demur.

The trap raced on, the front wheels of the bikes almost touching it now. The Terrible Three shook their fists at Kerr, but they could do nothing more. It was not quite possible to jump from a bike into the trap.

Kerr had taken a little packet from his pocket, and was opening it. The packet contained tacks. As Kerr remarked, he was quite ready for the cyclists of the party. Kerr was always ready for everything—he was a very thoughtful fellow.

He shook out a little shower of tacks behind the trap. A minute later there was a sharp exclamation from Manners.

"Keep on, you chaps! I've got a puncture!"

And Manners dropped out of the race.

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Tom Merry, shaking his disengaged fist at Kerr. "You—you spoofer! You—you—"

Pop!

It was Lowther's tyre this time.

Monty Lowther dropped behind, and jumped off his machine.

Tom Merry kept on though he was expecting his tyres to go at every moment.

"Better get back!" Kerr suggested gently.

"You New House bounder!"

"You School House chump!"

"I'll—I'll squash you—"

Pop!

Tom Merry's machine dragged under him. He shook a frantic fist at Kerr, and dropped behind in the race.

The trap rushed on, and the three cyclists disappeared from sight.

Cousin Ethel looked back.

"Have they gone home?" she asked, in surprise.

"Why, they're not following us now?" exclaimed Figgins, in astonishment. "Where are those Shell fellows gone to, Kerr?"

"I think they got punctures," said Kerr.

"All of them?" exclaimed Ethel, in surprise.

"Yes, I think so!"

"Goodness gracious! How curious!"

"Yes, queer, ain't it?" agreed Kerr. "You never know what those School House chaps will do next. Blessed duffers, you know!"

Cousin Ethel looked puzzled. She had not seen Kerr manipulating the packet of tacks, and it seemed extraordinary to her that the three Shell fellows should have had punctures all at the same time, and at such a critical moment.

"By the way, you'd like to drive, wouldn't you?" said Figgins, handing the reins to Cousin Ethel. "First to the left, now. It's all right about Gussy. I'll explain to him when we get back."

"I certainly thought Arthur intended to come with me," said Ethel.

"He was really prevented at the last moment," explained Figgins. "But it's all right; we'll get you home safe enough."

And they did!

The trap drove up to Glyn House, and Ethel was handed over to Miss Edith Glyn; and then good-byes were said, and Figgins and Kerr drove away in the trap.

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Figgins chuckled as he drove out into the lane.

"Did them that time!" he murmured.

Kerr grinned.

"There'll be a row when we get back," he remarked.

"They'll be waiting for the trap."

"They can wait!" said Figgins cheerfully. "We'll take it back to the livery stables, and walk home. We can get in through the side entrance, and they can go on waiting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy won't want the trap any more to-night, you know; and he ought really to feel obliged to us for taking it home for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that deep scheme was carried out successfully.

CHAPTER 9.

A Long Wait!

"H, the bounders!"

"The wottahs!"

"The beasts!"

"They've done us!"

"We'll scalp them when they get back!"

"We'll slaughter them!"

"We'll boil them in oil!"

These exclamations, and many more of the same sort, were uttered by the exasperated School House juniors, as they waited for the return of Figgins and Kerr in the trap.

Taggles had locked up the gates; and Tom Merry & Co. were waiting just inside. Wilkins, the groom, was waiting in Taggles's lodge to take the trap back to Rylcombe when it was done with. The Terrible Three had put up their punctured bicycles, and joined the Fourth-Formers again at the gates. They were anxious for the obnoxious Figgins to return. They wanted to see him very badly.

But the trap did not appear.

"They're a jolly long time gone to Glyn House!" Blake exclaimed at last. "They can't have stayed to supper, surely?"

"Oh, the wottahs! They must be back soon!"

"They couldn't miss calling-over," said Monty Lowther.

"We shall miss it, if we stay out here much longer!" growled Manners.

"We'll go in to call-over and come back," said Tom Merry. "I'll give Taggles a hint not to open the gates in a hurry if they arrive while we're gone."

"Wight-ho!"

Taggles took the hint—and a shilling, and the School House fellows hurried away to attend calling-over.

After that they returned to the gates.

"Have they come in, Taggles?" Tom Merry asked.

"No, Master Merry," replied the porter.

"My hat! Where can they be?"

"They're a jolly long time!" growled Blake. "They must have missed call-over in the New House. Ratty will be down on them."

"Serve 'em right."

"What about our prep?" said Digby, after another long pause.

"Blow the prep!"

"Well, we've got to do it, you know, or there'll be trouble with Lathom in the morning."

"Blow Lathom!"

And the juniors waited.

From the gates they could see a light gleaming in Figgins's study in the New House. They know his window very well.

"Fatty Wynn's there, I suppose?" said Tom Merry. "But where on earth can Figgins and Kerr be? Surely they can't be staying at Glyn House all this time?"

"Well, I'm going to do my prep," said Digby.

"Go and eat coke!"

Digby walked away to the School House. Tom Merry & Co. were growing decidedly exasperated by this time. The groom had inquired more than once whether it wasn't time to take the trap home.

The delay on the part of Figgins and Kerr was extraordinary.

If they had missed calling-over, they still had their usual evening preparations to do, unless they wanted trouble in the Form-room the next morning.

What did it mean?

"It's simply amazing!" Arthur Augustus exclaimed. "I wonder if there has been an accident? That ass Figgay is as enough for anything!"

"I think I'll cut off to the New House and see if I can find out anything," said Blake. "They may have got leave to stay out till bed-time."

"Not likely."

"Well, they're staying out, anyway. I'll see."

Blake ran off towards the New House. Jameson of the Third was just going into the house, and Blake stopped him.

"Seen anything of Figgins and Kerr?" he asked.

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"Not since calling-over," said Jameson. "In their study, I suppose."

Blake jumped.

"Calling-over!" he shouted.

Jameson nodded.

"Do you mean to say that Figgins and Kerr were at calling-over in the New House?" Blake shouted.

"Course they were," said Jameson.

"Did you see them?"

"Yes."

"But they're out of doors!" howled Blake.

"Are they?" said Jameson. "Then they must have gone out since calling-over. I saw them there. Ratty was taking the names."

"Oh, my only aunt!"

Blake dashed back to the gates.

"It's all up, you chaps!" he gasped. "Figgins and Kerr are in their House. They were at calling-over."

"What?"

"Impossible!"

"But they haven't come in."

"They've done something with the trap, and sneaked in somehow without our seeing them!" groaned Blake. "We've been dished again."

"Bai Jove!"

"The awful spoofers!" gasped Tom Merry. "And we've been waiting here a couple of hours. But—are you sure?"

"Jameson says he saw them at call-over!" grunted Blake.

"Let's make sure, anyway."

The whole party started for the New House. Blake tossed a pebble up to the window of Figgins's study. The window was opened at once, and three smiling faces looked down at the infuriated School House fellows—the good-humoured countenances of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

"Hailo!" said Figgins affably. "Come to say good-night? Now, that's what I call really polite!"

"Quite the polite thing!" agreed Kerr. "Just like Gussy!"

"You uttah wottahs!"

"When did you get in, you rotters?" roared Tom Merry. Figgins considered.

"Lemme see, about an hour and a half ago, I think," he replied. "We were in some time before calling-over."

"You—you beasts!"

"We didn't see you come in!" howled Lowther.

"Perhaps you weren't watching the tradesmen's gate?" Figgins suggested. "In fact, you couldn't have been, or you'd have seen us."

"Oh, you—you—you—"

"What have you done with my twap, you feahful wascals?"

"Taken it back to the livery-stables, of course," said Figgins cheerfully. "After the generous way you lent it to us, we felt we were bound to do that much. Don't trouble to thank us, Gussy; it was quite a pleasure."

"Quite a pleasure!" echoed Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

Arthur Augustus brandished an infuriated fist at the smiling faces looking down from the window.

"You feahful wottahs! If you will come down heah, I will give you a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

Figgins looked hurt.

"After we've taken the trouble to take the trap home for you, Gussy?" he exclaimed reproachfully.

"Is that what you call gratitude?" asked Kerr.

"Shocking!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

"You awful spoofahs! The groom is still waitin' to take the twap back to Wylcombe!" yelled the swell of St. Jim's.

"My hat! Is he? Then all I've got to say is that you ought to give him a good tip for waiting for you so long," said Figgins.

"You—you—you—" Words failed Arthur Augustus, and he could only shake his fists frantically at Figgins & Co.

"Well, good-night!" said Figgins affably. "So kind of you to give us a look-in!"

And the window was shut down.

The School House fellows looked at one another speechlessly. Then Arthur Augustus ambled away to dismiss the groom, and the juniors made their way to the School House to start upon their belated prep.

But their preparation was interrupted many times by ejaculations of wrath, and it is to be feared that they gave less attention to their prep. than to wild and wrathful plans for taking an exemplary vengeance upon Figgins & Co. of the New House.

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CHAPTER 10.

Herries is Wrathy.

BANG! Bang!
 Kangaroo and Clifton Dane of the Shell thumped loudly on the door of the end study.

The door was locked.

When Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, was at work upon one of his striking and valuable ideas he always locked the door to prevent interruption. The fact that he was supposed to share the study with Noble and Dane did not trouble him in the least. And though the two Colonial juniors were very much attached to their chum, their friendship was sometimes put to very sore trials.

Glyn sometimes made the study reek for days with fearful chemical smells, and sometimes used up all the study crockery-ware as vessels to hold queer-looking and weirdly-smelling compounds.

More than once Kangaroo and Dane had sworn solemn swears to slaughter him if he used the study as a laboratory any more, but Glyn went on his way unheeding.

Just now they wanted to get into the study to do their preparation, and they could not get in. They could hear Glyn moving about inside, but he did not even answer to their knocking.

"Will you open this door, you frabjous ass?" Kangaroo inquired in sulphurous tones. "We've got our prep. to do."

"Don't bother."

"Aren't you going to do your own prep., fathead?"

"No time."

"Linton will want to know about it in the morning, you ass!" shouted Clifton Dane.

"Never mind Linton. I'm nearly finished now, too."

"Then let us in!"

"Can't!"

"Why not, you chump?" roared Kangaroo.

"I'm busy!"

"Look here, Glyn, we'll slaughter you! We'll scalp you! We'll—"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"My hat!" exclaimed the Cornstalk, breaking off his list of dire threats as he heard that deep and terrific growl in the study. "The silly ass has got a dog there!"

"What on earth is he doing with a dog?" said Dane, puzzled. "He can't have taken to vivisection, I suppose?"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Open the door, Glyn!"

"Go and eat coke!" replied Glyn. "I tell you I've nearly finished my experiment, and it's going to be a howling success. I can't be interrupted now. Go and do your silly prep. in the Form-room! Go and eat coke! Don't bother!"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"Is that Herries' bulldog you've got in there?" demanded Kangaroo. "You know he ain't allowed in the House since he tried to bite the Head, you chump! You'll get a licking if a prefect finds him here!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's not Herries' bulldog!"

"Then what dog is it?"

"Mine!"

"What rot! You haven't got a dog," said Kangaroo. "My hat! How he's growling! Look here, Glyn, what are you doing to that dog? If you start vivisection in our study we'll boot you out for good!"

"Buzz off, and don't bother!"

Kangaroo stooped down and applied his eye to the keyhole. He knew very well that Bernard Glyn had no dog at the school, and so the Shell fellow's reply puzzled him. He uttered a sharp exclamation as he looked in through the keyhole.

Upon the study table, in a direct line with the keyhole, was the form of a dog—a big, ferocious-looking bulldog—and if it was not Towser, it was Towser's double.

"Why, he's telling fibs!" Kangaroo exclaimed, aghast. "He's got Towser there! And he's got an electric wire fastened on the poor beast!"

"My hat!" said Clifton Dane. "Why, we'll squash him if he's taken to that kind of thing! Scientific investigation is one thing, but tormenting animals is another. Glyn, you blighter, what are you doing to that dog?"

"Buzz off!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The two Colonial juniors were determined to get into the study now. Bernard Glyn was an extremely scientific youth, and he was liable to forget everything else in his keenness for experiments, but it hardly seemed possible that he had taken to any variety of vivisection. If he had, his chums had made up their minds what they would do, and it would be very painful for Bernard Glyn.

The thumping at the door soon brought a crowd along the passage. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers crowded up, inquiring what was the matter. The growling of the bul-

dog could be distinctly heard proceeding from the study. Levison of the Fourth looked through the keyhole and gave a yell:

"He's got Towser there!"

"Towser!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes; Herries' bulldog! And he's electrifying him!"

"Impossible!"

"Look for yourself!"

"Glyn wouldn't do such a thing!" exclaimed Tom Merry, aghast. "Besides, Towser wouldn't let him. He'd bite."

"May be fastened somehow," said Levison. "Anyway, that's what he's doing. You can see for yourself."

"I don't believe it!"

"Look!" grinned Levison.

Tom Merry looked through the keyhole. There was the bulldog, plain enough, on the study table, in a crouching attitude. The mouth was open, the teeth were gleaming, and the eyes rolled wildly. There was a battery on the table, and a wire ran from the battery to the neck of the dog.

Glyn's hand was on the battery, and Tom could see that he was working a switch, and each time he pressed it that deep and horrible growl came from the bulldog.

Tom's face went quite pale. He hammered on the door.

"Glyn, you brute! What are you doing to Towser?"

Only a chuckle replied from Bernard Glyn.

