

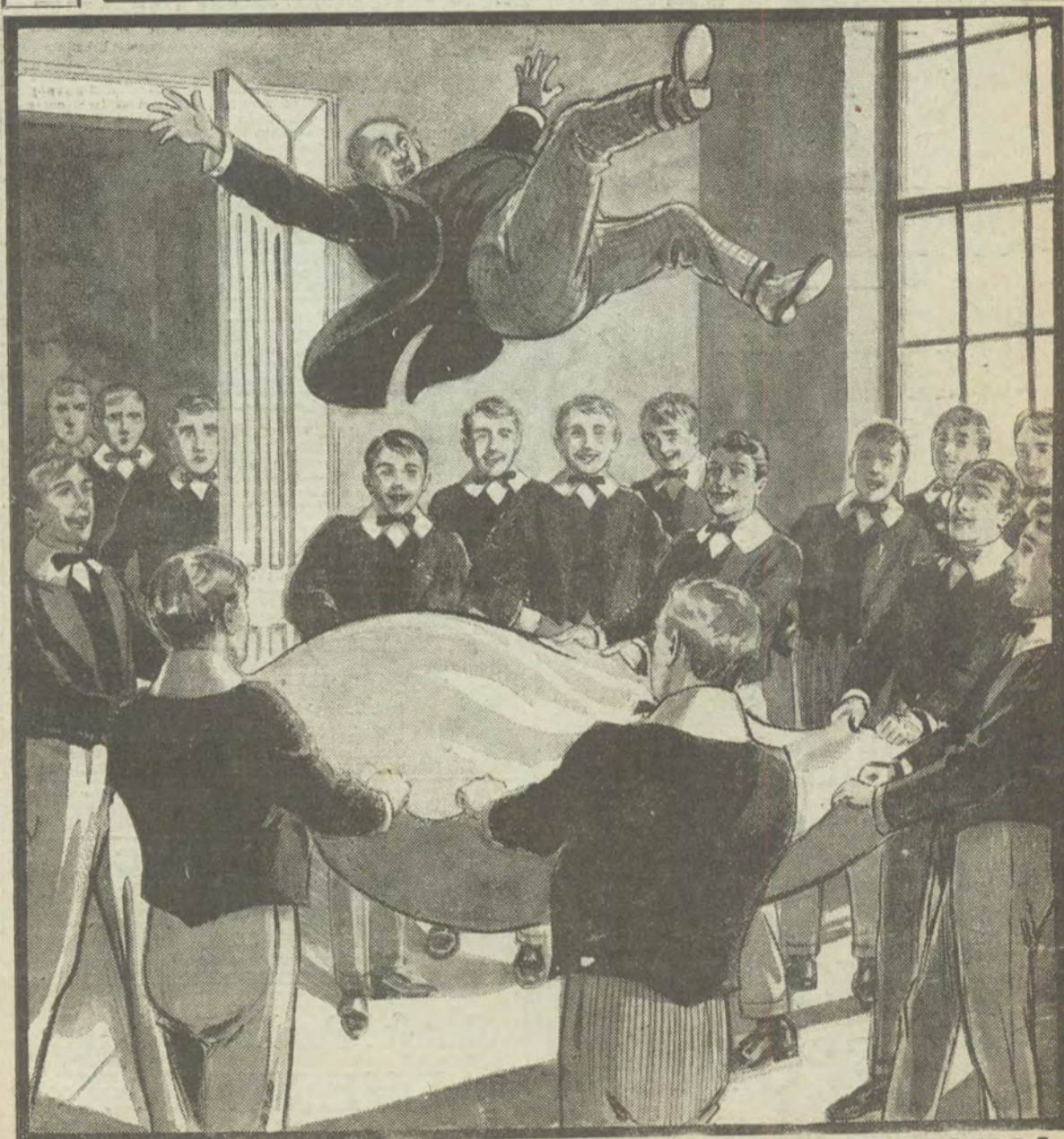
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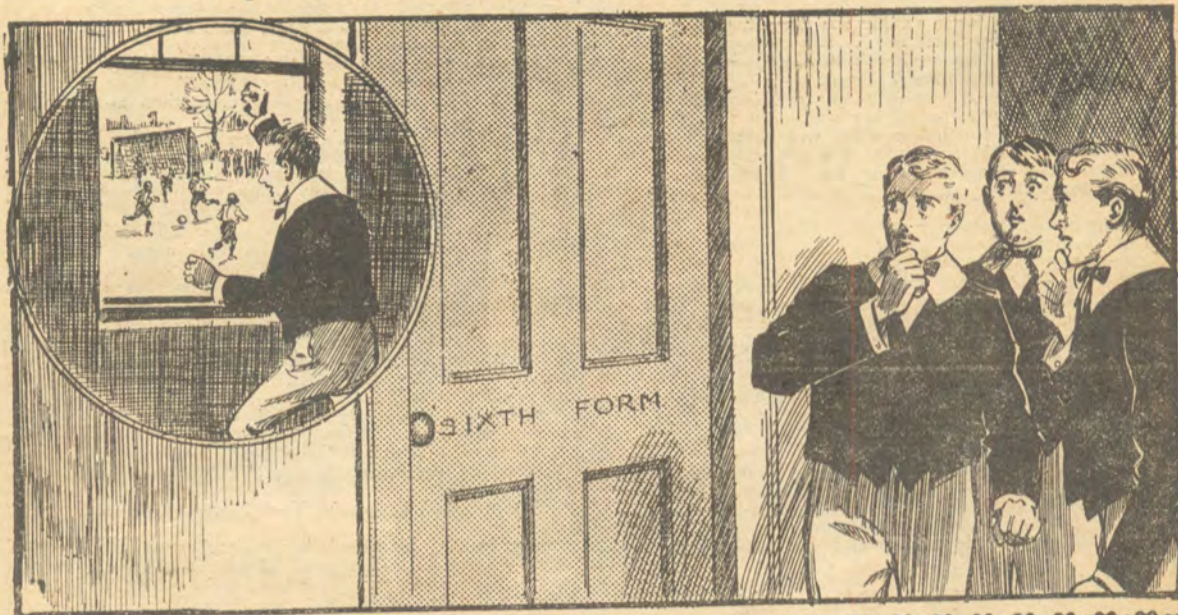


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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Mulvaney minor stood at the window of the Form-room, watching the juniors playing football in the fields. Before long he was as excited as the juniors themselves. "Go it, Tom Merry!" he yelled. "On the ball, Figgins! Run, you beggars, run! Look out—don't let him get the ball—oh, you fathead—you omdaun!" (See Chapter 15.)

CHAPTER 1. Simply Astounding.

EVERYBODY had noticed it. That is to say, everybody in the School House; Mulvaney, of the Sixth, being a School House fellow. For days past, Mulvaney had been like a bear with a sore head. At all events, that was how Jack Blake described him. Blake, of the Fourth, had the honour of fagging for Mulvaney that term, and so when Mulvaney was specially "ratty," Blake knew it better than anybody else. Old Mulvy, Blake confided to his chums in Study No. 6, wasn't a bad sort of a duffer, as a rule. But lately he had been very trying.

Something was worrying Mulvy. Mulvaney was popular in his way. He was a good footballer, and sometimes played in the First Eleven. He was a leading light of the senior debating society. He would referee a junior match, which was really very kind of him. He was a prefect, and so sometimes imposed lines and "whoppings." But Tom Merry said, from experience, that old Mulvy's whoppings were always laid on more lightly than any other prefect's whoppings. And he did not always remember to ask for the lines.

So, upon the whole, the juniors agreed that Mulvy was a good sort; and Jack Blake forgave him for unaccountable outbreaks of temper, when his duties as a fag brought him in contact with Mulvaney.

The fellows could not help wondering what was up with Mulvaney. Levison, of the Fourth, who knew everything,

declared that it dated from the morning when Mulvaney had received a letter from home. Levison declared that he had seen Mulvaney shy that letter across the senior common-room, and then kick over a chair.

"Pewwaps he hasn't weceived a wemittance he was expectin'," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth, remarked, with great feeling. "I know what that's like. My pathah doesn't always play up."

"Or perhaps his people are coming to see him" remarked Digby.

"Or he might have a minor coming to the school."

"Anyway, it's bad news of some sort," said Levison.

"Poor old Mulvy!"

Tom Merry, of the Shell, was the first who received definite information. Tom Merry, who was captain of the junior eleven at St. Jim's, wanted Mulvaney to referee in a match with Rylcombe Grammar School. But, in view of Mulvaney's irascibility of late, he felt a little doubtful about asking him, and he consulted on the subject with his chums, Manners and Lowther.

"Oh, ask him!" said Manners. "It can't do any harm."

"He can only kick you out of his study, anyway!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, that isn't exactly what I want," he said. "Still, I think I'll tackle him. I want to have a Sixth-Former refereeing the match if we can work it."

And Tom Merry made his way, a little doubtfully, to Mulvaney's study in the Sixth-Form passage.

Next Wednesday:

"RALLYING ROUND FIGGINS!" AND "SECRET SERVICE!"

No. 312. (New Series), Vol. 8.

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As he approached the study, he heard a sound of irregular footsteps, pacing to and fro in the room. Mulvaney was evidently not at ease. Tom hesitated a few moments, and then made up his mind, and knocked at the door.

There was no reply from within; Mulvaney apparently did not hear the knock.

Tom Merry knocked again, and then opened the door.

Mulvaney was walking up and down his study, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his brows corrugated in a deep frown. He stopped, and stared at the junior, not at all amiably.

"Why didn't you knock?" he demanded crossly.

"I did," said Tom mildly. "Twice!"

"Well, what do you want?"

"Ahem! If you're busy, I'll see you another time," said Tom Merry diplomatically. The prefect did not seem to be quite in a humour for favours to be asked of him.

"Well, get out!" said Mulvaney.

"Certainly!"

Tom drew back, and was pulling the door shut after him, when Mulvaney rapped out:

"No; come in! I want to speak to you."

Tom came into the study, and waited.

Mulvaney took another turn or two up and down the room, without speaking; and Tom Merry waited in silence, with exemplary patience, wondering what was coming. It was very evident that old Mulvy was very much perturbed.

He stopped at last, and stared at Tom Merry again.

"I want to speak to you, Merry," he said abruptly.

"Yes?"

"It's about—" Mulvaney paused.

"Yes?" said Tom Merry again.

"It's a rotten bother!"

"Is it?" said Tom, not knowing what else to say. If Mulvaney had been a junior, he would have said: "Get it off your chest, Mulvy, old chap!" But he could not say that to a prefect. So he said "Is it?" and waited.

"Beastly!" said Mulvaney.

"I'm sorry!" said Tom politely.

"They don't understand, at home," Mulvaney added, as if in explanation.

"Don't they?" said Tom.

"No. Of course, they wouldn't."

"No; I suppose they wouldn't," agreed Tom Merry. He did not understand in the least what Mulvaney was talking about; but it was only polite to agree with him. Tom Merry was always polite, especially to prefects.

"Of course, I shall have to stand it," said Mulvaney gruffly.

"Will you really?"

"I can't do anything else, can I?" growled Mulvaney.

Tom Merry thought it best not to answer that question. As he hadn't the faintest idea what Mulvaney was worrying about, he was not really in a position to give an opinion. Besides, Mulvaney did not want an answer; he ran on:

"Of course, I can't do anything else. I can't dictate to the pater. And he wouldn't take any notice if I did. He thinks St. Jim's is the right place for him."

Tom opened his eyes.

"So he's coming?" growled Mulvaney.

"Your pater?" ejaculated Tom Merry. Was it possible that Mulvaney had been bothered for days because his pater was coming to see him?

"My pater!" snapped Mulvaney. "Who's talking about my pater?"

"Oh, I thought you were!"

"I said my pater thinks St. Jim's is the right place for him."

"Oh!"

"That's why he's coming."

"Oh!"

"And a dooce of a trouble he will be to me here," said Mulvaney.

"Is—is—is he going to stay?" asked Tom Merry.

"Stay! Of course, he's going to stay. What do you think

he's coming for?" grunted Mulvaney. "I wouldn't mind if it was only for a visit. But he's going to stay, of course; he's going to be in the Shell—your Form."

Tom Merry almost staggered. This was news—with a vengeance. He wondered for a moment whether old Mulvy had gone "potty." But Mulvaney did not look potty. He looked worried and harassed and morose, but not at all potty. But really, to hear a Sixth-Former state that his father was coming to St. Jim's, to enter a junior Form, was so astonishing that Tom Merry could scarcely believe his ears.

"Well, what are you blinking at?" snapped Mulvaney.

Tom Merry recovered himself.

"Was I—I blinking? I didn't mean to. I was—was surprised."

"Nothing surprising in it, is there?" growled Mulvaney.

"I—I mean—about his coming into the Shell."

"He's been prepared for the Shell," explained Mulvaney.

"He's had a tutor. He's too old for a fag Form."

"I should jolly well think he is," said Tom Merry.

Mulvaney stared at him.

"What do you know about it? You don't know how old he is—you've never seen him, have you?"

"N-no! But he must be—well, older than most chaps—ahem!"

"I don't think St. Jim's is the right place for him," said Mulvaney. "It's no good my saying so; and it would sound unfeeling if I said I didn't want him here. But it will be simply rotten for me!"

"Rotten?" said Tom Merry vaguely.

"Of course it will. The little beast is a frightful trouble, intirely. He'll make things hum here, I know!"

"The—the what?"

"The little beast!" said Mulvaney, who always showed a trace of brogue when he was excited.

"Oh, come!" said Tom Merry, quite shocked. Whatever might be the faults of Mulvaney's pater, Tom felt that it was not right to allude to him as a little beast. It was undutiful, to say the least of it. "Don't call him names, Mulvy. It's not right."

"I've called him every name I can think of, bedad!" growled Mulvaney.

"And does he stand it?" exclaimed Tom, in astonishment.

"Stand it! Of course he does! I'd jolly well whop him if he didn't!"

"Whop him!" exclaimed Tom Merry, wide-eyed. "Oh, I say!"

"Yes, rather. You don't know him!" growled Mulvaney.

"He's what you'd call a practical joker. He was born one, I think. Always up to some blessed monkey tricks. He's old enough to know better."

"I—I suppose he is," admitted Tom Merry, thinking that Mulvaney's pater was probably fifty at least.

"And I've whopped him lots of times, and it doesn't make any difference," said Mulvaney.

"You—you've whopped him?"

"Yes, rather."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Nothing surprising in that, is there?" demanded Mulvaney, staring at the Shell fellow.