Levison scudded away along the passage to Study No. 6. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were there doing their preparation when Levison burst in on them. They stared at him. Levison, the cad of the Fourth, was not popular in Study No. 6.

"I say, Herries—"

"Well, what do you want?" growled Herries.

"Glyn's got your bulldog in his study—"

"Rats!"

"And he's torturing him—"

Herries half rose.

"Sit down, ass!" said Jack Blake. "We all know what a liar Levison is, and we know Glyn wouldn't do anything of the sort. Clear out, Levison!"

Levison sneered. He had not come to Study No. 6 for Towser's sake, but with the amiable desire to cause trouble between the two studies. Blake & Co. were on very friendly terms with Glyn of the Shell, which was quite a sufficient reason for Levison to want to see them at loggerheads.

"Well, it's true," he said. "He's got him in his study, and he's electrifying him. You can hear him growl in the passage!"

"Rubbish!" said Herries, but a little uneasily.

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "Clear out, Levison, or I shall throw you out on your neck!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if he was my dog, I wouldn't let him be tormented," he said.

"If he were your dog you'd torment him yourself," said Blake. "Buzz off!"

Herries rose from the table.

"There seems to be a row of some sort going on in the passage," he remarked. "I'll get along and see. If Levison's been telling lies I'll wallop him!"

There certainly was a row in the passage; there was no doubt whatever on that point. The excited voices of a score of fellows could be heard. Something, at all events, was going on, whether Levison was telling the truth or not.

Blake and Digby and D'Arcy followed Herries from the study.

A shout greeted Herries as he joined the crowd outside Glyn's door:

"It's your dog, Herries!"

"Listen to him!"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"Well, that sounds like Towser!" said Herries. "But Glyn wouldn't hurt a dog. I wonder what he's growling for?"

"Look through the keyhole!" sniggered Mellish of the Fourth.

Herries looked through the keyhole. A terrific change came over his face as he saw what was going on in the study. He jumped up and kicked furiously at the door.

"Glyn, you rotter! Glyn, you beast! Open this door, or I'll kick it down!" roared Herries. "I'll smash you! I'll pulverise you! Open this door, you cad!"

"Let us in, Glyn!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Bernard Glyn.

"You've got my dog there!" shrieked Herries.

"I haven't!"

"You—you liar! I've seen him!" yelled Herries furiously. "You're giving him electric shocks, you beast! I'll smash you! If you don't open the door I'll bust it in!"

Crash! crash! crash!

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"Stop that row!" shouted Bernard Glyn. "You'll have the prefects here, you ass!"

"Let me in!"

Crash! crash! crash!

Glyn hastily unlocked the door. He did not want to have the masters and the prefects hurrying to the spot to see what the row was about. Herries hurled the door open, and rushed into the study. He made one spring at Glyn, and seized him, and began to pommel him frantically. Glyn staggered back, struggling in vain to ward off the shower of blows dealt by the infuriated Fourth-Former.

"Hold him!" he gasped. "He's mad! Herries, you ass— Groo! Herries, I'll—I'll— Yah!"

"Take that—and that—and that—" "Yar-o-oh!"

The two juniors rolled over on the study floor, struggling furiously. Tom Merry ran to the table, to release the bulldog from the electric-wire. Then he gave a gasp of relief, and burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! This is no laughin' mattah, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Leave off, Herries. It's all right!"

"I'll all right him!" said Herries, who was pommeling away furiously. "I'll smash him! I'll teach him to torment dogs! I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's not a dog!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"It's a dummy!"

"Oh!" gasped Herries.

CHAPTER 11.

Too Much in a Hurry.

BERNARD GLYN staggered to his feet as Herries released him.

He was looking very much the worse for wear.

A crimson stream ran from his nose, and his collar was torn out, and his hair was ruffled, and he was gasping for breath.

"You ass!" he gasped. "You wild lunatic! Ow—ow!"

Herries gasped.

"Sorry! Why didn't you explain? It looks just like Towser."

"Of course it looks like Towser, ass, when I took Towser for my model, idiot!" yelled Glyn. "It's the model I made of Towser a long time ago, and you've seen it before, you frabjous ass!"

Herries nodded.

"Yes, I remember now. We called it Towser minor," he said. "I'd forgotten all about it. I thought it was destroyed."

Glyn dabbed his nose with his handkerchief.

"I've revised it," he explained, "with improvements. If you hadn't been a silly, frabjous cuckoo, you'd have known that I wouldn't hurt a dog, you silly ass!"

"Well, you see—"

"But how on earth have you made it growl?" demanded Tom Merry.

"It's a phonographic arrangement inside, worked by electricity," Glyn explained. "When it's set going, it growls, and the glass eyes move, and the jaws open."

"My hat!"

"Is that what you've been at work on all day?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, it's jolly clever!" said Herries, surveying the dog. "Looks just as if it was alive. Not so good-looking as Towser, but very like."

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"Better looking than your beastly bulldog!" growled Glyn. "I've taken all the trouble to make him, to spoof the New House chaps. You fellows have let Figgins & Co. do you in the eye so much lately, I thought it was time I took a hand."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Well, if I get out from lessons early to-morrow, and put him in Figgins's study, under the table, with the growl going—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Tom Merry heartily. "You should have explained before Herries punched your nose."

"Serve him right for keeping us out of the study," said Kangaroo. "I was going to punch his nose myself. You can consider that I've done it, Glyn, and we'll call it square."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!" exclaimed Levison, from the passage.

Knox of the Sixth strode into the study. He gave a jump at the sight of the bulldog on the table. He frowned, but there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes. The bully of the Sixth was down on Blake & Co., and he was glad to have an opportunity of reporting them to the Housemaster for a flagrant breach of rules. For, ever since Towser's famous attempt to bite the Head, Herries had been strictly forbidden to have him in the House, or to let him off his chain. And not for a moment did Knox suspect that it was not a real bulldog he saw before him.

"So, I've caught you, you young rascals!" said Knox.

"I object to bein' chawactewised as a vascal, Knox!"

"Who brought that dog here?" demanded the prefect.

"I did," said Bernard Glyn meekly.

"Take it away immediately, and then report yourself to Mr. Railton!"

"But I say, Knox—"

"Take it to the kennels at once."

"But I want to keep it here," said Glyn. And the juniors, seeing the mistake Knox had fallen into, grinned gleefully.

The dummy bulldog looked very lifelike, for the mechanism was working. The eyes rolled, the jaws moved, and the deep growl came from the depths of the throat.

Knox, in fact, was keeping a somewhat uneasy eye on the bulldog, not caring to venture too close to him.

"You know dogs are not allowed in the house," said Knox. "If you don't immediately take that dog back to the kennels I shall march you in to Mr. Railton!"

"Weally, Knox—"

"And all the juniors here will take a hundred lines each!" said Knox. "You are all in this breach of the rules!"

"But there isn't any breach of the rules," grinned Glyn. "You see, you are talking out of the back of your neck!"

"Mustn't cheek a prefect," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "That's your second breach of the rules—altogether, a pair of breaches."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox grasped Bernard Glyn by the collar.

"Come with me!" he exclaimed. "We'll see what the Housemaster has to say about it, you young rascal!"

"Oh, all right!"

And the bully of the Sixth marched Glyn away, and Tom Merry & Co. burst into a roar of laughter. Knox was evidently in deadly earnest, and had not the slightest idea of the mistake he was making. Straight into the Housemaster's study he marched Bernard Glyn.

Mr. Railton, who was chatting with Kildare of the Sixth, turned and looked at them in surprise.

"I have to report Glyn for a gross breach of House rules,

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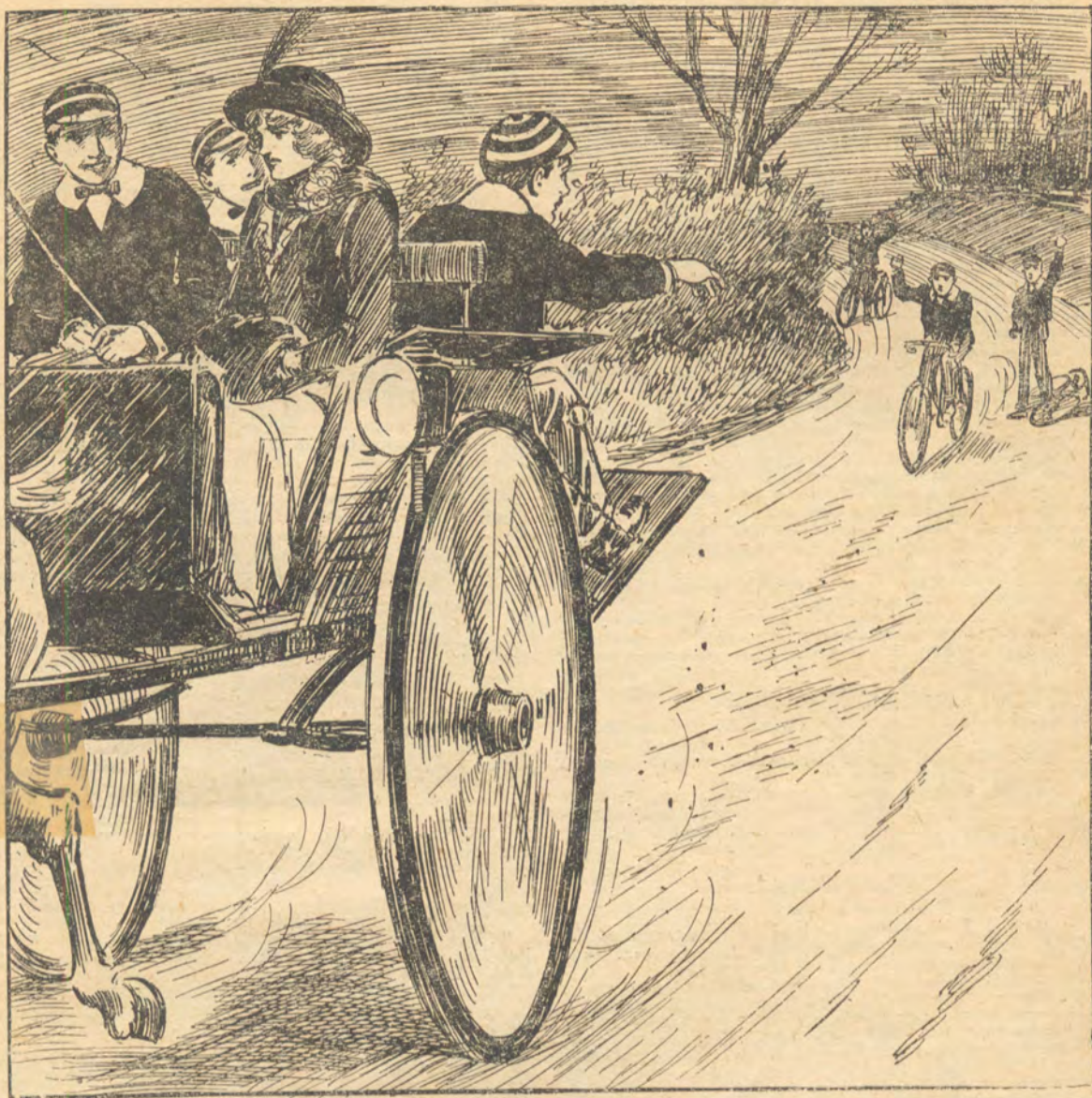
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Kerr shook out a little shower of tacks behind the trap. A minute later, there was a sharp exclamation from Manners. "Keep on you chaps, I've got a puncture." "Oh, you rotter!" gasped Tom Merry, shaking his fist at Kerr. "You—you spoofer! You——" Pop! (See Chapter 8.)

sir," said Knox. "He has a bulldog in the study, and he refused to take it back to the kennels when I ordered him to do so."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Glyn, this is very serious! You know that you should obey a prefect."

"Certainly, sir. But I couldn't take a bulldog back to the kennels when there isn't one in my study."

"What! There is no dog there?"

"No, sir."

Knox stared blankly at the Liverpool lad.

"You awful young liar!" he shouted, beside himself with rage.

"Come, Knox, that is not the language for a prefect to use!" Mr. Railton said severely. "You will kindly moderate your expressions—in my presence, at least."

"I—I beg your pardon, sir. But—but he is lying outrageously. There is a bulldog in his study at the present moment, and a crowd of junior boys there. Why, you could see it there yourself if you go, sir, unless they have sneaked it away while I came here."

"Do you deny that there is a dog in your study, Glyn?"

"Yes, sir."

"You saw one there, Knox?"

"Certainly, sir! And it is there now."

"This is very extraordinary!" said Mr. Railton, in surprise. "I will go to the study at once. Excuse me a few moments, Kildare."

And the Housemaster walked out of the study, followed by Bernard Glyn and Knox. They ascended to the Shell passage, Knox looking maliciously triumphant, Glyn very demure and quiet. The chuckling in the end study died away as the Housemaster strode in.

Mr. Railton's glance fell immediately upon the spurious imitation of Towerer crouched on the table, and he uttered an exclamation:

"Glyn, how dare you deny that there is a dog in your study?"

"You see, sir!" said Knox.

"Yes; I see. What have you to say, Glyn?" exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"There isn't a dog here, sir," said Bernard Glyn respectfully. "Or, if there is I don't know anything about it."

"What!"

"Have any of you fellows seen a dog here?" asked Glyn, appealing to Tom Merry & Co.
There was a general shaking of heads.
"I haven't," said Kangaroo.
"Wathah not!"
"Oh, no; there isn't a dog here."
"Nothing of the kind, sir."
Mr. Railton stared at the juniors, and then at the life-like bulldog, hardly knowing whether to disbelieve his eyes or his ears.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed angrily. "Is this a conspiracy to treat your Housemaster with disrespect? You can all see that that dog on the table, I presume?"

"Oh, that isn't a dog, sir," said Bernard Glyn cheerfully.
"What?"

"It isn't a dog, sir."
"Are you insane, boy? What do you mean? How dare you tell me that it is not a dog? What is it, then?" gasped the Housemaster.

"A model, sir."
"A—a—what?"

"A model, sir—one of my inventions," said Glyn calmly. "If you touch it, sir, you'll see that it isn't alive. Knox seems to have fancied that it was a dog, sir, but it isn't. I made that. I can't make real dogs, sir. Quite impossible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The amazed Housemaster stretched out his hand and touched the mechanical dog. Knox's face was a study. The touch of the hand, of course, showed immediately that the imitation of Towser was not alive.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, greatly astonished. "This is indeed a very clever contrivance, Glyn. I certainly supposed that it was a real dog. You should have explained to Knox that it was a mere piece of mechanism."

"Knox was in such a hurry, sir."
"Of course, you may keep that in the study if you like," said the Housemaster, smiling. "He is not likely to do any damage. And really, Knox, I wish you would make sure of your grounds before you make reports to me and waste my time."

The prefect set his teeth.
"Are we to do the lines, sir?" asked Blake demurely.
"The lines! What lines?"
"Knox gave us a hundred lines each because the dog was here—I mean wasn't here—"

"Certainly you need not do them. Come, Knox!"
The Housemaster quitted the study, and Knox, with a savage look at the juniors, followed him. And Tom Merry & Co. chuckled loud and long.

CHAPTER 12.

A Little Joke on Figgins.

WHEN the juniors came out of the Form-rooms on the following day, after morning lessons, there were many smiles among Tom Merry & Co.

Bernard Glyn had left the Form-room on some excuse before lessons were over, and had been away a quarter of an hour; and when he returned, a wink to the Terrible Three told them that the deed was done. The imitation of Towser was "planted" in Figgins's study in the New House, ready to give the Co. the scare of their lives when they went to their quarters. Figgins & Co., as they came out with the Fourth, noted the smiles among their rivals, and wondered at the cause.

"What's the little joke, Tom Merry?" Figgins asked, as he passed the Terrible Three in the passage. "Thinking of waiting at the gates for traps that don't come back?"

"Oh, rats!" said the Shell fellows.
"Or talking over the jolly time you had in your study yesterday?" grinned Kerr. "Wasn't it lucky I had a key that fitted the padlock quite by chance, you know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
And Figgins & Co. walked on cheerfully. They had scored over the School House very completely of late, and they were feeling extremely satisfied with themselves. The smiles of the School House fellows followed them as they sauntered across the quad. to their own House.

"There's something on, among those merchants," said Figgins. "I wonder what it is. Some little scheme for getting their own back, I suppose."

"They can't keep their end up with us," said Kerr. "We've done them in the eye, fair and square, and they ought to sing small."

"Only they won't!" grinned Figgins. "They never know when they are licked. I'll get my footer, and we'll have a punt about till dinner."

And Figgins ran up to his study.
As he opened the door a deep, low growl fell upon his ears.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins.
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He stared blankly at the figure of a bulldog under the table. The bulldog's eyes were turned towards the door, and they were rolling strangely. The jaws moved slightly, and at intervals the low growl came from the cavernous throat. Figgins stopped abruptly. Towser, the bulldog, was reputed to have a somewhat uncertain temper, and Figgins had not forgotten that he had once attempted to bite even so august a person as the Head of St. Jim's himself. A dog who would bite the Head would bite anybody, certainly—and Towser's teeth were dangerous.

"Hallo, Towser, old man!" said Figgins affectionately. "Towsey, old boy! I say, Towser!"

Growl!

"Now, Towsey, be a good chap," said Figgins, advancing a little and putting out his hand. "Good dog! Good doggie! Now, then!"

Gr-r-r-row!

Figgins jumped back hastily. He had been going to pat the bulldog's head, but that deep, fierce growl warned him off.

"Coming down, Figgy?" Kerr called up the stairs.
"There's a blessed dog in the study!" Figgins called back.
"Herries' bulldog!"

"My hat!"
Kerr and Wynn came up, and looked in at the doorway. The dog's eyes rolled at them, so wildly that the juniors began to fear that Towser was mad. Certainly the live Towser never rolled his eyes in that dreadful manner.

"That's what those rotters were grinning about," said Kerr, a light breaking on him. "They have planted that beast here on us, to keep us out of our own study."

"Old Ratty will make a row, if he sees him," said Figgins. "And the beast may start roaming about the house any minute. Suppose he came on Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Great Scott! There would be a row!"
"I suppose I can pass him, and get my footer," said Figgins uneasily. "Dogs are all right if you know how to treat 'em, you know. I can always get on with dogs—only Towser is a rather uncertain beast. I say, Towsey, old man—"

Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The three juniors backed involuntarily out of the study. That growl was so deep and savage and menacing, that it almost chilled their blood. Certainly a dog that growled in that manner was not safe at close quarters.

"We could shut the door and leave him here," Fatty Wynn suggested.
"But we should have to clear him out afterwards. We can't have our blessed study garrisoned by a blessed bulldog!" exclaimed Figgins. "Besides, I want to get my footer."

"Make a dash for it."

"And suppose the beasts jumps on me?"
"He looks jolly dangerous!" said Fatty Wynn. "See how he's rolling his eyes. That ain't natural in a dog. He's mad, I believe."

"A mad dog ain't safe," said Figgins. "He might give us hydrophobia. Herries ought to be kicked for leaving the beast loose."

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"Hallo, got a dog there?" asked Redfern, coming along the passage. "Better not let our respected Housemaster see him. Ratty doesn't like dogs."

"It's Herries' beastly bulldog, and he's taken possession of our study," growled Figgins. "I believe he's mad—look at his eyes. They're simply horrible!"

"My word—he does look dangerous," said Redfern, glancing into the study. "Kick him out!"

"You kick him out!" suggested Figgins.
"Ahem! Rather rough on poor old Towser to kick him," said Redfern thoughtfully. "Better go and tell Herries, and get him to fetch the brute away."

"And have those School House rotters crowing over us," growled Kerr. "They've planted him here as a joke on us, of course. We're not going to let those bounders think we're afraid of a rotten bulldog!"

"Look here, we're going to clear him out," said Figgins resolutely. "I'm not afraid. You've got a bat and some stumps in your study, Reddy. Get 'em, and we'll go for him!"

"Right-ho!" said Redfern.
He hurried to his study, and returned with a cricket-bat and three stumps. Thus armed, the four juniors advanced into the study.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"You can growl as much as you like, you ill-tempered beast," said Figgins. "But you're going out! Now, out you go! Shoo!"

The bulldog continued to roll his eyes and growl. Figgins made a threatening sweep in the air with the cricket-bat.
"Shoo!" he roared.

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But the bulldog refused to "shoo." The waving of the bat did not seem to frighten him in the least. Redfern and Kerr and Fatty Wynn brandished the stumps and "shooed," but the bulldog did not stir.

"He'll jump at us in a minute!" said Fatty Wynn. "I'll brain him if he does," said Figgins crossly. "I'm fed up with the beast! Give him a poke with your stump, Reddy, and I'll stand ready to swipe him with the bat if he jumps at you."

"Right-ho!" said Reddy.

He jabbed the stump at the bulldog.

Click!

That was certainly not the sound the juniors expected to result from jabbing a cricket-stump at a bulldog. Reddy's stump clicked on a hard surface, and slid along.

Reddy gazed open-mouthed at the bulldog.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped.

"It ain't alive!" yelled Figgins.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

The four juniors fairly jumped at the bulldog. They grasped him and rolled him over. He did not stir a muscle. His eyes continued to roll, and he growled continuously, but that was all. His limbs were rigid.

Figgins gasped.

"Tain't a dog at all! It's one of Bernard Glyn's tricks, the bouncer. It's a dummy bulldog!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Figgins raised the bat in the air.

"I'll finish him!" he said.

"Hold on!" said Redfern, catching his arm. "Let's plant him on the other chaps. We've been taken in, you know. Stick him in the passage and leave him there. Besides, it's a shame to damage him—must have taken Glyn a lot of time to fix him up with a phonograph and a giddy electric battery in his tummy. Stick him in the passage, and leave him for the other chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. dragged Towser out into the passage, and planted him there, with many chuckles. They had been taken in, and they were by no means averse to "passing it on," as it were. Then Figgins took his footer, and the four juniors went downstairs—and in the excitement of a punt-about in the quad, they soon forgot all about the mechanical Towser.

CHAPTER 13.

The Death of Towser!

"GOODNESS gracious!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, uttered that exclamation in horrified tones.

The Housemaster had been in the Third Form dormitory upstairs. There had been a rag there the previous night, and some damage had been done; and Mr. Horace Ratcliff had been examining it carefully, with the intention of coming down very heavily upon the delinquents concerned. His way down the stairs lay along the Fourth Form passage; and he was half-way to the head of the stairs when he sighted a ferocious-looking bulldog, squatting in the middle of the passage, and staring directly towards him.

The attitude of the bulldog was crouching as if for a spring—the jaws were moving, the eyes were rolling, and from its deep throat came a threatening growl.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Mr. Ratcliff stopped dead.

"Ratty" was not a hero. He was a good deal of a tyrant in his House, and more or less of a terror to the junior boys; but he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. His face went quite pale at sight of the bulldog, and a cold shiver ran down his spine.

"Goodness gracious!" he ejaculated. "That is Herries' bulldog—and he has let it loose again! It is infamous! The wretched brute ought to be sent away from the school! It is outrageous! One of the boys must have introduced it into the House! Good heavens! What is to be done?"

The Housemaster stood still, eyeing the bulldog uneasily. To get to the stairs, he had to pass the bulldog, within a few feet of him on either side, and Towser's looks showed what he might expect if he came within reach.

But he could not remain where he was indefinitely. He was wanted in the dining-room in a short time to preside at dinner. He thought of calling for help, but he refrained. To have the boys come upstairs and see him held at bay by a dog, would be too ridiculous. Mr. Ratcliff was not brave, but he was sensitive on the subject.

"Whatever am I to do?" he muttered. "Herries shall be severely punished for this. That dreadful dog ought to be killed! Shoo!"

But Mr. Ratcliff's "shoo" had no more effect than Figgins' "shoo," a short time before in the study. The

bulldog took no notice, but continued to roll his eyes and growl deeply and menacingly.

Mr. Ratcliff waved his hand in the hope of intimidating the dog; but Towser was not in the slightest degree intimidated.

The Housemaster felt desperate.

At any moment someone might come upstairs, and find him in this ridiculous position, penned up in the passage, and not daring to pass the dog.

He knew the laughter that would follow, though not in his presence, and that the incident would become a standing joke in the New House.

"It is outrageous—infamous!" he panted. "I—I think I will venture to pass him!"

He advanced a few paces.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Mr. Ratcliff backed away again, with great haste.

That deep and threatening growl went to the very marrow of his bones, and he could almost feel the sharp teeth of the bulldog closing upon a limb.

He stood regarding the motionless dog with furious looks, wondering what on earth he was to do. There was a sound of voices below, and he grew desperate. Juniors would be coming up, and he would be seen—held at bay by a mere dog!

He set his teeth, and strode into one of the studies, and seized a poker. Then he came out into the passage again, with the air of a man who had resolved to do or die.

He would pass Towser—and at the first motion to attack him, he would bring down the poker on the brute's head, and brain him.

With his heart in his mouth, the Housemaster advanced cautiously. If the bulldog had made a motion, Mr. Ratcliff would certainly have darted back more quickly than he advanced. But the animal seemed unconscious of its peril. His eyes were still rolling wildly, but not specially at Mr. Ratcliff.

Closer and closer the Housemaster crept. He kept close to the wall as he advanced, the dog's head being turned a little away. It was strange that Towser did not turn his head towards him—was he blind, or deaf?

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed.

Only a few more paces, and he would be near enough to bring the heavy poker down with a terrific crash upon the bulldog's head.

Then, leaving the beast dead or stunned in the passage, he would be able to make his escape.

Closer and closer!

Still Towser did not turn his head—still he was unconscious of his peril. The poker was in the air now.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

Mr. Ratcliff, with nervous force, brought the poker down, right at the bulldog's head.

Crash!

Towser did not yell. He did not cry. He did not growl any more. There was a slight sound of whirling inside him, as if a mechanism had stopped suddenly, that was all. The big head dropped on the floor, and the bulldog lay still. But Mr. Ratcliff was not satisfied. He brought the poker down twice again, in his terror that perhaps the ferocious beast would turn upon him, and then ran past the motionless dog, his gown rustling.

Half a dozen juniors were coming up the stairs, and Mr. Ratcliff, as he saw them, calmed down, and tried to look as if he had not been running.

Figgins and the rest stared curiously at their Housemaster, flushed and flustered, with a poker grasped in his hand, and gasping for breath.

"Boys," exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, in a voice he vainly endeavoured to render steady, "please carry away that body! Remove it from the house!"

"That—that body, sir?" said Redfern.

"Yes. I have been compelled to kill Herries' bulldog!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "Somehow it got into the house, and attacked me."

Figgins & Co. exchanged glances.

"Attacked you, sir?" murmured Figgins.