Tom Merry gasped. He had never heard of a fellow, even a Sixth-Former, whopping his pater before. He thought that the Mulvaney household must be run upon somewhat peculiar lines.

But he did not say so. It was no business of his.

"And now he's coming here!" growled Mulvaney. "I've got to put up with it. I—I was going to ask you a favour, Merry."

"Certainly," said Tom Merry. He had come there to ask a favour, but he was quite prepared to confer one instead.

"You're captain of the Shell, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, will you see that the little blighter isn't—isn't ragged to death the first day or two," said Mulvaney hesitatingly. "I can't always be chipping in, you know. I don't want him here, as a matter of fact, but—but I don't want him hammered to a jelly his first week. If you'd keep an eye on him—"

"With pleasure," said Tom Merry. "I'll jolly well see that he's not ragged at first, Mulvaney. Rely on me."

"Thanks," said Mulvaney, looking greatly relieved. "Of course, he'll be simply asking for it; but I don't want him to be slaughtered. He—he isn't exactly like all the other fellows who come into a junior Form here."

"No, apparently not!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's all right, Mulvy. I'll do my best for him. By the way—"

"That's all," said Mulvaney. "He's coming this afternoon."

"Right. By the way—"

"Oh, you came to ask me something, didn't you?" said Mulvaney. "What was it?"

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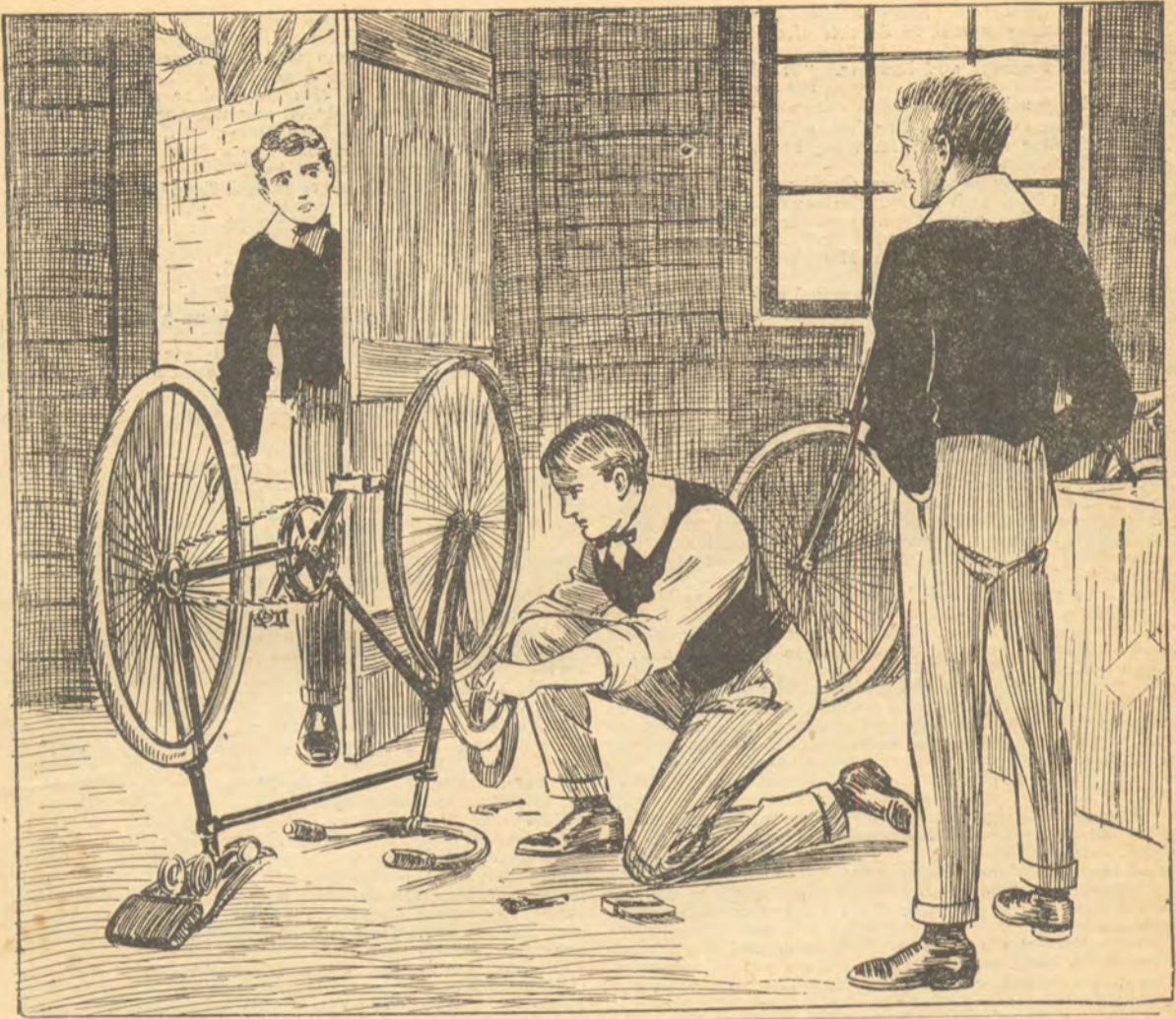
312

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

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Gore was in his shirt-sleeves, kneeling beside a bike. Mulvaney minor was standing with his hands in his pockets, looking on. "Sure, and Gore's mending my tyres!" he explained to Tom Merry. "I found out that it was he who punctured them with a penknife yesterday, and he is mending them for me!" Gore dabbed savagely at his nose, showing that his "kindness" in mending the tyre was involuntary. (See Chapter 11.)

"Will you referee for us on Saturday? We're playing the Grammar School."

Mulvaney nodded.

"Yes, one good turn deserves another. That's all right."

"Thanks!"

And Tom Merry quitted the Sixth-Former's study in a state of great astonishment, and with really startling news for his chums.

CHAPTER 2.

The "New Boy!"

"WELL?" said Manners and Lowther, as Tom Merry joined them at the end of the passage.

Tom Merry was still looking, and feeling, astonished. The amazing communication Mulvaney of the Sixth had made was enough to astonish anybody. Tom Merry had been wondering whether he mightn't have misunderstood the prefect. But there seemed no room for any misunderstanding. Mulvaney had said plainly: "I can't dictate to the pater. He thinks St. Jim's is the right place for him." Nobody else had been mentioned. Unless old Mulvy had really gone off his rocker, there it was!

"What's up?" asked Lowther, as he caught Tom Merry's expression. "Mulvy told you what's been worrying him the last three or four days."

"Yes. And it's simply amazing."

"What's the trouble?"

"His pater—his giddy pater is coming to St. Jim's—

coming into the Shell as a schoolboy—as one of us!" Tom Merry gasped breathlessly.

Manners and Lowther gave a simultaneous yell.

"Gammon!"

"Well, Mulvaney said so—honest Injun," said Tom Merry.

"He's coming this afternoon."

"But—but it's impossible," said Manners, bewildered.

"He was pulling your leg."

"He was quite serious, and in an awful wax about it."

"Well, I should think he was in a wax about it, if it's true. I suppose it isn't quite impossible, but it's jolly unusual. Hasn't his pater been to school in his young days?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Might be a giddy merchant prince, you know, risen from being office-boy, and never had time for school," Manners remarked thoughtfully. "I know old Mulvaney is something in the City, and he's jolly rich. Might be something of that kind. But I can't understand his coming to school in a junior Form. That's too thick."

"Mulvaney said so."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes, ass; and he was simply wild. He called him a little beast."

"Oh!"

"And he says he's a young terror, and will always be in hot water, and wants me to keep a fatherly eye on him," said Tom Merry, a little ruefully.

"Oh!"

"And I've said I will. I suppose it's up to us. Mulvaney senior will feel a bit like a fish out of water, I suppose."

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We've got nothing special to do this afternoon, and we'll look after him—what?"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Lowther. "It will be fun, anyway."

"No larks, you know."

"Oh, of course not!" said Lowther, with a chuckle.

The astounding news from Mulvaney's study was soon known throughout the Shell.

The fellows simply gasped when they heard it.

If it had not been Tom Merry, who was known as the soul of truthfulness, who gave the information, many of them would have refused to credit it.

But there was no doubting Tom Merry's word.

It was amazing, but true.

No wonder old Mulvy had been worried and bothered ever since he heard the news from home, if that was the news.

"Bai Jove," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, "it's enough to wowwy any fellow! A patah's pwopah place is in the home, I considah."

"Yes, rather," grinned Blake. "Not in the Shell, anyway. But I can't quite believe it. There must be some mistake."

"I've told Mulvy I won't let him be put upon."

"Well, it's jolly odd."

"Well, if the old boy hasn't had much education when he was a kid, you know," Kangaroo of the Shell remarked, "only natural he should want to pick up a bit now he's retired from business and got time. But I should have recommended a private tutor. He will be a bit out of place in the Shell."

"He'll be guded to death," said Gore.

Tom Merry frowned.

"Look here, you chaps, there's going to be no guying. There's a certain amount of respect due to age, you know," Gore sniffed.

"Not when a man plays the giddy ox!" he said.

"Well, he has a right to do as he likes. Look here, there's not going to be a rag when he comes, or there'll be trouble."

"Rot! He can't complain to the Head, if he's only a Shell fellow like the rest of us. We won't let him sneak."

"We'll jolly well give him beans!" grinned Crooke of the Shell.

"If you do, I'll give you beans," said Tom Merry warmly.

"I've told Mulvy I won't let him be put upon."

"Oh, rats!"

And Gore and Crooke swung away, quite determined that they would "guy" the peculiar Shell fellow when he came.

Quite a crowd was gathered at the gates of St. Jim's that afternoon to look for the stranger when he came. They knew the time the train arrived at Rylcombe, and timed the arrival at St. Jim's, and were ready. There was a shout from some of the fellows as the village hack was seen trundling down the road.

"Here he comes!"

All eyes were upon the hack as it rolled in at the gates. There had been a lingering doubt in Tom Merry's mind, a feeling that, after all, he might have misunderstood Mulvy. But that doubt vanished as he saw the occupant of the hack. It was a short, stout, middle-aged gentleman, with whiskers and spectacles, and a pleasant, good-natured round face. He was the only person in the hack. He looked out of the window, and gave the crowd of fellows an agreeable smile.

"This is St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry. "Are you Mr. Mulvaney?"

"Yes."

"We've been expecting you, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Welcome to St. Jim's, sir."

Mr. Mulvaney stepped from the hack.

"You are very kind," he said, evidently a little surprised by the warmth of his welcome from the boys. "Let me see. Where is the School House?"

"You're coming into the School House, sir?" asked Kangaroo. Kangaroo was a School House fellow, and he had a secret hope that this exceedingly peculiar "new boy" might be going into the New House.

"Yes, certainly!" said Mr. Mulvaney. "My son is in the School House."

"Oh, yes! You want to be with him?"

Mr. Mulvaney looked puzzled.

"I want to see him," he said. "Perhaps one of you will show me to his study."

"This way, sir!" said Tom Merry.

Mr. Mulvaney followed Tom Merry into the School House. The crowd of fellows were left in a buzz of excitement. There was no doubt about it now.

Tom Merry tapped at Mulvaney's door and opened it. The study was empty! Mulvy was not there.

"Mulvy's out, sir," said Tom Merry. "If you'll sit down here, I'll look for him and send him in!"

"Thank you very much, my boy!"

"Not at all, Mr. Mulvaney!" said Tom politely.

And, leaving the stout gentleman in Mulvy's armchair, Tom Merry hastened away to find the prefect.

CHAPTER 3.

Something Like a Rag.

TOM MERRY had been gone about a minute and a half when the study door reopened. Mr. Mulvaney looked up, expecting to see his son Mulvy of the Sixth. But it was George Gore of the Shell who looked into the study, and Crooke was just behind him. The two young rascals had waited just long enough for Tom Merry to clear off.

"Hallo!" said Gore.

Mr. Mulvaney stared at him, apparently surprised by so familiar an address from a junior. He gazed at Gore with all the dignity of fifty years odd. But Gore was not abashed. If the gentleman was coming into the Shell, he was a Shell chap, and he had to take the Shell as he found it. He couldn't expect any unusual consideration because he happened to be old enough to be the father of other chaps in the Shell.

"Waiting for Mulvy?" asked Gore.

"I'm waiting for my son," said Mr. Mulvaney stiffly.

"He's sent me for you," said Gore. "Will you follow me?"

"Oh, certainly!"

Mr. Mulvaney rose.

"Why cannot my son come to me?" he asked.

"I dare say he'll tell you," said Gore. "Hop along!"

"What!"

"Buck up; can't wait all day!"

"Boy, you are impertinent!"

"Bow-wow!" said Gore.

He walked away, and Mr. Mulvaney, in a state of great astonishment, followed him. He had never visited St. Jim's before, but certainly he had not expected it to be quite like this on his first visit. The familiarity displayed by these juniors towards a gentleman of his years was surprising and disconcerting. However, he followed Gore, as he was anxious to see his son.

Gore led him upstairs, and as Mr. Mulvaney did not know anything about the interior arrangements of the School House at St. Jim's; of course, he did not know that he was being led to the Shell dormitory. Gore opened a big door, and stood aside for Mr. Mulvaney to enter, and followed him in with Crooke.

There was a shout of laughter as Mr. Mulvaney came in. Nearly a dozen fellows were gathered in the Shell dormitory, most of them friends of George Gore's, and ready to back him up in a rag. It tickled them to see Mulvaney walk cheerfully into the trap.

Mr. Mulvaney looked round him at the row of white beds, and the grinning juniors. There was no sign of Mulvaney of the Sixth. Gore closed the door, and Crooke put his back to it. That made Mr. Mulvaney feel vaguely alarmed.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "Where is my son?"

"Oh, never mind that!" said Gore. "I don't know where he is, as a matter of fact. We've brought you here to talk to you."

Mr. Mulvaney jumped.

"What!" he ejaculated.

"We belong to the Shell, most of us here!" explained Crooke. "We're going to make you welcome!"

"But—I don't understand—"

"We'll make you understand, Mulvaney!"

"Boy, you are insolent! You should address me as Mr. Mulvaney!"

"Catch me!" said Gore, with a chuckle. "Now you're here, my pippin, you'll find that you are just the same as any other chap!"

"What!"

"The fact that you're an old josser instead of a young josser won't make any difference, you know," remarked Levison of the Fourth.

Mr. Mulvaney stared at Levison.

"What—what—what did you call me?"

"Josser!" explained Levison calmly.