"Yes; it sprang at me in the passage—"

Figgins almost staggered:

"Sprang at you, sir?" he stuttered.

"Yes; it sprang at my throat, and I was compelled to strike it down. I have had a very narrow escape," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Take the body away, please, and ask Taggles to bury it!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Did he bite you, sir?" said Kerr demurely.

"No; fortunately I escaped his teeth!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "I had, however, a very narrow escape. If I had lost my presence of mind, I should have been very badly bitten."

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Always remember, my boys, in time of danger, to preserve your presence of mind!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff had been so scared that he almost, or quite, believed that the bulldog had sprung at him. But the juniors who know that the mechanical dog could no more have sprung than it could have flown, could hardly help chuckling. Mr. Ratcliff descended the stairs, handing the poker to Redfern to replace in his study; and then the juniors prepared to carry away the "dead body."

"Sprang at him!" murmured Figgins. "Sprang at him, you know! Oh, my hurt!"

"Must have been scared out of his wits!" grinned Redfern. "But, I say, he's killed this poor beast—but what will he say when he sees the real Towser about the school again?"

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors lifted the mechanical dog—mechanical no longer—and carried him downstairs. They bore him across to the School House, and Tom Merry & Co., who were in the quadrangle, at once gathered round.

"Here's your giddy mechanical marvel," said Figgins. "I'm sorry to say he's dead. He sprang at Ratty in the passage, and Ratty brained him."

"What?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Sprang at him!" yelled Bernard Glyn. "Why, he couldn't move!"

"Well, Ratty says he sprang at him, and that's why he killed him—and I suppose Ratty ought to know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly ass—he's damaged my model!" growled Bernard Glyn. "I suppose you fellows got a scare when you found him in your study—what?"

Figgins & Co. looked mildly surprised.

"Scare! Why? My dear chap, why should we be scared about a mechanical dog?"

"But you didn't know he was mechanical when you saw him, I'll bet!" exclaimed Glyn excitedly. "You were jolly well scared. You took him for Towser."

"We didn't take him at all—we left him," said Figgins. "My dear chap, you will have to think of something better than that if you want to take a rise out of the New House, you know. We've got our eye-teeth out, you know. Ta-ta!"

And Figgins & Co. walked away laughing.

"Sold again!" growled Blake. "Lot of good you Shell chaps backing up against the New House. You'd better leave it to the Fourth."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats!"

"I'll bet you they were taken in, only of course they won't say so!" growled Bernard Glyn, "and I jolly well think Ratty ought to pay for the damage he's done to my model. I suppose it's no good asking him, though."

"Ha, ha, ha! I should say not!" roared Kangaroo. "If he found out that it was a dummy, after saying that it sprang at him, I fancy he would be ratty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Later that day, as Mr. Ratcliff was taking a turn in the quadrangle, he suddenly stopped, his eyes almost starting out of his head. Herries of the Fourth was crossing the quad., and at his heels was his big bulldog. There was no mistake about it—it was Towser, and there was not even a bump on his head.

Mr. Ratcliff called to Herries in great astonishment. For the moment he almost fancied that it was a ghost of Towser that he saw.

"Herries."

"Yes, sir," said Herries, stopping and turning round.

"Your dog is not dead, then?"

"I think not, sir," said Herries demurely. "He looks as if he were alive, sir."

"Is he not severely injured?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Extraordinary!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff, in utter astonishment. "I gave him three distinct and quite terrific blows, and certainly I thought that he was killed. Herries, if your bulldog gets into the New House again, I shall request the Head to have him sent away from the school."

And he strode away, very much puzzled. Mr. Ratcliff had heard of a cat having nine lives; but he had never heard that a bulldog was gifted with two, and how Towser could have survived those terrific swipes with the poker was a mystery Mr. Ratcliff never quite succeeded in solving.

CHAPTER 14.

A Really Big Scheme.

"MY only hat!"

Tom Merry uttered the exclamation.

Lowther and Manners gave inquiring looks.

Tom Merry had a letter in his hand, which he had been

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reading; but he had let it drop on his knee, and he had been thinking deeply. The subject of his thoughts it was easy to guess—the important subject of giving Figgins & Co. of the New House what the juniors called the "kybosh." The successive triumphs of Figgins & Co. had had an exasperating effect upon the School House juniors. Unless the obnoxious New House was put into its place, how could Tom Merry & Co. claim that their house was cock-house of St. Jim's? And that was a claim that could not possibly be given up, though the skies fell.

"Well, what's the news?" said Manners. "That letter is from Greyfriars, isn't it?"

"Letter?" said Tom Merry vaguely. "Oh, yes. I wasn't thinking of the letter. But it was the letter put the idea into my head, though. It's from Wharton—the captain of their junior footer team, you know. We write to one another sometimes. He mentions that a Greyfriars' chap was kidnapped a few weeks ago—carried off in a giddy motor-car by a chap who was going to hold him for ransom."

"By Jove!"

"That put the idea into my head," said Tom Merry.

"What idea?" demanded his chums.

"I suppose you'll agree that we've got to leave no stone unturned to dish Figgins & Co. It's a case of all hands on deck. We've got to dish those beggars, or else own up that the New House is cock-house of St. Jim's."

"What's the wheeze?" asked Lowther. "We're on, whatever it is."

"Why shouldn't they be kidnapped?"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Kidnapped, and carried off in a motor-car, you know," said Tom Merry, growing animated. "It is really a big idea, you know. You don't often get an idea like that."

"Not outside a lunatic asylum," agreed Lowther.

"Or a home for idiots," assented Manners.

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Look here, you silly asses, it's a big idea. Gussy hires a car sometimes from the garage at Wayland when he's in funds, and I suppose he can do it again. Now, Figgins & Co. are going over to Glyn House to tea on Wednesday. Glyn said he'd asked them. They will be coming back after dark—by that lonely lane from Glyn House that runs into the Rylcombe Road. Nothing could be better."

"But—but—"

"The car is in waiting. Gussy can drive a car. He's driven us in his pater's car at Eastwood House without killing anybody. We can rig Gussy up as a chauffeur, and stick him on to drive, in mask and goggles complete."

"But—but—"

"We can be masked, and armed to the teeth—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Figgins & Co. are suddenly seized by a gang of armed ruffians, and slung into the car with pistols at their heads—"

"Pistols!" yelled Lowther and Manners together.

"Well, knives at their throats, then," amended Tom Merry. "Kidnappers generally have revolvers, I believe, but we can't get any, I suppose. But a gleaming dagger, or a flashing stiletto—"

"Draw it mild!"

"Bound hand and foot, and gagged," pursued Tom Merry enthusiastically. "What do you think of that?"

"I don't see how a gleaming dagger or a flashing stiletto could be bound hand and foot, or gagged, either," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Figgins & Co. will be bound hand and foot, and gagged, same as the heroes are in novels."

"Oh, I see!"

"What do you think of the wheeze?"

"Oh, rotten," said Lowther.

"Rotten!" said Manners.

"Fatheads!" said Tom Merry. "It's a ripping scheme, I tell you, and I'll go and talk it over with Blake, as you haven't sense enough to understand it."

Lowther and Manners chuckled, and went on with their preparation, as Tom Merry strode out of the study, closing the door with unnecessary force.

Tom Merry's latest scheme certainly did seem a little wild, at first sight.

But the captain of the Shell stuck to it.

Study No. 6 received it at first with disrespectful laughter; but they came round in time, as the possibilities of the scheme were discussed.

And Lowther and Manners, though they agreed that the scheme was rotten, were quite ready to do their best to back up their study leader.

And indeed, as the plan was discussed, every fellow contributing a suggestion or two, it began to look more feasible, and if it went well, there was no doubt that Figgins & Co. would be most thoroughly dished.

And all the School House fellows were longing to dish Figgins & Co.

The New House trio were holding their heads very high. They had scored over the School House, and the School House had not succeeded in retaliating. If the prestige of the House was to be maintained, it was undoubted that Figgins & Co. had to be brought down off their perch.

But there was one fellow in the School House to whom Figgins & Co. were as sweet as sugar just now. That fellow was Bernard Glyn. They took a deep interest in Glyn's inventions; they watched some of his experiments; they invited him to show them a chemical experiment in their study, which made the whole passage smell for twenty-four hours afterwards. Bernard Glyn considered that Figgins & Co. were remarkably intelligent chaps, and his opinion of them rose very high. It was likely to fall to its former level, as a matter of fact, as soon as Cousin Ethel's visit to Glyn House came to an end.

Glyn had asked Figgins & Co. over to his place to tea on Wednesday, and the Co. had joyfully assented. Figgins wanted to go because Cousin Ethel was there, and Fatty Wynn, though not specially keen on that point, dreamed blissful daydreams of the lovely spreads that Glyn's sister prepared for his friends. Kerr wanted to go because his chums wanted to, so all three were happy.

Glyn was staying the night at home, as he sometimes did, his father's house being very near St. Jim's. After tea, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were to walk back to St. Jim's by themselves.

It was just after the three New House juniors had gone away with Glyn, that Tom Merry dropped into Kildare's study. Kildare was having his tea with Darrel and Langton of the Sixth.

Tom Merry sweetly and politely requested passes. He was quite prepared to break bounds if passes-out were unobtainable; but he knew that he could depend upon old Kildare's good nature.

"We want to go for a run in a car," he explained. "Gussy's hired a car from Wayland, and we may be out till calling-over—if you'll let us, Kildare."

Kildare had seen D'Arcy drive a car, so he had no misgivings. As a matter of fact, he supposed that the juniors would have a chauffeur with the car, as they generally did when they hired one.

"All serene," he said. "Don't be later than eight." "Right—ho!" said Tom Merry joyfully. "I say, there are six of us going, Kildare. Make it for Lowther, Manners, Blake, Gussy, Kangaroo, and your humble servant."

Kildare nodded, and wrote out the pass.

Tom Merry left the study highly elated.

"All wight, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when he came down the passage.

"Right as rain!"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "We've telephoned for the car. It's going to be ready at five."

"That's right," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "Figgins & Co. leave Glyn House at six. It will be as easy as rolling off a giddy log."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of the School House went down to footer practice to while away the time until the hour for starting on their expedition.

CHAPTER 15.

Kidnapped.

"GOOD-BYE, Ethel!"

"Good-bye!"

Figgins & Co. turned away from the door, and walked down the drive to the gates of Glyn House.

It was a dark, misty evening, and the trees in the park loomed up dark and spectre-like as the juniors started along the drive. All three of them were looking very cheerful. Figgins was always happy when he was with Cousin Ethel, and Fatty Wynn was always ecstatic when there was a big spread. Kerr had spent a pleasant hour with Bernard Glyn in his workshop, where the schoolboy inventor showed him his treasures. Altogether the three juniors had had a very cheerful afternoon, and they were feeling perfectly satisfied with themselves and the universe generally as they turned their footsteps homeward to St. Jim's. To Figgins at that moment, as to Pangloss of old, it seemed that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

They left the park gates behind them, and walked down the dark lane towards the Rylcombe Road, by which their way lay to the school.

"Jolly afternoon!" said Figgins, at last. "Glyn is a decent chap, though he's in the School House."

"Isn't she ripping?" said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh.

Figgins paused to stare at his chum. The only "she" in

the wide world, for Figgins, was Cousin Ethel, and he had never heard Fatty Wynn express such rapturous admiration for that young lady before. He did not know whether he quite liked it.

"Yes," said Figgins shortly.

"There isn't another girl in the world like her," said Fatty Wynn. "Don't you think so, Kerr, old chap?"

"Yes," grinned Kerr.

"I think I ought to see her oftener," said Fatty Wynn. "I feel a real regard for her, you know—a really deep friendship."

"Look here—" began Figgins hotly.

"Eh? Don't you?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Ye-es. But—"

"Precious few girls like her," said Fatty Wynn. "The chap who is going to marry her is jolly lucky!"

Figgins stopped dead.

"Marry her!" he ejaculated.

"Yes—don't you think he's a jolly lucky bargee?"

"He! Who?"

"Chap she's engaged to," said Wynn, with a glance at Figgins, wondering at the excitement of his long-legged chum.

"You silly ass!" shouted Figgins.

The fat Fourth-Former jumped.

"Eh—what? What do you mean, Figgy? What's the matter?"

"What do you mean by saying she's engaged, you silly fathead? If you meant it for a joke, I don't see the point of it, and I can tell you that I don't like jokes about girls. They are in rotten bad taste, for one thing!" said Figgins warmly.

"But—b-but she is engaged!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Chump! She isn't!"

"She is! I've seen the chap! Why, you've seen him, too; we all know him!"

"You silly burler!" howled Figgins. "Are you potty? You know jolly well that's she's too young to be engaged to anybody!"

"Pooh—rot!" said Fatty Wynn. "I suppose a girl's old enough to be engaged at twenty-five?"

"Tw-tw-twenty-five!" gasped Figgins.

"She's twenty-five," said Fatty Wynn. "Twenty-five last birthday, I believe."

"You—you—you silly ass! She's younger than I am!" howled Figgins. "She's three months and two days younger than I am!"

Fatty Wynn stared at his excited chum with a gaze of almost idiotic bewilderment.

"Have you gone potty?" he demanded. "I know she's twenty-five. She's ten years older than her brother, and he's fifteen!"

"Idiot! She hasn't got a younger brother!"

"Hasn't got a younger brother!" said Fatty Wynn, backing away from Figgins, convinced now that he was labouring under a sudden attack of insanity. "Glyn's sister hasn't got a younger brother! Who is Glyn of the Shell, then, if he ain't her brother?"