"You—you insolent young rascal!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Levison. "Do you want to be bumped?"

ANSWERS

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"Bumped!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney.

"Yes, rather! I suppose you know you can be bumped as well as any other chap. What did you come here for? You've got to take your chance."

"What! I—I—"

"You're starting a little late in life!" chuckled Mellish of the Fourth. "But we'll teach you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I begin to think that I am in a lunatic asylum!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney. "Stand aside, boy!" He marched towards the door.

Crooke did not stand aside. He only chuckled, and two or three fellows joined him, putting their backs to the door.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Mulvaney. "How dare you treat me like this? Do you wish me to complain to your headmaster of your extraordinary conduct?"

"You'd better not! That's what we call sneaking," said Gore.

"What!"

"And if you sneak, you'll be given a Form licking."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Now," said Gore. "Keep back, you old duffer—you can't get out!"

"You—you young rascal! I shall proceed instantly to your headmaster, and report this insolence to him!" exclaimed Mr. Mulvaney, who seemed hardly to know whether he was on his head or his heels. "Stand aside!"

He rushed at the door. But the Shell fellows promptly collared him, and he rushed back, and bumped on a bed. He gasped and panted, in a state of bewilderment that almost amounted to idiocy by this time.

"Good heavens! Release me—headmaster—report you—your hooligans—scoundrels—upon my word—oh, dear!" came in stuttering jerks from his lips.

"Now, sit there!" said Gore threateningly. "Get that pillow, Levison. If he gets off the bed, swipe him!"

"What-ho!" said Levison.

Mr. Mulvaney scrambled off the bed as soon as the juniors released him. Levison promptly swiped with the pillow, and he rolled back, gasping. There was a roar of laughter.

"Oh, oh! Groogh! Help!"

"Shut up!" roared Gore.

"Upon my word! Help!"

"Shove a cake of soap into his mouth if he doesn't shut up!" growled Gore. "We shall have the blessed prefects here soon!"

Kerruish of the Fourth grinned and brought a cake of soap. Mr. Mulvaney ceased to shout. He understood that the raggers meant business.

"Now," said Gore, wagging his forefinger at Mr. Mulvaney. "Now, then, you're new here, and you've got to give an account of yourself. Understand that?"

"You—you young ruffian—"

"Swipe him, Levison!"

Swipe!

The pillow came down, and Mr. Mulvaney roared.

"Oh! Ow! Bless my soul! Oh, dear! I—I think I must be dreaming!"

"Now, speak up!" said Gore. "How old are you?"

"I—I—I—"

"Do you want another swipe?"

Mr. Mulvaney glanced uneasily at Levison, who grinned and lifted the pillow. He looked towards the door; but there was no chance whatever of escape. He was in the toils, and he had to submit to his fate.

"Now, then," said Gore. "How old are you?"

"Fif-fifty-two!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney.

"Been to school before?"

"Ye-es. Of course!"

"I don't see where the of course comes in, as you've come here," said Gore. "Now, are you going to stand a feed to the whole Form?"

"The—the what?"

"Got any money?"

"Money? Yes!"

"Lots?"

"I—I have plenty of money!"

"Good! Then you can stand a feed to the whole Shell."

"I—I—I shall do nothing of the sort. I—"

"Won't you?" roared Gore. "Look here, I'm head cook and bottle-washer in the Shell. I'm going to keep you in order—see?"

"Bless my soul!"

"You'll have to learn that you've got to toe the line here," said Gore truculently. "We don't stand any nonsense at St. Jim's, I can tell you."

"Oh, dear!"

"Now, are you going to stand a spread for the whole Form?"

"Certainly not! I—"

"Good! Then you're going through it!" said Gore. "Get a blanket, you chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A blanket was whipped off a bed. Eight juniors seized it, one at each corner, and one at either side. Then Mr. Mulvaney was whirled off the bed, and tossed into the blanket. His weight made it sag, and he bumped down on the floor, and roared.

"Up with him!" shouted Gore.

Mr. Mulvaney was in a dazed and dizzy state by this time. That the juniors could really intend to toss him in a blanket—him, Mr. Mulvaney, chairman of companies, head of great enterprises in the City—seemed incredible. And yet they evidently did intend it, for up he went.

Earth and the whole universe seemed floating away from Mr. Mulvaney, as he went whirling up towards the dormitory ceiling.

Swoop!

Down he came again into the blanket.

"Gerrrrrooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Up again!" yelled Gore.

"Oh, help—mercy!"

Up went Mr. Mulvaney, higher than before, and it seemed to his terrified eyes that the ceiling was rushing down to meet him. It seemed like a century that he was in the air, and then he swooped down into the blanket again.

"Oh, dear, help! Please, my dear boys, stop it! Don't—oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Up he goes!"

But at that moment the dormitory door was thrown open, and the Terrible Three rushed in. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther did not speak. They rushed into the raggers, hitting out right and left, and Gore and Crooke and several more of the Shell fellows went sprawling on the floor. Before the raggers could recover from the surprise, the Terrible Three grasped Mr. Mulvaney, whirled him up, and rushed him headlong out of the dormitory.

Gore staggered to his feet.

"Ow! The rotters! They've rescued him! Ow, my eye! After them! They're not going to get him away! After the rotters!"

"Come on!" yelled Levison.

And the raggers rushed into the passage in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER 4.

Not the New Boy!

TOM MERRY & Co. had been looking for Mr. Mulvaney, Mulvy of the Sixth having returned to his study, and found that his pater was not there. Tom had immediately suspected a rag, and the din in the Shell dormitory had guided him there. The Terrible Three had gallantly snatched the "new boy" from the hands of the raggers, and rushed him out of the dormitory; but Gore & Co. were dashing in hot pursuit. Mr. Mulvaney did not know whether he was on his head or his heels. He was whirled blindly along by the three Shell fellows, as far as the end of the passage, and there they were overtaken. The Terrible Three dropped Mr. Mulvaney, and turned at bay.

"Hands off!" roared Tom Merry. "I tell you—"

"Rats! We haven't finished with him!"

"You're not going to—"

"Hand him over!"

"Collar him!" shouted Levison. "There's only three of the rotters. Kick them downstairs and collar the old josses!"

"Rush 'em!" shouted Crooke.

And the raggers came on with a rush, confident in their numbers. Mr. Mulvaney rolled blindly on the floor in the midst of the struggling juniors. The Terrible Three were great fighting-men, and they gave a good account of themselves, but the odds were too great. They were rushed back, and the raggers fastened upon Mr. Mulvaney again.

"Rescue!" shouted Tom Merry breathlessly.

Gore and Crooke and Levison had hold of Mulvaney. The Terrible Three dashed to the rescue, and caught hold of him, too. Then there was a tug-of-war, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther holding on to Mr. Mulvaney's arms and shoulders, and Gore & Co. dragging at his legs.

"Pull devil, pull Baker!" chuckled Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yank him away!"

"Hold on!"

"All together!"

The famous struggle over the body of Patroclus, sung by old Homer, was simply nothing to it. And Patroclus, on

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that celebrated occasion, was dead, and Mr. Mulvaney had the misfortune to be alive. He gasped and panted, yelled and roared, as the rival juniors dragged him to and fro in the struggle for possession.

Unless Mr. Mulvaney had come into halves, Gore & Co. would have been successful, for the odds were too great for the Terrible Three. But rescue was at hand. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Kangaroo came dashing up the stairs to their aid. They rushed into the conflict at once, and Gore & Co. were driven, defeated, along the passage, pursued right to the door of the dormitory, and driven in ignominiously.

Mr. Mulvaney sat on the floor in the passage, surrounded by the victorious rescuers.

"Bai Jove, we've wescued him!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Feel wathah out of bweath, Mulvaney, old chap?"

"Ow—ow!"

"Must be wathah wuff on you at your time of life, old boy?"

"Ow—ow!"

"Never mind, we've rescued him," grinned Kangaroo. "As a matter of fact, he's a bit too old for these games. He oughtn't to have come into the Shell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me help you up, Mulvaney," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Mulvaney staggered up, with Tom's assistance. He was gasping terrifically. He took his spectacles, which Blake found for him in the passage, and put them on, and blinked in utter bewilderment at the juniors.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I never—never knew anything like this! Take me to the headmaster, please! They shall all be flogged!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That won't do," he said.

"What—what?"

"You can't sneak, you know."

"Sneak!" stuttered Mr. Mulvaney.

"It's not the thing, you know. After all, it was only a rag. You must expect something of the sort, as you're new here," said Monty Lowther.

"What! Expect to be tossed in a blanket, intirely, at my time of life!" roared Mr. Mulvaney.

"Well, you knew how old you were before you came here, I suppose," said Lowther. "'Tain't Gore's fault you're an old chap, you know, Mulvaney."

"How dare you call me Mulvaney! Have you no manners?"

"Yes, here's Manners," said Lowther, with a grin, indicating his chum. "That's all we have."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "you can't expect to be called Mr. Mulvaney in the Shell, you know. If you come here as you've done, you must expect to be treated simply as a junior. It can't be helped that you're an old chap."

"Old chap! Boy, you—you—"
"And you can't sneak to the Head, or you'll be ragged again, and worse, and we sha'n't jolly well raise a finger to save you," said Manners.

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"Mulvy is waiting for you in his study," said Tom Merry. "You'd better come!"

Mr. Mulvaney gasped.

"Take me to him at once."

"This way, Mulvaney."

"You—you—oh, good heavens! I—I feel as if this were all a dream!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney. "This school must be very carelessly governed, when visitors are liable to be ragged by junior boys. I shall certainly explain the whole matter to the Head, and if you address me as Mulvaney again I shall report you also."

"Report and be blowed!" said Tom Merry. "We're doing the best we can for you, and you're a jolly lot of trouble, I can tell you. I've got a swollen nose on your account. You might be decently grateful."

"Yaas, wathah! You are a wathah ungwateful wottah, Mulvaney."

"Take me to my son's study!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney. "Perhaps he can explain why this place seems to have gone entirely mad."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, come on, cocky," said Lowther, "we'll hand you over to Mulvy, and be jolly glad to get rid of you."

"Upon my word!"

Mr. Mulvaney followed the Terrible Three downstairs. He was still gasping for breath, and seemed likely to go on gasping for some time. They came into the Sixth Form passage, and met Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare stared blankly at the dishevelled-looking gentleman. Mr.

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Mulvaney's collar was torn out, and his hair was ruffled, and his clothes were decidedly untidy and dusty.

"What on earth—" began Kildare.

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "Mulvaney's been ragged, and we're taking him home to Mulvy. No harm done."

"What!" shouted Kildare. "Do you mean to tell me that Mr. Mulvaney has been ragged? Mulvaney's father ragged! By George, there will be floggings for this! Mr. Mulvaney, I had no idea! How on earth did it happen?"

"I was taken up to a dormitory by a trick!" gasped Mr. Mulvaney. "There I was seized and swiped with a pillow, and tossed in a blanket!"

"Great Scott!"

"I have never heard of such a thing!" panted Mr. Mulvaney, mopping his perspiring brow. "I should not have believed such a thing possible. It is incredible. But —"

"Somebody will be sacked over this!" said Kildare sternly.

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "Mulvaney must take his chance with the rest. He knows what to expect, I suppose, when he comes here."

"What!" exclaimed Kildare. "Are you mad, Tom Merry?"

"No, I'm not. We rescued Mulvaney—"

"Call him Mr. Mulvaney, you disrespectful young rascal!"

"Well, I don't see why I should. But anything for a quiet life. Mr. Mulvaney will have to take his chance in the Shell with the other fellows. It's not our fault that he's older than us."

"What do you mean? In the Shell?"

"Yes. Didn't you know? Mulvaney's pater is coming into the Shell as a Shell chap!" said Tom Merry.

The captain of St. Jim's almost fell down.

"You—you young ass! What put that idea into your silly head?" he shouted.

"Mulvaney of the Sixth said so."

"What!"

"He told me so this afternoon. He said that his pater was coming into the Shell, and that he was a mischievous chap, a practical joker, and would get into trouble, and asked me to keep an eye on him. And I said I would. That's why we rescued him."

"You must be insane. Such a thing is impossible!"

"Mulvaney said so."

"Impossible!"

"What utter nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Mulvaney. "My son could not possibly have said anything of the sort!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"He did say so!" he exclaimed angrily. "I thought it was jolly odd. Isn't it true?"

"Of course it isn't! Are you foolish enough to imagine that a man of my age could enter a junior Form in a school?" exclaimed Mr. Mulvaney testily.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "You've put your foot in it this time, Tommy, my son, and no giddy mistake!"

"But—but Mulvaney said so!" yelled Tom Merry. "He said so quite plainly."

Kildare grinned. He could not help it.

"You've made some idiotic mistake!" he said. "Here's Mulvaney! Mulvy, old man, here's your pater."

Mulvaney of the Sixth had looked out of his study. He came out into the passage, uttering an exclamation at the sight of his dishevelled and dusty pater.

"Great Scott, dad! What's happened?"

"Look here, Mulvaney," exclaimed Tom Merry, "didn't you tell me your pater was coming into the Shell?"

Mulvaney of the Shell stared at him blankly.

"My pater—the Shell—bedad—certainly not, you young ass!"

"Then I—I'm dreaming!" gasped Tom Merry. "Didn't you say, 'I can't dictate to my pater. He thinks St. Jim's is the right place for him'?"

Mulvaney turned pink.

"Yes, I did!"

"Well, then—" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I was speaking of my minor."

"Your minor!" howled Tom Merry.

"Yes."

"You never mentioned your minor. I didn't know you had a minor. I've never heard of your blessed silly minor!" shouted Tom.

"What! I told you he was coming this afternoon—"

"You only mentioned your pater—"

"You young ass—"

"You awful duffer—"

"How could you think I said my father was coming into a junior Form, you silly young ass?" shouted Mulvaney.

"How could I think you were speaking of a minor when

you never mentioned a minor, and I didn't even know you had a minor?" shouted back Tom Merry.

"You—you silly gossoon—"

"You blessed blundering Irishman—"

"Look here—"

"Well, look here—"

"Never mind, never mind!" exclaimed Mr. Mulvaney. His face had broken into a smile as he listened to the altercation and understood the absurd mistake that had been made, and the smile broadened into a laugh. "Never mind. It's all right. It was a mistake. Sure, you always were making mistakes, Patrick! I thought the boys had gone mad, but now I understand. They thought I was a new boy. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nobody would have cheeked you, sir, if they hadn't thought that," said Tom Merry, much relieved to see Mulvaney's pater take it good-humouredly.

"Ha, ha, ha! A new boy at my age!" shouted Mr. Mulvaney, with tears of merriment in his eyes. "Ha, ha, ha! Bless my soul!"

"But where is Micky?" exclaimed Mulvaney of the Sixth. "Didn't he come with you, pater?"

Mr. Mulvaney wiped his eyes.

"Yes. He brought his bicycle with him, and wished to ride it to the school, so I came on alone in the back," he said. "He ought to be here by now. But perhaps the young rascal has gone for a spin."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "If there'd been a kid with you, sir, we might have guessed that there'd been a mistake. But as you came alone—"

Mr. Mulvaney laughed again.

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind. It was all my son's fault! Patrick, if you can get me a clothes-brush in your study—"

"Come in, dad!"

Mr. Mulvaney followed his son, and they disappeared into the prefect's study. Kildare walked away laughing. The Terrible Three looked at one another.

"Well, my hat," said Monty Lowther, "this beats the giddy band! How many sorts of a howling ass do you call yourself, Tommy?"

"I couldn't help it! It was Mulvaney—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thank goodness he's taken it so good-temperedly!" said Manners. "Gore will be in a blue funk when he finds out the facts!"

There was the sound of a bicycle bell ringing outside the House.

"Bet you that's Mulvaney minor!" exclaimed Lowther. "Come on!"

And the Terrible Three hurried out of the House, very eager to see the youth whose coming to St. Jim's had caused so much perturbation to his major.

CHAPTER 5.

Major and Minor!

"**B**AI Jove, that chap looks like old Mulvaney, doesn't he?"

"Another edition, I suppose," said Jack Blake.

"Hallo, kid! What's your name?"

A lad a few months older than Blake had jumped off a bicycle outside the School House, apparently in blissful ignorance of the fact that cycles were not allowed in the quad. He was a thick-set, muscular-looking youth, with a round face, a mouth of unusual size, and bright, dancing blue eyes. His hair, which was nearer red than brown, grew thickly, and seemed to push his cap back on his head.

He was entirely self-possessed. If he was a new boy at St. Jim's, he had none of the average new boy's bashfulness.

He looked coolly at the juniors on the steps of the School House.

"Mulvaney," he said. "What's yours?"

Blake did not reply to that question. It was no business of a new boy to ask the name of an old hand. It was a new boy's business to answer questions and be civil.

"Any relation to the collection of Mulvaney's we've got here now?" asked Blake.

"Pat Mulvaney is my brother."

"Oh! Are you coming to this school?"

"I've come."

"What Form?"

"Shell."

"My hat! The same Form as your pater!" exclaimed Blake.

"Extwaordinawy!"

"Great Scott!"

Micky Mulvaney stared at the juniors. Evidently he did not know what they were driving at.

Gore and Crooke of the Shell came out of the House, and they exchanged glances as they heard the exclamations of the Fourth-Formers.

"Another Mulvaney?" exclaimed Gore.

"Yes; minus this time!" grinned Blake.

"My word, it's raining Mulvaney! And is that bullet-headed kid going into the same Form with his pater?"

"So he says."

"Here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he came out with Manners and Lowther. "I say, you chaps, there's been a mistake! Mulvaney had blundered as usual—"

"Somebody's blundered, anyway!" chuckled Lowther.

"Oh, ring off, Monty! Old Mulvaney—I mean Mr. Mulvaney—isn't coming to the school at all. It was a mistake. He's only come here to bring his kid—this specimen, I suppose. I suppose you're Mulvaney minor—what?"

"Sure, and I am!" said the new boy.

Gore's jaw dropped.

"Old Mulvaney—not coming!" he stammered.

"No. It was a mistake."

"You took me in!" roared Gore furiously.

"Well, I didn't mean to. It was Mulvaney major's mistake, not mine."

"You—you idiot! Of course, it wasn't likely at all, but I took your word for it. Now I've been ragging a prefect's pater—oh, my hat! He'll go to the Head!" gasped Gore.

"I shall be sacked!"

"It's all right—"

"All right!" yelled Gore. "I don't call it all right. What will Mr. Mulvaney say? What will the Head say? What—"

"I tell you—"

"I'll jolly well explain to the Head that you did it all when I'm called up!" howled Gore. "You told us all—"

"Well, I told you not to rag him," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, rats! You told us he was coming into the Shell. You knew he wasn't. You were only gammoning. Now—"

"I told you what I had from Mulvaney of the Sixth. I couldn't help it if he was blundering. But it's all right. Mr. Mulvaney is going to look over it, and won't speak to the Head about what's happened?"

"Oh!" said Gore, greatly relieved. "Did he say so?"

"Yes."

"Good egg! That's all right, then. It was all your fault. So you're the Mulvaney that's coming into the Shell?" added Gore, turning to the new boy.

"Sure."

"Don't you know you're not allowed to lean bikes up against the House here?" said Gore. "You'd better take it away."

"How should I know when I've only just got here?" said Mulvaney minor. "Where's my pater? I suppose he's got here?"

"Yes, rather. He's in your major's study," said Tom Merry. "I'll take you there if you like."

"Thanks."

Mulvaney minor followed Tom Merry into the House.

He left his machine leaning against the balustrade of the School House steps. Tom Merry came out in a few minutes.

"So that's the new Mulvaney," he remarked. "He looks rather fresh. His major says he's a Tartar."

"I'll Tartar him!" growled Gore. "He's too jolly cool for a new kid. He wants putting into his place, and keeping there!"

"You'd better let him alone," said Tom drily. "He looks as if he's better able to take care of himself than his pater is."

Gore snorted.

"I'll jolly soon show you about that!" he said, and he swung away down the steps. He jerked Mulvaney's bike away from its resting-place.

"Going to put it in the bike-shed?" asked Crooke.

"No fear. I'm going to give him a hint not to leave bikes about," said Gore. He opened a penknife, and jabbed it through the tyres, one after the other. With a loud hiss the air escaped from the punctured tyres.

Tom Merry uttered an angry exclamation.

"That's a rotten thing to do, Gore."

"Against the rules to leave bikes about in the quad," said Gore calmly. "That will be a valuable tip to the cheeky young rotter!"

And he pitched the bike carelessly against the wall, where it curled up and fell. Then Gore walked away grinning. It was an ill-natured trick to play on the new boy, and George Gore was quite in his element in that line.

Tom Merry's brows contracted. He was greatly inclined to "go for" George Gore on the spot, but he restrained himself. He picked up the machine, and wheeled it away to the bicycle-shed, and put it on a vacant stand.

Meanwhile, Micky Mulvaney had gone into his major's study.

Mulvaney of the Sixth met him with a frown. He might have affectionate feelings towards his younger brother, but

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it was evident that he did not want him at St. Jim's. With Mulvaney major, absence made the heart grow fonder. "Here I am, Paddy," said Mick Mulvaney cheerfully. "And I wish you were anywhere else!" growled Mulvaney major.

Micky chuckled. "My dear Paddy, I'm going to do you credit in the school. Looks a cheery sort of place to me. I shall have a good time here."

"If you play any of your tricks——"
"Paddy, old man——"
"Now, now," said Mr. Mulvaney, raising his hand. "Don't you two begin to row as usual. I won't have it. You're to live in peace and quietness here."

"Bedad!" said Micky; and his major snorted. Evidently he did not anticipate much peace and quietness in the neighbourhood of Mulvaney minor.

"Micky, you're to do everything your brother tells you. You're to obey him, and—follow his example in everything," said Mr. Mulvaney severely.

"Bedad!" said Micky, again.

"And you're not to get into any rows with the other boys."

"Oh, begorra!"

"Especially, you are not to fight!" said Mr. Mulvaney sternly.

"Oh, pater!"

"That especially. You will probably be trouble enough to Patrick without that."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder," agreed Micky.

Patrick Mulvaney groaned.

"He will be in hot water from morning till night. He will be dragging me into fag rows all day long. He'll be in a fight before bedtime to-night—most likely two or three."

"Sure, it's likely enough," agreed Micky.

Mr. Mulvaney raised his hand sternly.

"Micky!"

"Yes, pater!"

"Give me your solemn promise that you will not fight anybody to-day. If you get over the first day without a fight, you may keep clear of it afterwards. I want your promise."

"Oh, pater, draw it mild!"

"You hear me, Micky?"

"Bedad, I hear you!"

"Now, Micky, do as I tell you," said Mr. Mulvaney, in a helpless sort of way. "You young rascal! I shall feel much easier in my mind going home."

Micky Mulvaney's truculent face melted at once.

"Oh, that's all right, pater! I promise."

"Good! You won't be sorry for it, Micky. Now I must go and see the Head. Give Micky a talking to, Patrick, and tell him about his new school."

And Mr. Mulvaney quitted the study. Mulvaney major looked at his minor grimly. Mulvaney minor stood with his hands in his pockets, and grinned at the Sixth-Former, and closed one eye.

"Ain't you glad to see me here, Paddy?" he demanded.

"I'd rather see you at Jericho!" growled his major.

"That's what I call brotherly. Now, I'm glad you're here. It will be fun having a brother in the Sixth Form."

"You won't see much of me," growled Mulvaney major, "and you're not to call me Paddy. I can't be Paddied here and Paddied there by a fag in the Lower School."

"Sure, what shall I call you, then?"

"Anything you like, only not Paddy."

"Good! I'll call you Pattikins, as your nurse used to."

"Shut up!" roared Mulvaney major.

"Well, I'll call you Freckles, then."

Mulvaney major made a rush at his minor. Micky Mulvaney dodged him round the study table. The senior halted, panting. Micky kept one eye warily on his major, and the other on the door.

"You're beginning already," said Mulvaney major, breathing hard. "Mind, I'm a prefect here, and I can whop you whenever you deserve it."

"Sure, now, and you wouldn't whop your own flesh and blood, Pattikins!"

Mulvaney major made another rush. Mulvaney minor fled, and there was a hot chase round the table. The major almost caught the junior; but Micky dived under the table just in time. He emerged on the other side, jumping up before he was quite clear of the table, and, as a natural consequence, lifting the side of it on his shoulders. The table reeled over, and a shower of books and papers and an inkstand shot to the floor, and mixed themselves on the study carpet.

Mulvaney major uttered a roar of wrath, and made a spring for a cane. Mulvaney minor made a spring for the door. He reached the door just as Mulvaney major reached the cane, and dragged it open. He dodged out with the cane swishing behind him, and fled down the passage roaring with laughter.

Mulvaney major glared after him, but he did not pursue. THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 312.

He did not want to risk Mr. Mulvaney meeting him in hot pursuit of his minor with a cane brandished in his hand. He turned back into his study, and surveyed the ruin his minor had wrought, and groaned.

"This is the blessed beginning! What is the blessed end going to be like! Well, I'm blessed!"

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble!

"GOOD-BYE, MICKY!"
"Good-bye, dad!"
"Remember your promise."

"That's all right, dad."

"And don't get into mischief."

"Oh, pater!"

And the station hack drove away with Mr. Mulvaney in it, and Micky waved his cap from the gates as it went down the road.

Then he turned back into the quadrangle.

He was alone now. His father had gone. His elder brother in the Sixth had not welcomed him with effusive affection. He was planted in a new and strange school to fight his own way, like a young bear with all his troubles before him.

But that prospect did not seem to dismay him in the least. With his hands in his trousers' pockets, and his cap on the side of his head, he sauntered across the quadrangle.

Three juniors whom he had not seen before bore down upon him. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House at St. Jim's. The cool and independent manner of the new boy struck them at once.

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"Hallo!" said Mulvaney minor affably.

"Who might you happen to be?" asked Figgins, not over-pleased with the extremely cool manner in which the new kid replied to his greeting.

"I might happen to be anybody," said Mulvaney minor.

"Say the German Emperor!"

"What!"

"Or Mr. Lloyd George!"

"Eh?"

"Or Winston Churchill!"

"Look here, you cheeky young beggar——"

"But I don't happen to be any of them!" said the new boy airily. "If you'd asked me who I am, I could have told you. I'm Mulvaney minor."

"Oh, you're Mulvaney minor, are you?" said Figgins darkly.

"School House kid, I suppose?"

"School House is my House certainly. I believe there's another House here, ain't there?" said Mulvaney minor, looking round.

"There's the New House—our House!" said Figgins.

"That's the cock-House at St. Jim's."

"Oh, rats!" said Mulvaney minor coolly.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Deaf?" said the new junior pleasantly. "I said Rats—R-A-T-S—rats! Rodents, if you like it that way better. In other words, gammon!"

Figgins and Co. exchanged glances. This new youth was so exceedingly "fresh" that they felt it their bounden duty to bump him. They felt that it would do him good to take some of the freshness out of him. And also it would relieve their own feelings. They gathered more closely round him.

"Do you know what we do with cheeky new kids here?" asked Fatty Wynn.

Mulvaney minor looked him over.

"Swallow 'em?" he asked. "I shouldn't wonder—to judge by your size."

Fatty Wynn turned quite red.

"You—you cheeky rat——" he ejaculated. "I'll—I'll——"

Mulvaney minor shook a warning finger at him.

"Don't you get excited," he said. "It ain't safe for fat people. You might have apoplexy. Sure, and you look as if you were going to have a fit now!"

"I'll—I'll squash him!" roared Fatty Wynn indignantly.

"You would if you fell on me, sure!" agreed Mulvaney minor. "Now, then, hands off, Tubby! Don't roll on me!"

Fatty Wynn did not roll on him, but he rushed on him. Mulvaney minor closed with him quite cheerfully, and they wrestled furiously. Then all of a sudden Mulvaney minor let go and jumped back. Fatty Wynn gasped and rushed on, and Mulvaney minor dodged round Figgins and Kerr.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I'm not going to fight you! I can't!"

"Lemme get at him——"

Mulvaney minor eluded the grasp of Figgins and Kerr, and broke into a run for the School House. His promise



Mulvaney major stumbled over the form of his minor, and went flying forward, his hands thrashing the air wildly. There was a terrific crash as he landed right upon Mr. Lathom, who was just coming out of his study.
"Oh!" (See Chapter 11.)

to his father had come back into his mind. He had given his word not to fight anybody that day. Mulvaney minor was evidently the kind of fellow who would get into a good many "scraps." But his word was sacred to him; for that day he was peaceable—he would have peace at any price.

He bolted across the quad., with Figgins & Co. in hot pursuit.

"Stop him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"After him!"

"Collar the School House cad!"