"Glyn's sister!" said Figgins faintly.

"Yes. Are you dotty? Has the ginger-beer got into your head, or what?"

"W-w-were you speaking about Edith Glyn?" murmured Figgins. "I—I—I thought you were—were speaking about somebody else."

"You're off your dot, I think!" said Fatty Wynn crossly.

"Blessed if I can understand you. Whom else should I have been speaking of, I'd like to know? Nobody else made any of the cakes, that I know of."

"Cakes!" said Figgins.

"Yes. Glyn's sister made the cakes herself, and I said she was a ripping girl, and so she is. Precious few like her," said Fatty Wynn, "and I said the chap she's engaged to is a lucky bargee. She'll make cakes like that for him some day."

"I—I—I thought you were speaking of Cousin Ethel," murmured Figgins, his face quite scarlet in the darkness.

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"Cousin Ethel's all right," he said. "But I don't believe she could make cakes the same as Glyn's sister does. They're better than you get at Bunn's in Rylcombe. I think Glyn is a lucky chap, too. If I were her brother, I'd get her to send me some cakes like that up to the school every day."

"Oh, blow the cakes!" said Figgins. "Blessed if I ever noticed whether there were any cakes or not!"

"Oh, you're dotty!" said Fatty Wynn. "What were you thinking about, then, if you weren't thinking about the cakes?"

Figgins did not reply to that question. The juniors walked on, and they had almost reached the turning into the Rylcombe Road when they noticed a motor-car drawn up by the

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side of the road in the darkness. The lights were out, and the car was almost invisible in the darkness under the trees. The juniors glanced at it carelessly as they passed. Just as they got past the car, there was a sudden rush of feet in the darkness.

Six dim forms sprang upon the three juniors. Before the Co. realised what was happening, they were seized and hurled to the ground, and their captors were kneeling on them.

"Ow!" gasped Figgins, as he wriggled with his face in the dust, with a knee planted in the small of his back. "Ow! Leggo! Lemme gerrup, you rotter! Ow! What's the game?"

He twisted his head round to look up at his assailant. He saw a figure in a long dark coat, the face completely covered by a black mask. The sight of it made him stare.

"Bind them!" It was a hoarse, deep voice from one of the masked men. "Hold on!" yelled Kerr. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Stab them if they resist!" "My hat! Footpads!" said Figgins. "Well, you won't get much out of us, you rotters. I've got no tin, and only a Waterbury watch!"

The masked ruffians did not speak again. They held the captured juniors tightly, and one of them went to the three in turn and bound them hand and foot. Figgins & Co. had no chance to resist. As soon as they were bound, handkerchiefs were tied over their eyes to blindfold them, and then gags were thrust into their mouths. Then they felt themselves lifted into the car.

"Get her going, Bill!" "Ave yer got 'em safe, Jim?" "Yus!"

That was all that was said. One of the ruffians, who wore a motorman's mask and goggles, jumped into the driver's seat, and another mounted beside him. The other four clambered into the car after the captured juniors, who were bundled on the floor.

The car snorted and jerked, and rolled out swiftly into the Rycombe Road. It turned away from the direction of the school, and buzzed away at a great speed.

Figgins & Co., unable to speak, unable to see, unable to move, lay huddled on the floor of the car, among the feet of their kidnappers, helplessly amazed and alarmed.

It had all passed so quickly that it seemed like a dream. They were kidnapped.

There was no doubt about that—but by whom—for what? If D'Arcy of the Fourth, or Cutts of the Fifth, had been kidnapped, it might have been for ransom—but the New House were not rich, and they were not valuable prizes for kidnappers. But they were kidnapped, there was no doubt whatever about that.

"Southampton in two hours, Bill!" muttered the deep, hoarse voice.

"If we ain't stopped, Jim."

"Who's to stop us?"

"The young gents will be missed."

"But they won't know where to look for 'em. We shall be at Southampton in two hours, and then we'll 'ide 'em safe enough."

Silence again. Figgins & Co. could not speak, but they could hear, and they listened to every word with avidity. They were being taken to Southampton—a great distance from St. Jim's. The car left no traces—there was little likelihood of their being traced.

Figgins felt himself roughly shaken by the shoulder. The gag was jerked out of his mouth.

"Don't you yell!" said the hoarse, husky voice. "You'll git six inches of this 'ere knife under yer ribs if you does. Look 'ere, wot's yer name?"

"I—I—I'm Figgins!"

"That's right; I got the right party. Yer father's a banker, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"Then he'll be able to pay for yer—hey? He'll pay two 'undred quid to 'ave yer back safe and sound, I reckon!"

"He jolly well won't!" said Figgins, with spirit. "You'll get sent to prison for this, and that's all you'll get, you scoundrels!"

"None of yer sauce, unless you want'er git this 'ere knife in yer ribs, young shaver! You're in desperate 'ands, I can tell yer that!"

"I'm not afraid of you!"

"Give 'im a wipe on the mug, Jim!"

"I'll settle his 'ash for good, if he gives me any of 'is chin-wag," said the deep voice. "If yer father won't pay fur yer to be sent 'ome, young shaver, we'll send 'im yer nose or yer ear per registered post, as a reminder that we're in want of the money. See? Now you can shet up!"

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"Look here—groooooh!"

The gag was jammed back into Figgins's mouth.

The kidnappers did not speak again.

In silence, so far as its occupants were concerned, the car rushed on.

Excepting for the kidnapper's mention of Southampton, the juniors had not the faintest idea of the direction the motor-car took.

It dashed on at a high speed, and mile after mile flew under the rapid wheels.

Mile after mile!

The captured juniors could not exactly judge the speed, but they knew that it was not less than an average of twenty miles an hour. The long country roads were deserted, and the chauffeur let the car go. An hour passed, and then another, still in grim silence save for the rush and scurry of the car. Forty miles had been covered, and the car was still rushing on through the dark winter evening.

"My hat!" thought Figgins. "A good forty miles from St. Jim's by this time. My only hat! How are we to get back, even if we get away from the beasts? And precious little chance of that!"

The car stopped at last.

"Ere we are!" said the rough, hoarse voice.

They had arrived, but where they were the kidnapped juniors had not the faintest idea.

CHAPTER 16.

A Surprising Discovery!

Figgins felt the hard, heavy grasp upon his shoulder again.

"You 'ear me?" said the hoarse voice. "Look 'ere, young shaver, we don't want to 'urt yer. If you give yer word not to struggle or cry out, we'll take the ropes off yer. Wot do you sye?"

The gag was removed to allow Figgins to reply.

"You rotter!" gasped Figgins.

"Now, talk sense. We're goin' to tike you into a safe place. If you like to walk, you can walk—if not, you're goin' to be dragged. You can tike your choice. Now, wot is it to be? Promise not to resist fur ten minutes, and we'll let yer loose. Otherwise, you'll stay tied up, and a bit tighter."

"We'll walk," said Figgins. He was beginning to feel extremely uncomfortable though his bonds were not tied very tightly.

"You others sye the sime?"

"Yes!" gasped Fatty Wynn and Kerr, as their gags were removed.

"I'll trust yer," said the hoarse voice. "Mind, I've got this 'ere knife ready for yer if you breaks yer word!"

"We shan't break our word, you beast," said Figgins. "We've given our word—for ten minutes. We're not going to stay in your paws, you can bet. We'll jolly soon get away, and you'll be sent to prison."

"Let their blooming legs loose, mates."

The gags were replaced in the juniors' mouths, and their arms remained bound. One of their captors examined the blindfolding cloths tied over their eyes to make sure that they could not see. Then their legs were untied, and they were led from the car, stepping one after another to the ground.

The cold night wind blew on their heated faces.

Where were they?

Certainly not in a town of any kind; there was the deep silence of the countryside round them.

"You got to git over this 'ere wall. Lively now," For a moment a keen edge touched Figgins's neck, and he shuddered. "Elp 'em over, mates."

The juniors were lifted in turn upon a wall, and lowered down on the inner side. Then they heard the motor-car drive away. There were only five of their captors round them now on the inner side of the wall. They were in an open space of some sort, and in complete darkness. Blindfolded, gagged, and their arms bound, they were helpless in the hands of the kidnappers, even if they had not given their word not to struggle. They used their ears—the only sense left to them—but they could hear nothing to indicate where they were. But certain slight sounds warned them that the kidnappers were divesting themselves of the masks and long dark coats.

"Now kim on," said the hoarse voice, "and mind, not a blooming trick, or you git this 'ere knife in yer blooming ribs!"

Figgins & Co. were marched away in the midst of their kidnappers.

Several times the party paused, and Figgins guessed that the kidnappers were listening and looking about them cautiously.

They stopped at last at a blank wall. Not a glimmer of light came through the blindfolds, and they knew that they



HARRY WHARTON & CO. RUN THE SWINDLER TO EARTH!

(An exciting incident in "Good Old Coker!" the grand, long, complete school tale, by Frank Richards, which is contained in the current issue of our Companion Paper, "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

were still out of doors and in darkness. Figgins & Co. heard a door creak on its hinges.

They were hurried through a doorway, still in darkness. There was a sudden clank, and one of the kidnappers uttered an exclamation.

"Look out!"

A bicycle had been knocked over in the darkness, as Figgins & Co. knew by the sound.

"Git a light, Bill!"

"'Ere you are!"

A match glimmered, and there was a smell of oil. A lantern had been lighted. The rays of light glimmered through the blindfolding cloths, but the juniors could not see.

"They're safe enough 'ere, mates. So long as they can't yeli for help, they'll be all right. We can leave 'em 'ere for a bit."

There was a sound of retreating footsteps, and the door closed.

The light was still burning. Figgins & Co. were left alone. The kidnappers were gone. The three juniors, their arms still securely bound, were unable to remove the cloth from their

eyes; but all three of them made the discovery, at the same time, that the gags in their mouths were loose, and could be removed with a little trouble.

Figgins was the first to get rid of the gag.

"Ow!" he gasped, when he recovered his voice. "Oh, my hat! What do you think of this, you chaps?"

"Grooogh!"

"We're forty or fifty miles from St. Jim's," said Figgins.

"But you heard what that villain said, if we shout for help we shall be heard. Pile in!"

Kerr and Wynn spat out the gags at last.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Kerr.

"B-b-but suppose they hear us and come back!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"We've got to chance that. I shouldn't wonder if they're gone; but we'll wait a few minutes to give them a chance to get out of hearing," said Figgins sagely. "My hat, this is a giddy adventure, and no mistake! I wonder where we are?"

"It's a shed of some sort," said Kerr. "I heard a bike knocked over."

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"

"So did I. A bike shed, I suppose."
 "Let's yell," said Kerr. "We may be heard by somebody, even if those rotters hear us, too, and come back. All together!"
 And with all the force of their lungs, the three juniors roared:
 "Help!"
 Their voices rang through the shed, and to a considerable distance beyond it. They shouted again and again with all their force.
 "Help, help, help!"
 "Somebody must hear us!" gasped Figgins. "I—I say, I can hear somebody coming."
 "Those rotters, perhaps."
 "Give another yell before they can stop us."
 "Help, help, help, help, help!" roared the juniors.
 There were undoubtedly sounds of footsteps close to the shed now. Figgins & Co. heard the door open.
 Was it their kidnappers returning? Or—
 "Help, help!"
 A chuckle!
 "Help!" shouted Figgins desperately. "Whoever you are, come and help us! We've been kidnapped by a gang of scoundrels and brought here. Help!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Figgins & Co. jumped.
 "You rotters, whoever you are!" shouted Figgins indignantly. "Come and let us loose. I tell you we've been kidnapped and brought forty or fifty miles from our school."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Can't you see we're tied up!" shrieked Kerr. "Come and let us loose before those scoundrels come back!"
 Hands glided over Figgins & Co. They felt their bonds cut, and the fragments of rope fell around their feet.
 They grabbed at the blindfolding cloths immediately, and dragged them off.
 Their eyes, so long in the darkness, blinked in the sudden light.
 Then it seemed to Figgins & Co. that a miracle had happened, or that they were dreaming. There was a laughing crowd in the shed, and the doorway was crowded, and outside there were still more—all roaring with laughter. And the amazing part of it was that they were all St. Jim's fellows. The dazed juniors recognised Tom Merry & Co.—Manners, Lowther, Blake, Herries, Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, and a score of other faces they knew. And in the crowd there were New House fellows, too—Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, and a dozen more—all laughing!
 Figgins & Co. blinked, and blinked, and stared in wild amazement at the yelling crowd.
 "I—I say, I—I'm dreaming!" panted Figgins. "How did you fellows get here?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "We walked!"
 "Walked! Walked forty miles!" howled Kerr.
 "Forty rats!" yelled Blake. "You're not a hundred yards from the School House."
 "What?"
 "Rats! What do you mean?"
 "Look here—"
 "Don't you know the old bike shed?" chirruped Blake.
 "Don't you know your own bike? You're standing six feet from your own jigger, Figgy!"
 Figgins glared round dazedly.
 It was true. There was his own machine, on the stand within six feet of him. The Co. were standing in the bike shed of the school. The very lantern that shed its light upon them was Kerr's own bike lamp!
 The bewilderment in the faces of the New House Co. made the crowd yell again. Tom Merry & Co. seemed to be in danger of going into hysterics.
 "But I—I—I say, how did we get here?" gasped Figgins.
 "We—we were kidnapped after we left Glyn House, and carried forty or fifty miles in a motor-car!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Draw it mild!"
 "Who did it?"
 "I don't know who did it—a gang of ruffians—they were masked, and they spoke like hooligans!" gasped Figgins.
 "I—I don't know how we got here. I—I thought we were somewhere near Southampton!"
 "Southampton! My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"
 A figure in a motor-car came pushing through the crowd. An eyeglass gleamed into the bike shed as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined his comrades.
 "I've taken the cah home, deah boys," he remarked. "I came back on my bike. Pway give me woom to put my bike on the stand!"
 "You—you've taken the car home!" yelled Figgins, beginning to understand. "What car?"
 "The cah I've been dwivin', deah boy!" said the swell THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 307.