But Mulvaney minor was a good sprinter. He crossed the quad. at a wonderful speed, and came panting up to the steps of the School House. Half a dozen juniors there watched the chase with indignant exclamations. They did not like to see a School House fellow fleeing from the New House—even if he was only a cheeky new kid.

Mulvaney minor came panting up the steps. The School House juniors crowded down the steps, quite ready to tackle Figgins & Co.

"Yah! Funk!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Kick those New House bounders out!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What are they doing on the respectable side of the quad.? Kick them out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Figgins & Co., assailed by a crowd of School House fellows, fled in their turn, hotly pursued across the quad.

rangle almost to their own House. Mulvaney minor stood on the steps and watched the chase with a grin. The School House juniors, panting a little, came back from the chase, and they glared at Mulvaney minor in an extremely unfriendly way.

"So you're a rotten funk, are you?" exclaimed Gore contemptuously.

Mulvaney minor flushed crimson.

"Sure, I'll fight any chap that calls me a funk!" he exclaimed.

"You'll fight me, then!" snorted Gore. "I call you a funk. Rotten funk! Yah!"

Mulvaney minor clenched his hands, and then unclenched them again. The eyes of all the School House juniors were upon him, and his flush deepened. His promise to his father was proving more irksome than he had anticipated. But he never thought of breaking it.

"Oh, you call me a funk, you spalpeen, do you?" he said.

"Yes, I do—now come into the gym., and I'll lick you into the bargain."

"Sure, and I'm sorry I can't oblige you!"

And Mulvaney minor turned and walked into the House. There was a buzz among the juniors. Their faces were expressive of surprise, wonder, contempt. That he was a funk was not at all the impression Mulvaney minor had made.

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upon them at first. George Gore burst into a loud and scornful laugh.

"Well, of all the rotten cowards," he exclaimed, "I think that chap takes the cake! Bah!"

"Beastly funk!" said Crooke. "We'll give him a lesson in the dorm. to-night—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

There was an exciting time in store for Mulvaney minor, on his first day at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.

Mulvaney's Study Mates.

MULVANEY MINOR had his tea in hall. There were very few Shell fellows at the table, most of them having tea in their studies at the time that suited them best. Skimpole of the Shell was next to Mulvaney. Skimpole was a brainy youth in large spectacles, with a benevolent countenance. He gave the new boy a welcoming blink when he sat down at the tea-table in Hall.

"Ah, you are Muldoon?" he asked.

"Mulvaney, please!"

"Yes, I knew it was some name like that!" said Skimpole. "The new boy?"

"Yes!"

"You're coming into my study," said Skimpole.

"Oh!" said Mulvaney minor.

"Yes, Mr. Railton mentioned it to Gore, and Gore was saying some very angry things about it. He thought we were going to be only two in the study after Vavasour went away," explained Skimpole. "However, I shall be glad to welcome you in our study!"

"Thanks!" said Mulvaney. "Who's Gore?"

"Gore? That is the big fellow who was bullying you!"

Mulvaney minor grinned.

"Oh, that's Gore, is it? I'm going to share his study?"

"Yes. There were three of us when Vavasour was here.

Vavasour was very agreeable, and he used to kick Gore when Gore was unpleasant, which made matters very much more comfortable in our study," said Skimpole. "Vavasour was a nice fellow, and I'm sorry he's gone away. Gore will be much more unpleasant now."

"I see. He only behaves when well kicked," said Mulvaney. "Well, I'll see if I can take Vavasour's place as kitchen-in-chief as well as study-mate."

Skimpole shook his head.

"You had better be very polite to Gore," he said. "He is very rough and violent. He sometimes throws my books on the fire."

"Your school books?"

"Oh, no! My volumes on social problems, and so on. I am a Socialist, you know," said Skimpole modestly, with an impressive blink at the new boy. "I take a deep interest in all social problems, especially in submerged tenths and toiling millions. I have Professor Balmyscrumpet's great work in twelve octavo volumes—"

"Oh, tare and ouns!" said Mulvaney. "A pity Gore didn't put that on the fire, too, while he was about it!"

"My dear Muldoon—"

"Mulvaney, you ass!"

"Yes, I mean Mulvaney. My dear Mulvaney—"

"Let's get out!" said Mulvaney, as tea was finished.

"I'm going to take my things to the study. Where is it?"

"I will show you the way with pleasure, and help you carry your books there!" said Skimpole hospitably.

"Thanks!"

Skimpole had the kindest heart in the world. He had a secret hope, too, that the new boy would turn out to be a fighting man, and keep Gore in order as Vavasour used to do before he left St. Jim's. Things had not been quite so pleasant in Skimpole's study since Vavasour had left.

Skimpole and Mulvaney conveyed the latter's books and other personal belongings to the study, and Skimpole was helping his new friend to put them away, when Gore came in. Gore had been to tea with Crooke, up the passage, and Crooke came back with him to smoke a cigarette with him in his study—that being one of his little ways. They both stared at the sight of the Irish junior in the study.

"Hallo!" said Crooke. "What's that bounder doing here?"

Gore pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said.

"Sure, and this is my study!" said Mulvaney pleasantly.

"Yes, Gore; you are already aware that Mr. Railton has assigned Muldoon to this study," said Skimpole, blinking at the bully of the Shell. "Please do not make any disturbance. I am helping Muldoon to put his things tidy."

"I wouldn't have a rotten funk planted on me," observed THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 312.

Crooke. "Kick him out, Gore. Or, better still," he chuckled. "Make Skimmy kick him out!"

Gore laughed.

The idea of making the peaceful and benevolent Skimpole engage in a fight with the new boy quite appealed to George Gore's peculiar sense of humour.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed. "Skimpole, take your jacket off."

"My dear Gore—"

"You are going to fight the new kid," explained Gore. "It will be fun. You needn't be afraid; he's a holy funk."

"But I have no quarrel with the new boy, Gore," said Skimpole, in distress. "On the contrary, I feel very friendly disposed towards him. I am going to lend him some of my books on Socialism, Determinism, and—"

"You're going to lick him!" said Gore.

He closed the study door Crooke put his back to it. The two young rascals were greatly pleased with their scheme. A fight between Skimpole and the new boy would be distinctly amusing.

"Now, go it, Skimpole," said Gore. "You've got to fight the new kid, or fight me. You can take your choice."

"I refuse, Gore. I consider—"

"Take your jacket off!" roared Gore.

"My dear Gore—"

"Take your jacket off, Mulvaney!"

"Rats!"

"My hat! I'll jolly soon have it off you!" said Gore. And he laid violent hands upon the new boy, and dragged his Eton jacket off.

Mulvaney's eyes blazed, and he clenched his fists, but he did not hit Gore. His promise to his father was fresh in his mind. Gore threw his jacket in a corner of the study.

Crooke had dragged Skimpole's jacket off.

"Now pile in," said Gore. "I'll keep time. Are you ready?"

"My dear Gore—" said Skimpole feebly.

"Are you going to begin?" roared the bully of the Shell.

"Certainly not. I—"

"Then we'll jolly well bump you for a start!"

"My dear—Oh! Hands off, please! Oh, dear! Yah!"

Gore and Crooke seized upon the genius of the Shell, and he was swept off his feet, and brought down with a heavy bump upon the floor. His spectacles slid down his nose, and he blinked over them in dismay.

"Ow, ow! Oh—oh, dear!"

Gore jerked his glasses off, and threw them on the table.

"You don't want your gig-lamps on," he said. "Now, get up and pile in. If you don't begin, I'll start on you with a cricket-stump!"

He jerked Skimpole to his feet. Skimpole, who was extremely shortsighted without his glasses, blinked at Mulvaney in a very uncertain sort of way.

"Do—do—do you mind if I fight you, Muldoon?" he asked nervously. "Gore is so very obstinate. I will not hurt you."

"If you don't hurt him, I'll hurt you!" said Gore threateningly. "Now, pile in!"

Skimpole put up his hands, and advanced upon Mulvaney. There was no help for it, for Gore had taken up a cricket-stump, and held it ready for business. Mulvaney backed away. He could not fight that day without breaking his promise. And he certainly did not want to fight the harmless and benevolent Skimpole.

"Oh, pater!" he muttered. "Sure you didn't know what you were lettin' me in for!"

"Do you mind putting up your hands, Muldoon?" asked Skimpole.

Mulvaney put up his hands.

"Go for him!" shouted Gore. "Mind, I've got the stump ready. I'm going to larrup you if you don't hit hard."

"My dear Gore, you know—"

"Shut up, and pile in!"

Skimpole piled in feebly. Mulvaney stood up to him, grinning, and brushed his feeble drives aside.

"Go for him!" shouted Gore angrily. "That isn't fighting. Pile in!"

"I—I cannot, Gore! He pushes my hands away, you see," said Skimpole. "As you are aware, I do not know very much about boxing. Yaroooh!"

The cricket-stump came behind Skimpole with a loud whack, and he jumped and roared.

"Stop that!" shouted Mulvaney.

Gore glared at him.

"Eh! What's the matter with you? I'll give you some, too, if I have any of your chin!" he exclaimed savagely.

Mulvaney made a step towards the grate, and caught hold of the poker. The poker had been thrust into the fire, and it was red-hot at one end. Mulvaney drew it out. He turned round towards Gore, grinning over the red-hot poker.

"I give you three seconds to get out of this study—you and the other rotter!" he said.

"What! Put that poker down!" roared Gore.

"Are you going?"

"Going! Why, I'll smash you! I'll—I'll—Yah! Get away! Keep that poker away from me! Do you hear? You—you villain! I'll—I'll—Yaroooh!"

Mulvaney minor advanced upon him, with the poker extended. Gore crashed the cricket-stump upon it to knock it aside, and there was smell of scorched wood. Then he gave a wild howl as the red tip of the poker touched his arm, and dropped the stump and leaped back wildly.

"Ow, ow! Yah! Oh! I'm burnt! Oh!"

"Sure, and didn't I warn you?" said Mulvaney minor cheerfully. "And you'll get burnt some more if you don't get out."

"Yes, please go, Gore," said Skimpole. "Under the circumstances, I consider that Muldoon is completely justified in adopting somewhat violent measures—"

"Gerrooh, gerroff!"

Gore dodged wildly round the table. Mulvaney pursued him, lunging at him with the poker.

Crooke made a jump to tackle Mulvaney from behind, but the new boy swung round, and Crooke's hand dabbed on the poker. He gave a fiendish yell, and tore out of the study. Gore backed away to the door, panting.

"I'll—I'll smash you for this, Mulvaney! I'll—"

"Get out!"

"I'll pulverise you! I'll—"

"Bunk!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" yelled Gore, as the poker touched his jacket. "Yaroooh! You—you young villain! Yarooop! Oh!"

And Gore leaped through the doorway.

Mulvaney closed the door after him and locked it, and then burst into a roar as he threw the poker into the grate.

"Ha, ha, ha! That settles Gore for a bit!"

Skimpole adjusted his spectacles, and blinked approvingly at Mulvaney.

"Really, you know, I should never have thought of that," he said. "I trust I did not hurt you, Muldoon, when I was fighting you—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You couldn't hurt a mouse!"

"I am really relieved, my dear Muldoon. I am afraid that Gore will be very violent this evening—or to-morrow—after what you have done."

"To-morrow!" Mulvaney chuckled. "He can be as violent as he likes to-morrow. The more the merrier. Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 8.

Very Wet.

GÉORGE GORE was looking very grim when the Shell fellows went up to their dormitory that night.

During the evening Mulvaney had succeeded in avoiding him.

For a long time he was locked in the study, and after that he visited his major in the Sixth-Form quarters, where Gore could not follow him.

And on the occasions when Gore had a chance of getting to close quarters, Mulvaney fairly ran for it.

Such an exhibition of utter "funk" brought upon him derision and scorn from all the fellows in the School House, but Mulvaney did not seem to mind. He would have explained his motive if anyone had asked him, but no one did. They took it for granted that he was the bluest of funks, and despised him accordingly. But he knew that his character would be redeemed when his promise no longer bound him. And so he took it all with undiminished cheerfulness.

He wondered, however, what was going to happen in the dormitory that night. In the dorm., after lights out, he would not be able to get away from Gore if Gore chose to make himself unpleasant. And it was pretty certain that he would choose.

Micky Mulvaney did not like the prospect.

Some of the fellows grinned as he came into the dormitory. There was evidently a general anticipation of fun after lights out. Kildare of the Sixth came to see the juniors in, and he turned out the light and quitted the dormitory. Then there was a buzz of voices, almost before the prefect's footsteps had died away.

"Have that funk out!"

"Anybody got a candle?"

"Get a light!"

"Hold on!" said Crooke. "No rows till the prefect's gone down. We don't want Kildare coming back here and spoiling the fun."

"Wait ten minutes," said Gore. "The cad can enjoy the

pleasures of anticipation, you know. Mulvaney, you rotter!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" replied Micky.

"You're going to have a high old time."

"Thanks!"

"Oh, don't be a beastly bully, Gore!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Why can't you let the new kid alone? It's cowardly to go for a chap who funks, anyway."

"Mind your own business!" retorted Gore. "And don't you jolly well interfere! We're going to have some fun with the cad!"

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke.

And a good many voices chimed in. Most of the Shell fellows were looking forward to some fun with the new boy after lights-out that night.

"Well, I suppose you can have your fun, but you're not going to hurt him," said Tom Merry. "If you begin any rotten bullying, Gore, you'll have a fight on your hands."

"Oh, rats!" said Gore.

He jumped out of bed and lighted a candle. Nearly all the Shell fellows turned out. The Terrible Three sat up in bed to look on. They did not intend to take part in the ragging, unless it became too rough, and then Tom Merry intended to chip in promptly. He would not see the new boy ill-used, simply because he hadn't the resolution to stand up for himself.

The glimmer of candle-light illumined the long, lofty dormitory. The raggers gathered in, an eager crowd round Mulvaney's bed. Micky sat up.

"Get up!" said Gore.

"Now, look here," said Mulvaney minor. "Play the game. I can't fight ye to-day, Gore, because—"

"Because you're a funk!" sneered Gore.

"I promised my pater—"

"Rats!"

"Come off!"

"Chuck it!"

"Sure, and it's the thruth," said Micky Mulvaney; "and I'll fight ye to-morrow with all the pleasure in the world. I promised my pater that I wouldn't fight on my first day here!"

"Liar!" said Gore.

Mulvaney flushed.

"You—you rotter! Hands off, I tell ye—"

Gore was grasping at his bedclothes. He dragged them off, and then two or three fellows shoved the new boy out of bed, and he rolled on the floor.

Mulvaney jumped up, amid a roar of laughter. Gore made a run at him, and Mulvaney jumped to his washstand and caught up the jug. Before Gore could get out of the way Mulvaney had swung the jug upon him, and the water came in a drenching flood over Gore. He gave a gasping yell, and staggered back, soaked to the skin. His pyjamas hung round his limbs in wet folds.

"Groo-hoooh—hoooh—yow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "Is that wet, Gore?"

"Grooooooh!"

Gore made a frantic spring at Mulvaney. The new boy lunged at him with the empty jug, and caught him on the chest with a crack. Gore jumped back again.

"Put that jug down!" he roared.

"No fear! I'm keeping it at present! Sure, and it's curious I am to see whether it's harder than yer head!" said Mulvaney.

"You—you—you—"

"Come on!" said Mulvaney, brandishing the jug recklessly. "You were spoiling for fun jist now, Crooke. Come on!"

But Crooke did not come on. He did not like the look of that recklessly-brandished jug; and the other raggers hung back.

Gore, furious, dragged away his wet pyjamas, and towelled himself down, breathing wrath and vengeance. There was a lull in the proceedings. Gore had to find fresh pyjamas from his box, and it took him some time. When he had finished Micky Mulvaney had taken another jug of water from another washstand.

"Sure, and I'm ready now!" he remarked.

"Put that jug down!" said Gore, in a voice of concentrated fury.

"Not this evening!" said Micky cheerfully.

"I—I'll smash you—"

"Come on, then! You'll get wet again!"

Gore paused, quite baffled. He did not want to get drenched again, and he did not want the heavy jug broken on his head. The new boy faced him calmly and coolly. He would not fight, but he certainly did not look like a funk as he faced the raggers. The Terrible Three looked on, grinning. They were beginning to enjoy the scene. It was not going at all according to Gore's programme. Gore

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seemed to be destined to be the ragged instead of the ragger.

"Sure, I'm sorry to spoil the fun," said Mulvaney politely. "If I hadn't promised my father, sure, I'd fight ye with pleasure, Gore. I'm not a funk, and I'll prove it to you to-morrow!"

"Liar!" said Gore.

Mulvaney made a threatening movement with the water-jug, and Gore jumped back in alarm. There was a laugh.

"Go it, Gore!" said Manners. "We shall be going to sleep soon, if the circus doesn't begin. What are you waiting for?"

"Not afraid of a funk, are you?" chuckled Clifton Dane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I'll smash the cad!" said Gore. "You wait till to-morrow, you rotter!"

"I'll wait till five minutes past twelve to-night, if you like," said Mulvaney calmly. "I promised not to fight to-day, but sure to-day ends at twelve o'clock midnight. Now, Gore darling, I'm tired of standing here. Go back to bed!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Deaf, is it? Go back to bed, or I'll swamp you with water!"

"Why, you—you—" gasped Gore, quite taken aback.

This was turning the tables with a vengeance.

"Are you going?" asked Mulvaney, advancing, with the water-jug uplifted.

Gore backed away. There was no help for it. He did not want to be drenched with icy water again. Amid loud chuckles from all the Shell fellows, Gore was driven back to bed, and he turned in, gnashing his teeth with rage.

"Gentlemen, the show is over," said Monty Lowther. "I can't call the performance a success. Gore is no good. I'm going to sleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Shell fellows all turned in. Mulvaney waited till they were all in bed, and the candles blown out, and then he set down the water-jug and turned in. But he did not go to sleep. He knew that he was not done with Gore yet, and he intended to remain awake and keep a wary eye open for the bully of the Shell.

CHAPTER 9.

Making Things Hum!

MULVANEY intended to keep awake, and for some time he did keep awake.

But sleep was heavy on his eyes; he was tired after his day's experiences. In spite of himself, he nodded off.

He heard eleven strike from the old clock tower of St. Jim's, and it was the last sound he heard.

He was dozing, and he slid from his doze into a deep sleep.

He slept soundly, and he did not hear a movement in the dormitory. He did not hear a fellow creeping softly out of bed.

Gore was less sleepy. Perhaps his sudden cold bath had made him more wakeful; and he wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. He waited till eleven o'clock had struck to make sure that the new boy was asleep; then he crept out of bed and took the jug from his washstand, and stole softly towards Mulvaney's bed.

There was a sound of deep breathing from Mulvaney, and Gore chuckled silently. The new boy was fast asleep. He was to have a sudden and startling awakening.

In the dim starlight that struggled through the high windows of the dormitory, Gore could just make out the form of the sleeper.

He raised the jug, and tilted it over the bed.

Swoosh!

The water came out in a flood.

There was a gasp and a wild yell from Mulvaney, and he jumped up in bed like a jack-in-the-box.

"Yaroooh! Ooosh! Oh, howly mother av Moses! Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gore.

"Yarooooh! Oh!"

Gore threw the jug down and retreated, roaring with laughter.

Fellows sat up in bed on all sides, exclaiming and calling out in alarm.

"What's the matter?"

"What the dickens—"

"Ow! Sure, and it's drinched I am intirely!" yelled Mulvaney, his accent growing with his excitement. "Drinched to the skin! And me bed's drinched! Oh, you baste—you thafe of the worruld!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Mulvaney jumped furiously out of bed, and rushed at Gore. He caught the bully of the Shell round the body, and they struggled. Then suddenly Mulvaney remembered, and let his enemy go.

"Oh, you baste! Oh, you rotther!" he gasped, as he released Gore.

"Come on, you funk!"

But Mulvaney did not come on. He retreated to his washstand, and took the towel, and began to rub himself dry.

"What on earth's the row?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Only a bath for Mulvaney!" chuckled Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crooke.

"What a rotten trick!" said Tom Merry indignantly.

"Faith, and I'll make ye sorry for it intirely!" gasped Mulvaney. "What time is that strikin', Tom Merry?"

"Half-past eleven!"

"Grooh! You wait a little bit, you thafe of the world! Oh, crumbs! Me bed's drinched in wather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore went back to bed, laughing like a hyena. Mulvaney struck a match, and looked at his bed. It was simply swimming in water. The new boy regarded it with dismay. It was certainly impossible to go to bed again in that bed.

"Oh, the baste!"

"You can turn in with me if you like!" said Tom Merry good-naturedly. "You can't sleep in that blessed swamp!"

"Thanks! It's a good sort ye are!"

"Put some dry things on, though!" said Tom, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mulvaney changed into dry pyjamas, and turned into Tom Merry's bed. But this time he did not go to sleep. He was waiting for twelve o'clock to strike.

At midnight he would be free from that unfortunate promise to his pater, which had placed him at the mercy of the bully of the Shell. And he did not intend to wait until the morning.

The Shell fellows were soon asleep again, but they were not destined to remain asleep long.

Midnight tolled out from the clock-tower.

Then Mulvaney minor sat up in bed. Tom Merry opened his eyes drowsily.

"Wharrer marrer? Ain't rising-bell!" he murmured.

"I'm getting up," replied Mulvaney.

Tom Merry's eyes opened wider.

"Shurrup! Lemme go to sleep, fathead!"

"It's to-morrow morning now," Mulvaney explained.

"What!"

"To-day was only up to twelve o'clock to-night, and now it is to-morrow," Mulvaney said lucidly as he jumped out of bed. "As it's to-morrow now, it's no good waiting till to-morrow, is it?"

"Yes—no— What are you talking about?" asked Tom, in bewilderment.

"I'm going to talk to Gore."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom, sitting up sleepily. "Nuff rags for to-night."

"Yes; but it isn't to-night now. It's to-morrow."

And Mulvaney stepped to Gore's bed. Gore was sleeping the sleep of the just—and the unjust. Mulvaney grasped his bedclothes and yanked them off, and George Gore started up with a howl.

"Hallo! What the—"

"Get up!"

"Who's that?" roared Gore, blinking furiously into the darkness.

"Mulvaney—me!"

"You—you rotter! I'll—"

"You'll get up!" said Mulvaney, groping for Gore, and collaring him and dragging him out of bed. The bully of the Shell descended upon the floor with a bump.

"No, then, get up!" said Mulvaney. "You're going to sleep in that bed you've drenched! I'm going to have your bed!"

"What! Why, you—you—"

"Get up!"

Gore jumped up quickly enough. He made a wild rush at Mulvaney, and Mulvaney stepped aside, and the bully of the Shell rushed past him in the dark, and bumped heavily upon Bernard Glyn's bed. There was a roar from Glyn as Gore sprawled over him, and he reached out and shoved him off the bed. Gore found his way to the floor again.

"Clumsy!" said Mulvaney cheerfully. "Do get up! Anybody got a candle?"

Two or three fellows had turned out, and candles were lighted. Gore gained his feet again, fuming with rage. But some of the Shell fellows grasped him and held him back.

"Can't fight this time of night!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Dash it all, everybody's in bed! There would be a fearful row if we woke up a prefect!"

"I'm going to smash him——"

"Get back to bed!" said Tom Merry. "You can fight in the gym. to-morrow."

"I tell you——"

"Shut up!" said Monty Lowther. "I tell you you can't fight at this time of night! Now, chuck it, Gore, or we'll bump you!"

"Well, if I leave it till to-morrow——" began Gore.

"To-day," grinned Mulvaney. "After twelve o'clock it's to-day, you know. That's important. I promised my pater not to fight anybody yesterday, and you chaps have seen that I've kept my word. Now that's over, and I'm going to lick Gore. Sorry to spoil you fellows' beauty-sleep, but you can blame Gore for it. He's not going back to bed till I've licked him bald-headed."

"Do you hear that?" roared Gore, in a rage.

"Now, look here, Mulvaney——"

"Faith, and I've no time. I'm going to lick Gore."

Gore broke away from the fellows who were holding him, and rushed at the new junior. Mulvaney's hands were up in a twinkling, and they went it hammer and tongs. Fortunately, their bare feet made little sound on the floor.

"Well, if it's going to be a mill, we may as well have some more light," said Monty Lowther, taking a couple of candles from his box. "Are there any gloves here?"

"I don't want any gloves!" shouted Gore.

"You will before I'm finished with you!" chuckled Mulvaney.

Half the Shell fellows were out of bed now. The rest were sitting up in bed, keeping the blankets round them for warmth. Gore and Mulvaney were fighting desperately. Gore was the bigger of the two, and he was very strong, and he had plenty of pluck. But the new junior was showing surprising qualities as a fighting man. He kept Gore at arm's length, and suddenly, with a terrific right-hander, he sent him spinning along the dorm.

Gore made a clutch at a bed, and missed it, and rolled on the floor.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Gore, old man, you've woke up the wrong passenger!"

"The wrong passenger's woke up Gore!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke picked his chum up. Gore was panting for breath. Mulvaney was as cool as a cucumber.

"Better have this thing in order," said Kangaroo. "I've got some boxing-gloves in my box——"

"I don't want gloves, I tell you!" howled Gore.

"Make a ring, and I'll keep time," went on the Cornstalk.

"You'd better have rounds——"

"I don't mind," said Mulvaney. "Any old thing."

"I'm going to smash him!" said Gore, panting. "I'm going to pulverise him! Blow rounds! I'll finish him this time!"

"Obstinate ass!" said Kangaroo, shrugging his shoulders.

Gore snorted, and rushed to the attack again. This time he succeeded in getting through Micky Mulvaney's guard, and Mulvaney staggered back from a tremendous left on the nose, followed up by a right under the chin. But as Gore rushed on to pursue his advantage, Mulvaney recovered as if by magic, and let out right and left, with two smashing blows that sent Gore thumping on the floor again.

"Well hit!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bravo, Mulvaney!"

"My hat! And that's the chap we called a funk!" grinned Manners. "Gore will have had enough of the funk soon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore was looking decidedly groggy as he scrambled up. By this time he was sorely repenting that he had rejected gloves and rounds. But Mulvaney gave him time to recover his breath. It was Gore who recommenced the attack.

The juniors, greatly excited now, and by no means displeased to see the bully of the Shell taken down a peg or two, crowded round in an eager ring.

For four or five minutes now the fight went on without a rest or pause, both the combatants receiving punishment.

But Gore got by far the larger share, and he repented him more than ever that he had refused the gloves.

"Go it, Mulvaney!"

"Stand up to him, Gore!"

"Good hit! Good man! Pile in!"

"Not so much blessed row!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We shall have the giddy prefects here soon if you don't shut up!" Bump! George Gore dropped again, like a sack of potatoes, and he did not rise. Crooke bent over him.

"Going on?" he asked doubtfully.

Gore groaned.

"Ow! I—I c-c-can't! The beast is too strong for me! Ow!"

"Licked, by George!" said Monty Lowther. "This is where our esteemed friend Gore gets it in the neck and shuts up! I don't think he will call Mulvaney a funk any more!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gore staggered towards his bed. He was quite done, and he realised that he was no match for the new junior. He had indeed woke up the "wrong passenger" in tackling Micky Mulvaney.

"Hold on!" said Mulvaney. "That's my bed, Gore!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Mulvaney quietly but firmly pulled him away from the bed. "You've drenched my bed, and I'm going to have yours," he said calmly.

"You—you rotter!" growled Gore. "I—I'll lick you some other time, you beast!"

Mulvaney grinned, and turned into Gore's bed. Gore did not get into the soaked bed, however. He turned in with Crooke. But it was a long time before he slept. That midnight battle had had a great effect upon him, and he lay meditating upon his sins for a long time before slumber visited his eyes.

And Mulvaney was not disturbed again that night. The new junior had proved, to the satisfaction—or, the dissatisfaction—of all, that he was not a funk, and incidentally that he was a very dangerous customer to tackle. And he slept the sleep of the just until the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

CHAPTER 10.

Levison Catches a Tartar.

CLANG! clang! clang!

Mulvaney minor turned out bright and fresh in the clear winter morning. He seemed as fresh as a lark, and not at all affected by the disturbance of his night's slumbers and the fight that had taken place in the small hours. George Gore was looking very different. Both his eyes were decidedly darkened, and he groaned as he turned out of bed. He felt an ache all over.

He did not speak to the new boy. He was "fed up" with Mulvaney minor, and did not want any further dealings with him. Micky had already begun to make things hum!

Mulvaney whistled cheerily as he went downstairs. He was taking a trot round the quadrangle, when a crowd of the Fourth Form came out.

Levison and Mellish at once spotted the new boy.

They knew nothing, so far, of the happenings in the Shell dormitory during the night, and still had the impression that the new boy was a funk of the first water. Under that impression, they bore down upon him. Mulvaney met them with a cheery smile.