of St. Jim's calmly. "We've had quite a long dwive—twenty miles out, and twenty miles back!"
 "Twenty miles out! Twenty miles back!" gasped Figgins, understanding at last how forty miles had been covered, and yet the journey had finished at St. Jim's. "Oh, you rotten spoofers! Of course, we couldn't see in the car—and it did a lot of turning—we couldn't guess—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Wathah a job gettin' you ovah the wall, wasn't it?" said D'Arcy affably. "First time you've got in ovah the school wall blindfolded, deah boys!"
 "The—the school wall!" stuttered Figgins.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 Figgins & Co. looked at one another with sickly looks. They knew it all now.
 "I s'pose that two 'undred quid'll be 'anded over," said Tom Merry, adopting the deep, hoarse voice that had spoken in the motor-car. "Otherwise, you'll git six hitches of this 'ere knife in yer bloomin' ribs."
 And he cheerfully held up a penknife, which was not more than three inches long. Figgins remembered the touch of cold steel that had made him shudder, and his face went scarlet.
 "Oh, you spoofers! It—it was you—"
 "I was the wuffian that dwove the cah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think we've done you this time, Figgins, deah boys."
 "Foiled, diddled, dished, and done!" chuckled Monty Lowther.
 "You—you rotters!" yelled Figgins.
 "Oh, hold me up, somebody," sobbed Redfern.
 "Oh, Figgy!" gasped Owen and Lawrence.
 "When I heard Figgy's voice, yelling for help from the bike shed, you could have knocked me down with a steam-hammer!" sobbed Blake.
 Figgins & Co. were crimson. At that moment they would have been intensely pleased if the floor of the bike shed had opened and swallowed them up. But the floor was quite solid, and there was no escape that way from the derisive yells of laughter from the almost hysterical crowd of juniors.
 They had yelled frantically for help—in the bike-shed at St. Jim's. Their yells had brought half the Lower School to the spot—and now—
 "Oh, my hat!" groaned Figgins. "Let's get out of this! Tom Merry, you—you villain—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Figgins & Co. made a rush for the door. They could stand it no longer. They pushed their way through the howling crowd.
 "Help, help!" roared Lowther, in imitation of Figgins & Co.'s frantic appeals. "Help! I've been kidnapped by Tom Merry—I've been driven twenty miles and back again—I'm a prisoner in the bike-shed—help!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Figgins & Co. fled across the quadrangle.
 The crowd, laughing like hyenas, followed them.
 The hapless New House juniors took refuge in their own study, and locked themselves in; and refused to reply to inquiring voices from the passage—voices that asked whether they felt safe, whether they were afraid of kidnappers, and whether they didn't think it was time to sing small.
 "We've been dore!" groaned Figgins. "We can't deny it—we've been dished just about as thoroughly as anybody could possibly be dished! Kerr, you ass, why didn't you suspect anything?"
 From under the study window came a roar.
 Figgins & Co. looked out of the window with furious faces. A crowd of School House fellows were there. Tom Merry raised his hand, and the whole throng broke into a sort of chant.
 "Who's been kidnapped?"
 "Figgins!"
 "Who's a gilly ass?"
 "Figgins!"
 "Who are the champion duffers of St. Jim's?"
 "Figgins & Co. Ha, ha, ha!"
 Figgins slammed down the window and drew the blind. And the School House crowd marched away at last, still roaring.
 And in the School House that evening there was great triumph. The fortune of war had gone against Tom Merry & Co. for a time—but in the last round, even the New House fellows could not deny that Figgins & Co. had been "CAUGHT NAPPING!"

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of TOM MERRY & CO. next Wednesday, entitled "NOT WANTED," by Martin Clifford. Also a grand instalment of our amazing new serial, "SECRET SERVICE," by "Agent 55." Order your "GEM" in Advance. Price One Penny.)

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SECRET SERVICE!



The Opening Chapters of a Grand New Serial Story. By AGENT "No. 55."

NOTE!

The author has, for obvious reasons, to conceal his real identity under the pen-name of Agent "No. 55." Concerning his position, I am allowed to say no more than this: that if his real name were revealed it would cause something like consternation in Diplomatic and Secret Service circles.

THE EDITOR.

THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

Jerry Osborne, a young Britisher taking a holiday in Berlin, goes to the assistance of a man who has been knocked down by a motor-car in the street in

THE GERMAN CAPITAL.

To his surprise he recognises in the injured man his employer, Mr. Muller, the head of the London office in which Jerry works. After the accident Mr. Muller's brain seems to be affected; he has lost his memory, and mutters continually. As

THE INJURED MAN'S ONLY FRIEND

in Berlin, Jerry is asked by the German police to accompany him home to England. The lad therefore takes charge of his employer. He is surprised to note how much attention his charge attracts during the train journey to the frontier.

At Flushing Jerry is attacked by several Germans, and in the scuffle Mr. Muller is knocked down. The blow restores him to his full senses, and Jerry is amazed to see him rush off with his aggressors to catch the steamer, which Jerry himself just misses. He is pondering over the strange turn events have taken, when a stranger introduces himself. He is an English airman and inventor, named Max Elton, and Jerry finally accompanies him to his lonely house on the marshes about seventy miles from Flushing. They agree that the Muller affair is very fishy, and the following day Jerry asks to be allowed to stay with his new friend.

"I'll be jolly glad to have you!" says Elton heartily. "I believe we are in some danger here, and, to tell you the truth, I am a bit afraid."

(Now start the third instalment.)

Elton's Secret!

"Afraid!"

Jerry laughed outright. Never did any man look less like feeling fear than Max Elton at that moment.

"Fact! This Muller business has got me scared. This is an out-of-the-way show here. You'll see for yourself when

we go out for a look round. Not another dwelling for miles; that's why I chose it. Sea on one side, and marsh and dykes on the other. A fellow might make the noise of fifty syrens, and there's no one to hear him. Nice convenient spot, eh, for Mr. Muller to play me a dirty trick. Old Neb is a top-hole fighter, but he and I together make only two, and you can bet your hat that this Muller fellow will take every precaution to do his work thoroughly. Suppose he were to turn up here with half a dozen of his cronies? Seven to two! Longer odds, thank you, than I quite care about. Now, with you here, we'll be three, an increase of fifty per cent. in the available fighting force. Now you can see why I'm so jolly glad you mean to stay."

Elton rattled on with a frankness and boyishness of manner that completely won Jerry's heart. The greatest aviator in Europe, which meant in all the world, he was talking as freely and easily to Jerry as though they were both members of the same foster club.

That was Max Elton's great charm, which won him more friends than did his reputation as one of the cleverest engineers and most daring aviator the world had yet seen. He was as much at home with a Cabinet Minister as a news-boy, and he hadn't a notion of the meaning of "side."

"Come outside and have a look round, though I warn you there isn't much to see," he said.

And he was right. From the house there was nothing for the eye to rest upon but a huge dyke, on the top of which ran the road along which Elton had brought the car the night before, wide stretching marsh, and the sky. Sign of human existence there was none. A narrow causeway, just wide enough to take a car, and some forty yards long, connected the road with Elton's house, which was quite a small dwelling with the stable for the car alongside.

"We'll get on to the dyke," suggested Elton.

From there the sea came into view, a sheet of pale, lead-coloured water, dull and lifeless under a grey sky; between the sea and where they stood sloped the greyish-green side of the mighty dyke, the only bulwark against the drowning of the land.

"Cheerful prospect, ain't it?" grinned Elton. "Hallo! There goes Neb!"

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A Magnificent New Long Complete School File of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"

Turning from the sea, Jerry saw the ugly grey car, with the horsy-looking little man at the steering-wheel, just issuing from the garage.

"Off to Kamp—our nearest town, thirty miles away—to get some grub. Thought we'd better lay in a stock," Elton explained. "There's a bit of a village—Nieden—ten miles nearer, but the provender there, sell doesn't suit my stomach."

The car a diminishing spot on the narrow dyke-top, Jerry and his companion turned to stroll in the opposite direction. All at once Jerry turned to his friend.

"I say, wouldn't it be simpler, since you think it likely Muller may be here, to take your car and get away from here for a spell? They wouldn't be likely to destroy your house or hurt Neb, I should imagine."

"It would be more simple," Elton admitted. "But I can't do it."

"Don't like the idea of running away?"

"No, not that; but I'm afraid. Told you so before." He smiled into Jerry's questioning eyes. "You see, I've something rather valuable lying about here, and those German sleuths might find it. That's what I'm afraid of. Come along, and I'll show you the new hydroplane I'm experimenting with. Oh, she's a daisy!"

And then Jerry Osborne understood why Elton was afraid.

He listened while Elton gave a description of his water-plane in the careless, off-hand style of speaking that he affected. But beneath the carelessness Jerry caught now and again a glimpse of the real enthusiasm of the man. For an instant the eyes would flash and grow stern, the gay voice harden, and the man of intellect and genius stood revealed.

"Of course, I could have done all this—the experimenting and so on, I mean—without going out of England," observed Elton suddenly; "and I expect you're wondering what kind of a jackass I must be to come to this out-of-the-way dog-hole in a foreign country."

"Didn't want interference, I suppose?"

"I didn't; no, not much." And Elton winked. "You see, I'm pretty well known, and it's been kept no secret why I'm here. I've had lots of visitors. Foreigners as well as Englishmen come to see my little chap. It's the greatest thing in waterplanes ever turned out, though I say it myself, and all I've shown it to agree."

"You've kept it no secret, then?"

"No."

"Then"—and Jerry stopped and looked earnestly at Elton—"then is this waterplane of yours only an excuse—a sort of blind?" he said slowly.

Elton burst into a roar of laughter.

"Good for you, Jerry!" he cried, slapping his companion on the shoulder. "Didn't I say you had brains?"

And then the mirth died from him, and he became serious, another man.

"Jerry," he said impressively, "they don't know it in England. Even the Government, from whom, as you know, I hold an appointment, doesn't know yet. I've had some of the cleverest and sharpest men from all parts of Europe here, and not one of them has even suspected what you've guessed in two minutes. Yes, I have an excuse, and because I can trust you, and you've offered to help me, I'll tell you what no man on earth besides myself—not even old Neb—knows. I'm here on my own to keep an eye upon what is going forward in the Zuyder Zee."

"Which the Dutch are attempting to drain."

"As you say. But, my boy"—and Elton's voice dropped to a whisper—"what are the plans of Germany which the Dutchmen's draining work is concealing?"

"Great heavens!" And Jerry's face was aghast.

"You may well say that, Jerry. One day, and before long, too, you'll know as much as I do; know something that is intended for England's ruin, and the Germans would eagerly give ten millions of money and the lives of ten thousand men to prevent England from realising."

"You mean that Holland's drainage scheme, of which there's been talk for years, is nothing more than a gigantic curtain, behind which Germany is concealing her preparations for England's successful invasion?"

"I do. So far, I've little more than suspicions, but with good warrant for them. One day those suspicions will be confirmed, become absolute cast-iron facts. And you and I, Jerry, all being well, are going to give those facts to our country. It's the greatest scheme that's ever come from a German's brain, and, if successful, it means England's ruin and annihilation. And not a living soul in our country has a notion of it. Behind the screen Germany has forced Holland—yes, you may well open your eyes, but what I say is correct—has forced Holland into erecting, she is making preparation which—Hullo! See that windmill, Jerry? That's where my pet hydroplane is stabled. We'll have her out. Oh, confound it! What rotten luck!"

"What is the matter?"

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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"Why, I've been ass enough to leave the key of the stable at home! Shall have to go back for it."

"I'll go!" cried Jerry eagerly.

"Will you? That's no end good of you, Jerry, though it is a shame to make you fag back. I remember now. I left the wretched key on the sideboard in the living-room. Sure you won't mind?"

"Only too glad. It isn't far, and I can't well lose my way," Jerry laughed.

And glad of the chance of being of some service to the man on whom he was already coming to regard as a hero, Jerry turned and began to trot swiftly back towards the house, the only break upon the dreary landscape. And as he ran his brain was excitedly busy with the marvellous secret of which Max Elton had made him a partaker.

In a few minutes he had reached where the causeway left the dyke road.

Elton had called after him that Neb had probably made the front door fast before leaving, so to the back of the house Jerry went, threw open the door with its bright brass handle, and came face to face with:

"Put oop dose hands und mage no noise, or you vas a dead man at vonce!" a guttural voice greeted him.

Jerry stiffened in his tracks. In front of him stood a thick-set, powerful-looking man, holding an automatic pistol, the muzzle of which was pointed straight at his heart.

The man was he with whom he had fought on the platform at Hook of Holland, the prizefighter-looking chap, who had spirited Muller away.

And as Jerry stared at him blankly, his breath cut short, Muller himself stepped from a doorway into the passage, and behind the pistol-holder.

A Tight Corner.

"Osborne! Himmel!"