"Top of the morning to you!" he said amiably.

Levison jerked the new junior's cap off, and tossed it over the gate leading into the Head's private garden. In that garden juniors were never allowed, and it was rather a favourite amusement of Levison to toss caps belonging to very small fags there, and watch the trepidation with which they sneaked in to recover their headgear. He fancied that the same amusement would be quite safe with Mulvaney minor, though he was by no means a small fag, but a somewhat bigger fellow than Levison, and much more strongly built, and in decidedly better condition.

Mulvaney looked after his cap calmly as it went flying, and saw it land in a bush at a considerable distance over the gate. Then he looked at Levison.

"What's that for?" he asked.

"You can go and fetch it," said Levison, chuckling.

"That's the Head's garden, you know. Juniors are not allowed there. If a prefect spots you in the garden you get lines or a licking. Savvy?"

"Then how am I to get my cap?" asked Mulvaney innocently.

"You'll have to risk it!" grinned Levison, and Mellish burst into a laugh.

Mulvaney shook his head.

"Under the cirs. I don't care about going into the Head's garden," he remarked. "As you chucked the cap there, Levison, you can fetch it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Levison.

"What are you cackling at, entirely?"

"Well, the idea of it!" said Levison. "I didn't chuck your cap there to fetch it myself. You'd better scoot over the gate, and get it before a prefect comes along."

"No fear! You're going!"

"Fathead!"

"In fact, I insist upon your going," said Mulvaney. "I want my cap. You chucked it over the gate. You can go and fetch it."

Levison shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and turned away. A grip like iron on his collar swung him back. Ho

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swung round in anger and amazement, and found himself looking into Micky Mulvaney's smiling, cheery face.

"Don't go yet," said Micky agreeably. "You haven't fetched my cap."

"Let go my collar, you silly ass."

"Are you going to fetch my cap?"

"No, I'm not!" roared Levison; and he clenched his fist.

"Let go my collar at once, or I'll knock you into the middle of next week!"

"Right-ho!" said Mulvaney, releasing Levison, and pushing back his cuffs. "Come on, and see how far you can knock me along the giddy calendar."

Then Levison hesitated. He had expected Mulvaney to scuttle off, as he had done the previous day from Gore. But there was no sign of scuttling off about Mick Mulvaney now. He seemed to be quite a new fellow, in another sense of the word, this morning.

Levison looked at him very doubtfully.

"Well, I don't want to hurt you," said Levison generously.

"Clear off, and don't bother, and I'll let you alone."

"Will you fetch my cap, please?"

"No, you silly chump, I won't."

"Then you won't clear off yet awhile!" chuckled Micky.

"If you don't get over that gate at once, my pippin, I'll throw you over it!"

"What!" gasped Levison.

"Oh, my word!" murmured Percy Mellish, retreating a few paces. "This giddy kipper isn't such a funk, after all."

Several fellows were gathering round now, and they were looking on in surprise, and amusement. Certainly just now Levison looked more like a funk than Mulvaney did. He was looking, and feeling, decidedly uneasy, and wishing that he had let the new boy severely alone. To go after the cap he had thrown into the Head's garden, and fetch it back at the order of the new boy, would be too terribly humiliating; but the more he looked at Mulvaney, the less he felt inclined for a personal encounter with him.

"Sure I'm waitin' for yez," said Mulvaney. "It will be time to go in to breakfast soon. Will you get over that gate?"

"No, you silly fool!"

"Faith, then I'll chuck ye!"

Mulvaney advanced upon Levison. Levison put up his hands desperately.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, arriving upon the scene, and putting up his eyeglass to survey it. "Bai Jove! What's the mattah with Mulvaney? I believe the young beggah has been takin' us in."

"He licked Gore last night in the dorm.," said Tom Merry, who had also joined the crowd with some more of the Shell fellows. The altercation was attracting a great many juniors to the spot.

Levison started.

"That funk licked Gore?" he ejaculated.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes; and if you'd known that you'd have left his cap alone, wouldn't you Levison?"

Levison bit his lip. That was certainly the case. He had not had the faintest idea that the new junior was such a "dark horse."

But he could not give in without a struggle. A licking was better than the chipping he would receive if he gave in like this, after attempting to bully the new boy. He put up his hands savagely as Mulvaney closed in upon him, and hit out. Mulvaney grinned, and knocked his hands aside with perfect ease, and gave him a tap on the chin that made him stagger. Then the new junior rushed in, and closed with him.

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Levison struggled furiously.

But the arms of the Irish junior were like a band of iron round him, and Levison's struggles had no effect upon that firm grip. He felt himself swept off his feet, and borne bodily towards the garden gate.

"Bai Jove!"

"Good old Mulvaney!"

Mulvaney swung Levison, with perfect ease, up on the gate, and rolled him over. The cad of the Fourth fell with a heavy bump on the inner side.

He rolled on the garden-path, and sat up in the gravel, blinking. There was a yell of laughter from the fellows on the other side of the gate.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.

Gore Mends the Punctures.

LEVISON sprang to his feet.

He was on the forbidden side of the Head's gate, and if he were spotted there by anyone in authority it would mean trouble for him.

The gate was locked, as usual, and he could not open it; but he clambered on it in hot haste to get back into the quadrangle.

Mulvaney tapped him on the chest lightly.

"Get back, you spalpeen. You're not coming over without my cap."

"Look here—"

"Gerroff!"

Mulvaney drew back his right arm as if for a heavy drive, and Levison jumped off the gate in a great hurry. The juniors chuckled again gleefully. Levison's attempt at bullying the new boy was ending disastrously for him.

"You'd better fetch the cap, Levison," said Tom Merry laughing. "You know you ought not to have chucked it there, in the first place."

"I won't!" roared Levison.

"Sure, then, you'll stay in the garden all the mornin'," said Mulvaney cheerily.

"I will not! You rotter, I—"

"Bettah fetch the cap, Levison, deah boy."

Levison made a rush at the gate to scramble over, but Mulvaney was ready. The cad of the Fourth was met with a sharp tap on the nose, and he fell off the gate again, and bumped down in the gravel.

"Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison scrambled to his feet. His face was black with fury. He glanced over the gate, seeking Percy Mellish in the crowd, to call to him for aid; but Mellish had wisely vanished from the scene. He did not want any trouble with the new junior who had licked Gore, and was now engaged in licking Levison. Percy Mellish preferred to leave that tough customer severely alone.

Levison panted with fury. He knew now that he was no match for the boy he had attempted to rag, and he knew he could not get over the gate unless Mulvaney permitted him. There was nothing for it but surrender. He looked round for the cap. It had fallen into the rhododendrons at a considerable distance from the gate. To reach the rhododendrons it was necessary to cross the garden in full sight of several windows of the Head's house, and that was a risky proceeding.

But there was nothing else to be done. Levison ran across the garden in a hurry, reached the rhododendrons, and grasped at the cap. As he

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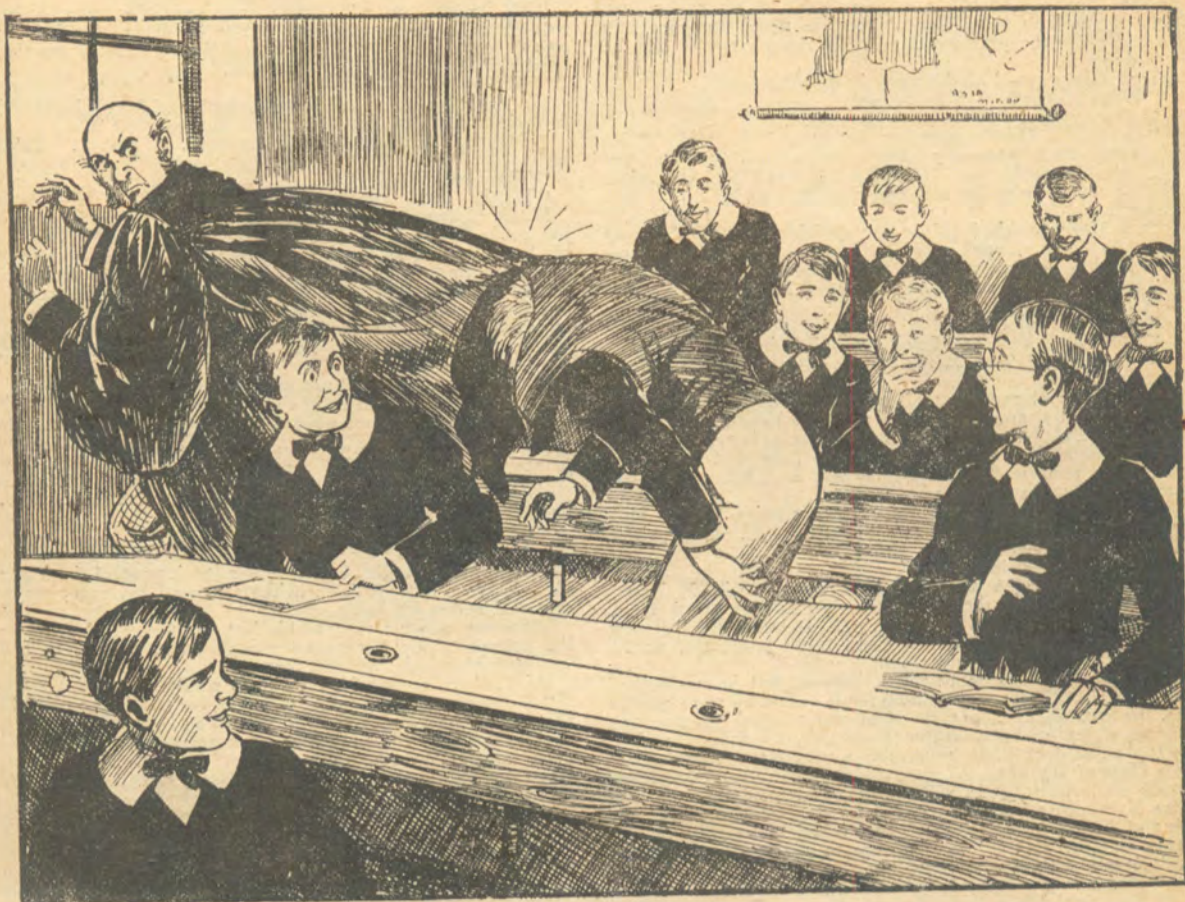
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Gran



"Crooke! Let go of my gown at once! How dare you?" Mr. Linton pulled angrily at his gown. The result was to jerk up the tail of Crooke's coat over his head. There was a yell of laughter from the Shell. "Ha, ha, ha." "Crooke!" shrieked Mr. Linton. "You insolent young rascal!" (See Chapter 12.)

did so a voice was heard from the direction of the greenhouse down the garden.

"I see yer, a-tramplin' on the 'Ead's lawn! I'll report yer, Master Levison." It was the voice of Taggles, the porter, who was in the greenhouse.

Levison gritted his teeth. He grabbed the cap, and ran back towards the gate. He flung the cap at Mulvaney, who caught it neatly, and placed it on his curly head.

"Thanks!" said Mulvaney minor.

"Hang you!" growled Levison.

And he clambered over the gate, and dropped into the quad, and stamped away, with the comforting assurance in his mind that Taggles would not fail to report his trespass. Mulvaney minor strolled away with his hands in his pockets.

Figgins & Co. had just come out of the New House, for a stroll round the quad, before "brekker." They grinned at one another as they spotted the new boy.

"There's that blessed funk!" said Figgins. "I think we ought to bump him, for his own good!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed the Co.

And the three New House juniors bore down upon Mulvaney minor.

To their surprise, he did not seek to avoid them.

He halted, and stood with his hands in his pockets, waiting for them to come up.

"Top of the mornin'!" he said pleasantly.

"We're only at the bottom of the morning as yet," said Kerr.

Mulvaney laughed.

"Fat as ever!" he remarked, looking at Fatty Wynn. "Sure, and you should take dumb-bell exercise, and thry bread-and-water for a week, and—"

Fatty Wynn turned purple.

"You—you—you cheeky rotter!" he gasped. "I was only going to bump you in a friendly way. But what you want

is a hiding. I'll—"

He did not say any more, but rushed right at Mulvaney.

Figgins and Kerr expected the new junior to turn and run. But he didn't. He met Fatty Wynn with open arms, so to speak. Fatty found his fists knocked up, and the new boy's arms round him. He was swept off his feet, and sat down on the ground with a bump that took his breath away.

Mulvaney minor walked off, and left him sitting there, gasping for breath, and Figgins and Kerr looking at him in astonishment.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Figgins.

"My only chapeau!" murmured Kerr.

"Ow, ow, ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Why, the beast is as strong as a horse! Groo-hooh!"

And it was full five minutes before the fat Fourth-Former left off gasping.

When the breakfast-bell rang in the School House two Shell fellows failed to turn up in Hall. They were Gore and Mulvaney minor.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was at the head of the table, and he frowned as he noted the two empty places.

"Where are Gore and Mulvaney?" he said crossly.

"They can't have heard the bell," said Tom Merry.

"Please go and look for them."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry quitted the hall, wondering whether Gore and Mulvaney had come to fisticuffs again. He looked round the quad, but it was deserted, in the gym., and finally a sound of voices drew him to the bicycle-shed.

He looked into the bicycle-shed.

The two juniors were there. Gore was in his shirt-sleeves, kneeling beside a bike. The tyres were off, and Gore was mending punctures. Mulvaney minor stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on. Gore's face, which had looked considerably damaged when he came down that morning was

now looking still more damaged, a proof that there had been further trouble. Probably a great deal of persuasion had been required to make Gore consent to mend the punctures he had made the previous day in Mulvaney's tyres. But he was doing it.

Tom Merry gazed at the scene in astonishment.

"What on earth—" he began.

Mulvaney turned his head, and grinned.

"Sure, and Gore's mending my tyres," he said. "He punctured them yesterday with a penknife when I left my bike outside the House. I found out it was Gore, and asked him to mend them for me, and sure he's so kind that he's doing it."

Tom Merry laughed. Gore was dabbing his nose savagely at intervals, to staunch a fresh stream of red. His kindness in repairing Mulvaney's tyres was evidently not voluntary.

"Brekker's on," said Tom Merry. "Linton's sent me to look for you."

Mulvaney nodded.

"Right-ho! You can finish that after brekker, Gore."

Gore grunted. Tom Merry returned to the breakfast-room, laughing.

"They're just coming, sir," he said. "Gore's been mending a puncture, and he's got to wash his hands, sir."