The exclamation broke from Muller. If Jerry Osborne had received a dramatic and unpleasant surprise, the amazement of the German was certainly equally as great. For once Herr Zophel's right-hand man, the astutest and most resourceful spy in all the German Empire, was thrown off his guard, absolutely at a loss for words. For several seconds he could do nothing but stare at his clerk, whose appearance at such a time and place was to him nothing less than miraculous.

Hendricks, the man with the gun, growled something harshly in German, but the other did not seem to hear him.

And then Muller's self-possession returned. The brain of a spy needs to act promptly. The appearance of Osborne was bewilderingly disconcerting, but a fact to be dealt with. Smiling, Muller allowed the pistol, half-drawn from his pocket, to sink out of sight, and came fully into the passage.

"Why, Osborne," he cried, "how in the name of goodness come you to be here? I thought you were on your holiday. But come in—come in!"

Hendricks, his weapon still covering the Englishman, barked a question in German, receiving a curt answer in the same tongue.

"Come in, Osborne," repeated Muller. And he laid a plump hand on Osborne's sleeve.

"Und gome without noise, or I shoot!" Hendricks supplemented.

"You must take no notice of my friend. He still thinks you are a housebreaker," Muller said quickly. "Come inside."

And Jerry obeyed. His brain also had been active. At the first sight of the levelled pistol, his impulse had been to drag the door to and take to his heels—to run to warn Elton that his enemies were in possession of the house. The next instant he abandoned it. The chance to warn Elton would not be given him; he would be shot down before he had gone ten yards. And, himself dead, Elton would be shot down by a concealed marksman as he returned unsuspectingly to the house.

Hendricks made way for him to pass, and, slightly turning his head, Jerry had a glimpse of a third man, also armed, standing behind the house. Following Muller, he entered the kitchen.

"And now, how on earth do you come to be here?" Muller asked.

It will be remembered that, during the journey from Berlin, to Muller his companion had been as an absolute stranger. The injury to his head, when he fell in Unter den Linden, had affected his memory, wiping from it all recollection of everything in his life that had gone before. Memory was a total blank.

And a blank it would have remained but for the second fall on the platform at Hook of Holland. A second time he had fallen on his head, and the effect of the shock had

been to awaken him, as it were, from the mental sleep into which he had fallen as a consequence of the motor accident. Once again he became his normal self—alert, swift of brain, and conscious of all that had passed in the War Minister's private room. But of what had occurred during that mental sleep, his brain retained not the faintest impression.

Afterwards Hendricks had tried to explain matters. From a confederate on the train from Innsbruck—the attendant Jerry had noticed—he had received a telegraphic message that their chief was on the train, and in the custody of an English detective. At once Hendricks had trained to Rhine, the station on the Holland frontier, hoping to contrive some scheme for the release of his chief. How he had succeeded we know.

To all this Muller had listened attentively; but though events certainly appeared to be as Hendricks related, the secret service agent was wholly unable to comprehend how they had come about. Hendricks had tried to give him a description of Jerry, but it was necessarily imperfect. Muller had the best of reasons for being amazed when he and his clerk came face to face in the back passage of Max Elton's house.

"How do I come to be here!" repeated Jerry. "Why, I missed the steamer at Hook of Holland, and a gentleman on the quay, seeing me stranded, was kind enough to offer to bring me to his house—to here."

"Marvellous!" ejaculated Muller, really interested, and speaking in the most kindly manner. "And do you know who is your kind friend?"

"Yes. Mr. Elton, the great aviator."

"And a good customer of mine, I am hoping." And Muller smiled. "To think of seeing you here! Wonderful—wonderful! And I am here to do business with Mr. Elton."

"Fine business!" thought Jerry. Aloud he said: "How's that?"

"A new engine, Osborne—the finest engine for aero' or hydroplane ever made. I have just obtained it; and, knowing Mr. Elton's reputation, I have hurried here to beg of that so great and clever man to view it—to test it, if he will. If he approves—ah!—my fortune is made. We come here to see him—I and my friends. We find the house deserted; no one here. Mr. Elton gone. We suspect a tragedy—something terrible, a crime perhaps. We enter,

and then you come. Perhaps, we think, it is one of the guilty men returned for something. My friend Hendricks, he is rough and ready, an old soldier, and thus not easy to take by surprise. He is waiting for our housebreaker. And, behold, that wicked man is one whom I know so well—none but my own clerk Osborne, who I hoped to be away enjoying himself. Ah, it is a comedy!" And Muller laughed with great heartiness.

It was a clever story, sounding very plausible, and a credit to Muller's quickness of wit and fertility of imagination. Unfortunately, Jerry knew better.

It was a hard position for him, a terrible responsibility for so young a man to shoulder.

He affected to believe Muller's pretty yarn; with perfect frankness he answered Muller's questions as to Elton. And while he thus spoke lightly, and appeared at ease, his brain was busy with the awful fear that every second would see the return of Max Elton to the house to learn why he was so long in finding the missing key. Almost could he hear the reports of the pistols whose stream of bullets would be pumped into Elton as soon as he came within certain range. Only by getting these ruffians away from the house was it possible for Elton to escape the fate awaiting him. How was this to be accomplished?

Drowning men clutch at straws. Jerry Osborne suddenly faced Muller, a look of disappointment on his face.

"What a pity you didn't write and let Mr. Elton know you meant coming to see him!" he said innocently.

"There was no time." And Muller smiled with a meaning Jerry understood perfectly. "But why, Osborne?"

"Why, then Mr. Elton would have stayed at home to meet you," replied Jerry. "He would not have gone away."

It was a desperate shot, and Jerry looked anxiously at Muller, to see how it was taken. What if the spies had been watching the house, and were aware that Elton had merely gone for a stroll?

"He has gone, and his servant also," Jerry continued desperately. "If you look in the motor-house you will see the car is missing. The business was important, and Mr. Elton left the house immediately after breakfast."

It was the truth, if not the whole truth, Jerry was telling, and his intention was certainly to mislead the spies, but a slight departure from accuracy was justifiable, argued Jerry, when something so precious as the life of Max Elton was at stake.

"He left you here alone? How is that?" demanded Muller quickly.

"He thought I could get on all right for a bit."

Then ensued a hasty conversation between Muller and Hendricks, and it was plain that both men were disconcerted by the failure of their plan. Muller's voice was sharp; that of his accomplice harsh and angry, with an accompaniment of violent oaths. To and fro they walked. What should they do? The scheme was too good to abandon. Jerry hated himself because he could understand nothing that they said. Nervously he awaited their decision, praying that Elton might not arrive on the scene.

At length Muller turned to Jerry:

"Ach, I am so sorry!" he said. "And when does Mr. Elton return?"

"I cannot say."

"Will it be to-day?" the German persisted.

"He did not tell me." And then, fearful of exciting suspicion, Jerry added: "I should think he would be here by night."

"Ach, then it is a pleasure but deferred," announced Muller, his eyes clearing.

He spoke rapidly to Hendricks for a few seconds, and then to Jerry he said, in a most friendly manner:

"It is dull for you here all alone, Mr. Osborne. Will you come with us on a little excursion that we will take to fill up the time until we may visit Mr. Elton again? Come, you shall enjoy yourself with us instead of moping here."

To refuse was impossible. Jerry realised it at once. And there was a note of determination in Muller's voice that warned him a refusal would not be taken.

"Right you are, and thank you!" he said cheerfully. "I'm ready. I'll just scribble a note and let Mr. Elton know where I have gone."

But the hope of warning his friend was nipped in the bud. "No need at all, Osborne. You will be seeing Mr. Elton so soon again," declared Muller. "Come!"

And, taking Jerry's arm, Hendricks walking behind, Muller left the house. Outside they were joined by the third man Jerry had seen, and a fourth suddenly appeared above the edge of the dyke. Try as he could, Jerry could not keep his eyes from the direction where stood the windmill, but as they crossed the road no sign of Elton was to be seen.

Scrambling down the dyke side, Muller chattering all the

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Dreadnought

NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"



time; the party at length came to the verge of the sea, where a fair-sized motor-launch was waiting, the tide being in. All climbed in, a man aboard in overalls started the engine, the screw revolved, and the craft shot out upon the greyish-green water.

Five minutes later, Elton returned to the house, to be mystified by Jerry's disappearance.

Jerry Plays a Lone Hand.

Never had Jerry Osborne known a longer or more wretched day. But slowly as the hours passed, they went all too quickly, for he had made a shrewd guess at what the night was to bring.

As soon as darkness fell, the motor-boat would return, Muller and his gang would land, and, under cover of the night, an attack would be made on Elton's house. He felt as certain as though Muller had wholly taken him into his confidence.

And what chance would Elton have against at least four men, resolute and well armed, even with the assistance of the faithful Neb? That himself would be well taken care of he had no doubt. The house entered, Elton might be shot down before he knew what was the matter.

His own plan of getting the spies away had gone for naught. The sole result had been the postponement of the intended murder.

The motor-boat was of good size, boasting a large and well-appointed cabin, and in it Jerry spent the better part of the day, trying to appear at ease while inwardly miserable.

Muller was most friendly and conversational, and Jerry had nothing to complain of in his treatment. At midday he joined the others in a substantial meal, and in the afternoon an hour or more was passed in Muller teaching him German dominoes. Everything was done to make him comfortable.

Hendricks, he felt sure, suspected him. The man's sullen eyes were for ever watching him. But it was evident that the big German had not recognised in him the man who had put up such a tough fight on the platform at Hook of Holland. Had recognition taken place, Jerry had not much doubt as to the fate awaiting him.

The other two men were fair, bearded, and apparently ignorant of English. They never spoke to Jerry, anyway, but with Muller and Hendricks conversed freely in their own harsh tongue. At no period was Jerry left alone in the cabin.

What was to become of himself? This, also, was a troublesome question, not easy to be answered. Staring from the cabin window, Jerry was considering his position when Muller entered, made a sign to Hendricks, who got up and went out, and seated himself near the young man.

"Would you be willing to cut short your holiday?" asked Muller abruptly. "It would pay you."

"How is that?"

"Well, it is like this, Mr. Osborne," Muller went on frankly. "This new engine of which I spoke will be a fortune to me if all goes well. I shall see Mr. Elton, and if he is satisfied I mean to demonstrate the engine before the director of the English Government Aircraft Works at Roslea, in Norfolk, which, as you know, are of great importance. Now, to assist me I need one of discretion, a young man I can trust. If you agree to cut short your holiday, then I shall be willing to make you a recompense—say, twenty pounds. Think it over. You think, perhaps, of Mr. Elton?" suggested Muller, after a second pause. "Of course, you will be able—"

"Herr Krug—Herr Krug!"

Muller was interrupted by the engineer bursting into the cabin, evidently excited. He hurried something out in German. Muller replied, and then the latter got up.

"One moment, Osborne!" he said, and hurried from the cabin.

Inside two minutes he was back again, seemingly annoyed. The engineer had reported the petrol supply was nearly exhausted. The boat could run but a few more miles. It was most exasperating. The mechanic was a fool! The boat could not return, and the interview with Mr. Elton would be lost again. There was just sufficient oil to carry the boat to Hook of Holland, and there they would have to go.

"But do not be grieved you cannot yet return to see your friend, Mr. Osborne," Muller cried. "We will take care of you. We must stay at the Hook overnight. But it is my fault, and I will bear your expenses. That is only fair. That fool of an engineer!"

There was nothing to be done but submit. Jerry was helpless. To no one could he appeal. But some instinct told him Muller was lying.

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Miss E. Schofield, Cross Street, Queenstown, Port Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in England or America, age 13-20.

J. J. Frawley, junior, 72, Victoria Street, Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with Canadian girl and boy readers of "The Gem."

C. L. R. Bangton, Neerim North, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in the British Isles, age 17-20, interested in postcards, etc.

L. Fordred, 45, Kod Street, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with an English girl reader, age 15-17.

G. Dobson, P.O. Box 123, Barberton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 15.

F. Turner, Elvire Street, Midland Junction, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 16-19.

J. Meade, Union Street, Kilmore, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in England, age 16.

R. Gilham, Lindsay Street, Coolgardie, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in the British Isles, age 15-17. Miss Ethel Gilham, of the same address, wishes to correspond with a boy reader.

W. Leggat, 65, Ruby Street, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-16.

J. Rennie, 63, Jeffcott Street, West Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Ireland interested in postcards, age 17.

Miss N. Carnell, 171, Eureka Street, Ballarat, East, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 15-17.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

AN INTERESTING ARTICLE GIVING MANY TIPS FOR HOLIDAY FUN!



A FAMILY GATHERING.

The season of festivity has once more come round to us, and at the time when preparations for Christmas fun and parties are proceeding apace, this article should prove itself of some use to those who intend gathering their friends and acquaintances round them. There are many classes of amusement for such family gatherings, some of which may be mentioned in "Games of Active Motion," which are, as a rule, enjoyed chiefly by the younger members of the party; "Games of Writing and Drawing," which are favoured as much by the elders, and "Card Tricks," which also amuse both young and old.

Two very popular

GAMES OF ACTIVE MOTION

are "The Bookbinder," and "Hunting the Hare," both of which will please the guests immensely. In the first one the company sit in a circle, on the carpet, or on chairs, with the exception of one, who may be termed the leader. Each guest taking part in the game holds his (or her) hands outstretched, palms upwards, and upon each person's extended hands a book is placed. The game is started by the leader walking round the circle trying to snatch one of the books from one pair of hands, and, if successful so far, in attempting to hit the hands which supported the book before they are withdrawn. If he succeeds in this, the guest thus hit must take the part of the bookbinder. If a guest withdraws his hands because of a feint by the leader, or before the book is actually removed, he is counted the loser, and takes the leader's place. And so the game should proceed, causing much amusement.

"Hunting the Hare" also proves a very exciting game when played by young people. The company, as in the last game, form into a circle, this time, however, standing, and join hands. One, the hare to be, is left out. When the ring is complete, the hare runs round the outside, and taps some other player upon the shoulder. This guest leaves the ring, runs after the hare, and endeavours to catch him, while the remaining members join hands again. By dodging in and out of the ring, and by going under the arms of his friends in the circle, the hare, if he is a good runner, can, with the assistance of those in the ring, who should aid his escape in every way, make the chase extremely exciting. When caught, the hare takes the place of the pursuer.

GAMES OF WRITING AND DRAWING

which come as a delightful change to the rush of the last-mentioned style of amusement, are always popular, and the host has plenty of material from which he can choose. The following are very popular and mirth-provoking, besides being easily understood. One, at all time very funny, is the "Contents of a Boy's Pocket." For the purpose, one of the male guests, preferably a young boy who has the usual youngster's assortment of goods in his possession, is asked to stand at one end of the room, whilst all the others are given a sheet of paper and pencil, and are asked to write down a list of twenty things which they think are at all likely to be found in the youth's pockets. A certain time is allowed for this, say five minutes, when the papers are collected and checked

The guesses are read aloud by the host, while the youth, upon whose pockets so much attention has been concentrated, answers "Yes" or "No," as the case may be. The boy and the girl each guessing the most should receive a small prize. Reading the guesses always causes great fun, especially those made by some of the girls!

The "Telegram Game" is also the cause of much amusement. Again paper and pencil are served out, and the host explains the game. Certain letters of the alphabet are given, and the guests are asked to write a telegram, each word of which must commence with one of the stated letters. A small prize can also be given for what is considered the best telegram written. For instance, if the letters given are these:

S N O B L P O,

a telegram something after the following style can be written:

"SALE NOW ON. BRING LARGEST PANTECHNICON OBTAINABLE."

A packet of ordinary playing-cards are to be found in practically every home, and a few

CARD TRICKS,

which do not require any special apparatus or practice in sleight-of-hand, are usually very acceptable. To cause a card to vanish from the top of a pack placed upon the table, and afterwards to be found in another person's pocket sounds rather a tall order; but it is really very easy. Slightly moisten the back of your left hand and offer the cards to be shuffled, afterwards placing the cards face downwards on the table. Ask one of the guests to look at the top one, and to remember it. He can also show it to the remainder of the party. Ask him, then, to place the back of his left hand on the top of the cards, and to press heavily upon it with his right.

In order that he shall do it correctly, you must offer to show him the way. Place your left hand, the back of which is damp, lengthways upon the top card so that the latter is entirely covered. Press hard with the right and remove your hands, placing them directly behind the back. The top card will be found adhering to the left hand, and has to be removed, and secretly placed in someone's right-hand pocket.

Having at last caused the person to cover the cards in the correct manner you announce that when you have counted three, the top one will have left the pack and journeyed into So-and-so's pocket. Count three, ask the person to remove his hands from the top of the pack, and examine the top card. Then it will be seen that the card has obeyed your commands. Although this trick is very simple, it is very effective if accompanied by the right patter. For instance, you must urge your guests to watch the cards as sharply as they can, saying to Mr. X. (who has his hands on the cards):

"Now, Mr. X., for goodness' sake press harder on those cards—harder, quick, harder, for when I count the top one will slip out as easily as winking. That's better. Now, watch—one—press harder, Mr. X.—two—watch closely—three—gone—see it go? No? Well, I think you'll find it in Mr. So-and-so's right-hand pocket. Am I not right? I thought so!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 307.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY—

"NOT WANTED!"

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"NOT WANTED!"
By Martin Clifford.

This grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's opens with a merry scene on the frost-bound surface of the river, where School House and New House juniors are disporting themselves, and indulging in friendly rivalry on their skates.

An episode of thin ice and a narrowly-averted catastrophe brings Cecil Cavendish on the scene, and shows him up in a very unfavourable light. Cavendish begins his career as a new boy at St. Jim's with the disadvantage of having made the worst possible impression upon his schoolfellows, and after his first few days he is universally condemned as a snob as well as a funk.

This state of affairs not being at all to his liking Cavendish, prompted by Levison, the cad of the Fourth, adopts a cunning scheme to re-establish himself with his schoolfellows. How his scheme works out, or the ultimate consequences of it to himself, is related by Martin Clifford next Wednesday in

"NOT WANTED!"

and a wonderfully fine story it makes!

ANTICIPATION.

From the contents of my bulging letter-bag I gather that my readers are in a great state of anticipation in regard to the

NEW HALFPENNY COMPANION PAPER

which has been gradually evolved from the suggestions and ideas of my readers themselves, and which will make its bow to the public early in the New Year. I am flattered to find this strong feeling of anticipation, for it shows me clearly that my chums are looking to me with every confidence, born, I think, of the feeling that I have never failed them yet, to give them

SOMETHING REALLY GOOD!

At the same time, my reader-chums' great expectations spur me on to yet greater efforts to obtain for them the most powerful, humorous, and interesting stories by the best authors, and the funniest and cleverest pictures, presented in the brightest and most attractive form.

In our new companion paper I am going to pay very special attention to this latter point. For real brightness, both in the matter of appearance and in the nature of its contents, our latest venture will easily surpass any halfpenny paper at present on the market. So you may safely go on anticipating, my chums, while for my part I will go on doing my level best to ensure that our new companion paper shall come up to the standard of your anticipations—or even beyond—in every single particular.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"Loyal Reader."—I cannot vouch personally for the ventriloquist double throats, not having tried them. There are many books published that deal exclusively with this art.

L. C. Warman junior.—The Sexton Blake stories are written by various authors, who have expressed a desire to remain anonymous.

"Un Escoses" (Dunfermline).—Messrs. Hachette & Co., 18, King William Street, publish Spanish books.

G. Johnson (Chippenham).—Tom Merry is about 15 years old.

Jack Mills (Australia).—A troop of scouts already exists at St. Jim's. More will be heard of them before long.

A. E. Cox (Queensland).—Many thanks for your most interesting letter. I always leave it to my readers to form Leagues of their own. As you have not sent your full address, I cannot insert your name in the Correspondence Exchange column.

HOW A PICTURE PLAY IS PRODUCED.

A cinema producer calls a scenario a "script," which is the American word for picture plot. Cinema films are made, as some of you know, in what are called "studios." Huge glass-roofed buildings occupying many acres of ground, and surrounded by numerous outhouses, dwelling-houses for the directors, and often many square miles of their own private property. There are many different departments in a cinema studio, such as: 1. Scenario department. 2. Property-rooms, where furniture and anything from a sword to a piano is stored. 3. Large halls, where the actual plays are acted and photographed. 4. Scenery-rooms, where every possible kind of scenery is stored away. 5. Scenic artists'-rooms, in which highly-paid painters decorate the pieces of scenery. 6. Artistes' dressing-rooms. 7. Tank for water scenes, and several others. In the scenario department we have a chief scenario editor, with a number of assistants, varying in proportion to the size of the studios. The Vitagraph Company of America has no less than thirty people engaged in the scenario department alone. To this department are forwarded all the plots sent in by outside writers, and round the room are huge piles of these "scripts" waiting their turn. So that if you are kept waiting a couple of weeks for your plot don't get impatient. One man is specially deputed to read everything that comes in, and after he has thrown out the worst stuff, what is left is handed on to a second reader, and so on, until only the very cream of the plot is placed before the scenario editor. After wading through the MSS., he selects a number of likely themes, and consults with the producer as to the possibility of using them. When a decision is made, cheques are sent out to the authors of the accepted plots, and the scenario editor begins his work of reconstruction. He may incorporate the ideas from three plots into one photo-play, perhaps of three reels—that is, 3,000-feet film. This scenario writer has to include a great deal of technical matter in the final script which the outsider could not possibly do. For instance he is but a few yards away from the studio in which the story he is making will be produced, and he has in mind what properties will be used, and possibly which actors will take the different parts. In writing a scene he will state properties required, such as desk, office chair, typewriter, table and chair for typist, telephone, clock, window—blinds drawn—and one door. When he has completed this by no means easy task, the scenario editor's work in the film is ended, and he hands the script over to the producer, who immediately sets about making the film.

(Another interesting
Cinema article next
Wednesday.)

The Editor

Our

Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

PROVED IT!

Employer: "Yes, I advertised for a strong boy. Do you think you can fill the post?"

Applicant: "Well, I've just finished lickin' fourteen other fellers that were waitin' in the hall!"—Sent in by W. Evans, Norwich.

SO SIMPLE!

I would I were an artist—
'Twould fill my soul with cheer,
For when I grew a-thirsty
I'd draw a glass of beer.

Still, would I were a woodman,
And tramp the forests through,
And whenever I got hungry
I'd take a chop or two.

I envy the house-painter,
Who, now I'd have you note,
When the days get chilly
Slips on another coat.

—Sent in by A. Mack, Quebec.

PROBABLY NOT.

Shopkeeper: "Can't I sell you a bicycle, sir? Only six pounds."

Farmer: "Oh, no, thank you! I can buy a good cow for that."

Shopkeeper: "But, my dear sir, you'd look rather funny riding a cow down the street."

Farmer (cortly): "Not so funny as I should if I were seen riding a biecele."—Sent in by E. M. Thatcher, Maidenhead.

TWO SIDES OF THE QUESTION.

A tramp, while passing a farmhouse, was bitten by a young bulldog, the property of the farmer. Maddened with pain, the man seized a pitchfork lying near and viciously prodded the animal with the business end. The dog's howls of agony brought the farmer on the scene, and, seeing his pet licking its wounds, turned wrathfully on the tramp.

"Why did you not put the other end of the fork to the beast, you scoundrel?" he demanded angrily.

"Why the dickens did he not put the other end of himself to me?" was the angry rejoinder.—Sent in by J. A. Tuck, Leicester.

HOW WAR BEGINS.

Tommie was reading the war news. When he had finished he said to mamma:

"Mamma, how do wars begin?"

"Well, suppose the English hauled down the French flag, and that the French—"

Here Tommie's father intervened.

"My dear," he said, "the English would not——"

"Excuse me, they would."

"My dear, who ever heard of such a thing?"

"Pray do not interrupt."

"But you are giving

Tommie a wrong idea."

"I am not, sir!"

"You are, madam!"

"Don't call me 'madam'—

I will not allow you!"

"I will call you what I choose!"

"I am sorry I ever saw you! You are so——"

Tommie (going out): "It's all right. I think I know how wars begin."—Sent in by I. Jurgensen, Newlands, Cape Town.

UP-TO-DATE.

Farmer Giles: "I want some photos taken, please."

Photographer: "Yes, sir. Sit down. What will you have—carte or cabinet, sir?"

Farmer Giles: "Well, I don't want either a cart or a cab in it. I want an up-to-date picture, so please put in a motor-car."—Sent in by F. Derrle, Carlisle.

THE IRISHMAN'S LETTER.

"Dear Mick,—Oi have lost ye address, and as Oi can't find ut, will ye send ut as soon as possible, as Oi want to tell ye poor Uncle Dan doied very suddin after a long illness. He laid for many days, quiet and spachless all the toime, inquiring for water, with a little whisky. The doctor tells me that his death was caused through illness, but Micky, me bhoy, between ourselves, stoppage of the heart was the cause of his death. He was eighty-five years of age last March all but fifteen months, and had he lived till now he would have been dead six months.

"I enclose five shillings, which father sends unbeknown to me.

"P.S.—I would beg of you not to break the seal of this letter until two or three hours after ye have read it, by which time ye will be better prepared for the sorrowful news.—Yours,

—Sent in by H. Wade, Leicester.

SARCASM.

Bobbie: "Will you please send mother a leg of mutton, Mr. Bones?"

Mr. Bones: "Yes, my boy."

Bobbie: "And mother says that if it's as skinny as the last, the man needn't trouble to knock; he can push it through the letter-box."—Sent in by R. P. Hughes, Cheshire.

HIS WAY OUT.

Three Irishmen, having had four guineas to be equally divided amongst them as a Christmas present from their master, were rather at a loss as to the exact amount they should each receive. Two of them made suggestions, but the others would not agree. So the third settled the business for them.

"There are two for you two," he said, "and two for me, too."—Sent in by A. Laing, Heaton.

THE BROAD HINT.

The child, remembering her mother's warning, sat at the table and held her peace. The mother was so absorbed in talking to her neighbours that she omitted to give the child anything to eat. Unable to bear it any longer, the little child held up her plate for observation.

"Does anybody at the table," she inquired demurely, "want a clean plate?"—Sent in by C. Macfarlane, Glasgow.

HIS ORDERS.

Murphy was a new recruit in the Cavalry. He could not ride at all, and, by ill-luck, was given one of the most vicious horses in the troop.

"Remember," said the sergeant, "no one is allowed to dismount unless he has orders."

Murphy was no sooner in the saddle than he was thrown off.

"Murphy," roared the sergeant, when he found Murphy lying breathless on the ground, "you dismounted!"

"I did."

"Did you have orders?"

"I did."

"From headquarters, I suppose?"

"No, sir. From hindquarters."—Sent in by Miss N. Morton, Christchurch, N.Z.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.