Gore and Mulvaney came in a few minutes later. Gore was looking in such a state of suppressed fury that the whole Shell saw at once that something was on. When breakfast was over they discovered what it was.

"Time before chapel to finish those repairs, Gore," Mulvaney remarked, as they went out into the hall. Gore gritted his teeth savagely.

"Hang the repairs! I—"

"They've got to be done, you know," said Mulvaney grimly. "It was a dirty trick to jab a knife into my tyres, and you know it. It'd serve you right to make you buy new ones. But you're going to mend those punctures, or I'll hammer you till you can't stand!"

Gore clenched his hands for a moment, but he unclenched them again. There was no help for it. And he went quietly to the bike-shed to get on with the repairs. A grinning crowd of juniors followed him there to watch him at work.

It was, as Jack Blake remarked, a very interesting sight to see Gore of the Shell doing something useful, and for somebody else. Gore would willingly have smashed the tyres and the bicycle into little pieces, but he was working under the eye of Mulvaney minor, and he worked on steadily till his task was finished. Then he rose to his feet, considerably soiled and crimson with rage.

"I'll make you sorry for this," he said thickly.

"Sure, and it's only tit for tat, Gore darling," said Mulvaney good humouredly. "Sure you couldn't expect me to mend the punctures meself intirely."

Gore swung savagely out of the shed. The chapel bell was ringing, and the juniors trooped off, chuckling. Mulvaney minor had succeeded in making an impression upon the School House fellows. There was no doubt that the new junior was hot stuff, remarkably hot stuff, and that he was extraordinarily able to take care of himself.

CHAPTER 12.

Mulvaney Minor is Rather Too Humorous.

MULVANEY MAJOR met Tom Merry as the latter was coming in to go to the Form-room.

"Well?" said the Sixth-Former.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Your minor is all right!" he said. "There's no need to look after him. I never saw a new kid who could look after himself so well as your giddy minor, Mulvaney."

"Good!" said the prefect. "I suppose he has been fighting already?"

"Only a couple of fights so far."

"Only! And hasn't got into any trouble with the masters yet?"

"Not yet," said Tom, laughing. "Perhaps he won't."

"Oh, he will!" said Mulvaney major. "You'll see. He's come here to turn my hair grey."

"Hallo, Paddy!"

Mulvaney major swung round with a frown as his minor sauntered in, and addressed him in that cool and familiar manner. Micky Mulvaney nodded cheerily.

"How are you going on, Paddy?"

"I've told you not to call me Paddy!"

"Sorry. I mean Freckles!"

Mulvaney major turned red with wrath.

"I know I shall have to lick you, you cheeky young imp!" he growled.

"Oh, Paddy—I mean oh, Freckles!" said Mulvaney minor reproachfully. "Look here! What's the good of having a major in the Sixth if you can't chip him? What are the Sixth for, anyway?"

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"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"I'll show you what the Sixth are for, you young scoundrel!" said the prefect. "The Sixth are for keeping cheeky young puppies in order, and licking them when they need it. And sure I'll begin on you!"

"Oh, Freckles—"

The prefect made a dash for his minor, and Micky Mulvaney fled down the passage. His major dashed after him.

"Tally-ho!" roared Monty Lowther. "Yoicks! Tally-ho!"

"Chase me, Charley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Micky Mulvaney turned into the Form-room passage, with his major hot on his track. Mulvaney major had his ash in his hand, and he intended to let his minor feel the weight of it as a preliminary lesson on the subject of cheeking the Sixth. Micky was a good sprinter, but the senior was faster, and he ran him down in the Form-room passage. But Micky was not at the end of his resources. Just outside the Fourth Form-room he halted suddenly, and threw himself down, right at the feet of the prefect.

Mulvaney major could not stop himself in time.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had just stepped out of the Form-room to see what the disturbance was about. He was blinking along the passage through his glasses when the Mulvaney's arrived on the spot. Mulvaney major stumbled on the form of his minor, and went flying forward, his hands thrashing the air wildly. There was a terrific crash as he landed right upon Mr. Lathom.

"Oh!"

"G-g-g-goodness gracious!"

Mr. Lathom staggered back under the impact of the heavy Sixth-Former, and sat down in the passage. Mulvaney major sprawled across his knees.

Mulvaney minor sprang to his feet and fled. Before either the prefect or the Form-master could speak a word he had vanished round the nearest corner.

Mr. Lathom groped for his glasses wildly.

"G-g-goodness gracious! What—what has happened? Is that you, Mulvaney? What do you mean by rushing into me in this manner? Bless my soul! Are you aware, sir, that you have knocked over a Form-master?" gasped Mr. Lathom. "Get up immediately, sir! How dare you sprawl over my feet in that manner?"

Mulvaney major scrambled up.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir."

"I should hope you are sorry, Mulvaney!" snorted Mr. Lathom, as he picked himself up breathlessly. "I am surprised at you—shocked and surprised! A Sixth-Form prefect playing in the passage in this absurd manner!"

"I—I—I wasn't—"

"I saw you!" said Mr. Lathom, raising an accusing forefinger. "I saw you, Mulvaney, and I was surprised and shocked. I may say disgusted. To see a senior boy chasing a junior along a passage, recklessly butting into a master—Dear me! Mulvaney, it is simply disgraceful!"

"But, sir, I—I—I—," stammered Mulvaney major.

"Don't interrupt me, Mulvaney. Don't attempt to excuse yourself. I can make allowances, sir, for exuberant spirits in junior boys, but a boy in the Sixth, sir, is old enough to control that exuberance. In the Sixth Form a certain dignity and reserve is expected, Mulvaney. A Sixth-Former, especially a prefect, is not expected to race along the passages like a fag!"

"But I was—"

"That is enough. Remember my words, Mulvaney, and please do not let this occur again," said Mr. Lathom majestically.

"I was after my minor!"

"That will do. Whether the boy you were playing with was your minor or not is quite immaterial. I repeat, do not interrupt me. No doubt you wish to make your minor welcome to the school, but horseplay in the passages is not the way, and it is undignified and unworthy of your position in the college, Mulvaney. If the Head had seen you, I am not sure that he would have allowed you to remain a prefect. Such conduct is very unbecoming indeed in a prefect. Now, not a word; but pray let us have no more horseplay in the passages."

And Mr. Lathom went into the Form-room, and closed the door behind him with unnecessary vigour—indeed, almost with a slam.

Mulvaney major stood crimson with wrath and confusion. At the end of the passage a crowd of juniors were grinning and enjoying the scene.

"No more horseplay, Mulvaney!" called out Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Think of the dignity of the Sixth!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Don't you know that the Sixth Form is the giddy Palladium of a giddy school?"

"Shut up!" roared Mulvaney.

"Oh, don't shout! If the Head heard you, I am not at all sure that he would allow you to remain a prefect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray let us have no more horseplay in the passage, Mulvaney major. I am shocked, surprised, disgusted, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The enraged prefect charged at his tormentors, and they scattered in all directions, yelling with laughter.

Mulvaney major walked away breathing hard. The troublous times which he had felt that his minor would bring upon him had commenced. As soon as he was gone, Mulvaney minor came cheerfully back, and walked into the Shell room looking quite serene. He was a little late, and Mr. Linton gave him a severe glance.

"Mulvaney!"

"Yes, sir," said Micky politely.

"You are late for class. As you are a new boy, I will excuse you. But do not let it occur again."

"Certainly not, sir," said Micky. "Sure, I'm awfully sorry, sir!"

"What made you late?"

"I was waitin' for the coast to be clear, sir—I—I mean I was—was admiring the scenery from the lower passage window, sir."

Mr. Linton looked at him very sharply.

"You may go to your place, Mulvaney," he said curtly.

"Thank you, sir."

Micky Mulvaney looked a little restless as the lessons proceeded. It was clear that his active nature and exuberant spirits found the Form-room irksome. Several times he addressed remarks to the other fellows, and drew down Mr. Linton's wrath for talking in class. At the fourth offence, Micky was given a taste of the "pointer," and for some time after that he was chiefly occupied in sucking his aching palm.

In the second lessons, Mr. Linton was devoting special attention to Skimpole, and to do so he came among the Form. Skimpole was a great genius—at all events, he firmly believed so—but his genius did not show itself in the classroom. He was, in fact, a far from promising pupil, and Mr. Linton was not satisfied with either the quality or the quantity of his Latin—the quantities being false, and the quality, therefore, bad. As Mr. Linton stood before Skimpole's desk, laboriously explaining some point which only a genius could have misunderstood, his gown was whisking against Mulvaney, who was in the row before Skimpole.

Next to Mulvaney sat Crooke. Mulvaney dropped his hand into his pocket, and then slid it gently behind Crooke without attracting that youth's attention.

He had a large, strong safety-pin in his hand. Tom Merry caught sight of him, and made an excited sign to him to "chuck it."

But the spirit of mischief was upon Micky, and he declined to chuck it. He winked one eye at Tom Merry, and that was all.

With deft fingers, he fastened the end of Mr. Linton's gown to the tail of Crooke's jacket with the safety-pin, which was quite strong enough to stand a very hard pull. Indeed, it was more likely that the gown or the jacket would give way, than that the safety-pin would when a strain was put upon the connection.

Then Mulvaney minor sat with a good-as-gold expression upon his cheery face, and waited for results.

The results were not long in coming.

Mr. Linton, having succeeded in driving some dim conception of his meaning into Skimpole's mighty brain, turned from his task to move out before the class.

Crooke was at the end of a form. The Shell master passed down the aisle between the forms to get back before the class; but he did not pass very far.

He took two paces, and his gown tautened out behind him, and at the third pace he was brought up with a sharp jerk.

The jerk on Crooke's jacket, too, pulled it round him, and up over his arm. Mr. Linton swung round, and saw his gown, apparently, in Crooke's grasp.

He simply jumped.

His idea was, of course, that Crooke had caught hold of his gown, and was jerking at it by way of a joke. Such a joke upon a Form-master, in the sacred precincts of the Form-room, was unheard-of, incredible, unparalleled. Mr. Linton could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses.

"Crooke!" he thundered.

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Crooke.

He was surprised and alarmed to find himself entangled in the Form-master's gown. He did not know in the least what caused it, and as he struggled to release his arm from the folds of the gown, he seemed to Mr. Linton to be jerking at it.

"Crooke, let go my gown at once! How dare you?"

"I—I'm not holding it."

"This instant, sir!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"I—I—"

The master of the Shell pulled angrily at his gown. The result was to jerk up the tail of Crooke's jacket right over his head. There was a yell of laughter from the Shell. They could not help it at the ridiculous sight.

"Crooke, you insolent young rascal! How dare you!" shrieked Mr. Linton. "I—I—"

He grasped Crooke by the shoulders, and swung him out of his seat, and spun him into the room before the Form.

Crooke made a jump to get away, and there was a loud rending sound, as a large patch was torn from Mr. Linton's gown.

The Shell fellows gasped.

"Crooke, you—you must be insane! You shall be flogged for this, boy! I will take you in to the Head at once!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"I—I didn't do it!" howled Crooke. "You got fastened to me somehow, sir!"

"What! Nonsense!"

"Look here, sir, it's hanging on to my jacket."

The torn fragment of Mr. Linton's gown was trailing behind Crooke. Mr. Linton grasped him by the shoulder and swung him round. Then he saw the safety-pin, and understood.

"Did you fasten that pin there, Crooke?" he demanded.

"Pin, sir! No, sir! I didn't know. It was a trick. I didn't—wasn't—"

"No; it is scarcely likely that you would fasten it to your own jacket. It was someone else—someone sitting near you." Mr. Linton turned round to the class with a brow like thunder. "The boy who fastened my gown to Crooke's jacket will kindly rise to his feet!"

There was a murmur from the Shell. But no one rose to his feet. Micky Mulvaney did not quite like Mr. Linton's looks, and he remained where he was.

CHAPTER 13.

Not Licked!

MR. LINTON was almost scarlet with rage.

Such a "jape" played upon him in his own Form-room roused all his ire. It really seemed as if the end of the universe must be coming, when such things happened to a Form-master in a Form-room.

"Do you hear me?" he thundered. "Some boy fastened Crooke's jacket to my gown by means of a safety-pin! I order that boy to come forward."

Silence!

"It was some boy sitting near to Crooke undoubtedly," said Mr. Linton. "I shall give the boy in question one minute to admit it."

All eyes turned to the Form-room clock.

The seconds ticked away in the midst of a painful silence. Half a dozen fellows had seen Micky Mulvaney's action, but they had no intention of giving him away. George Gore, among others, had seen him, and he was strongly tempted to rise and denounce the practical joker. But he knew what the Shell would think of him if he did, and he refrained.

Micky Mulvaney kept a perfectly innocent face. If he was bowled out, he was prepared to face the music; but he did not believe in looking for trouble.

The minute passed.

"Very well," said Mr. Linton in a concentrated voice, "I am perfectly aware that a number of you—probably all of you—are aware who committed this disrespectful and outrageous action. Unless the boy instantly comes forward, I shall punish the whole Form!"

"Oh!" murmured the Shell fellows.

"All half-holidays this week and next will be taken away," said Mr. Linton, "and every member of the Form will write five hundred lines!"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Micky Mulvaney looked dismayed.

He had not expected a drastic line like that to be taken by the master of the Shell; though, as a matter of fact, he had not thought of the consequences at all when he japed the Form-master. He had acted without thinking—a little way he had.

Tom Merry gave him an expressive glance. It was time for him to own up. Whatever happened, he had no right to evade punishment at the cost of bringing a fortnight's gating and a host of lines upon his Form-fellows.

Mulvaney minor understood the glance, but he did not need the hint. He had already made up his mind while Mr. Linton was speaking.

Mr. Linton paused impressively, and looked over the class. Mulvaney minor rose to his feet meekly. The Form-master's eyes rested inquiringly upon him. He did not think for a moment that a new boy, on his first morning in the Shell Form-room, would have the astounding audacity and impudence to play such a trick on his Form-master. His

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natural idea was that Micky was going to give him information, and, much as he desired to know the culprit, his lip curled with contempt of the sneak. Micky Mulvaney understood his expression, and his blue eyes glimmered with fun for a moment.

"If you please, sir—"

"Mulvaney, do you know who played that trick?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Who was it?"

Mulvaney minor hesitated.

"Ought I to tell you, sir?" he asked dubiously.

"What! I order you to tell me!"

"Wouldn't it be sneaking, sir?" asked Micky innocently.

Mr. Linton frowned. Some of the Shell fellows chuckled softly, but the frowning glance of the Form-master soon made the chuckles die away.

"Don't bandy words with me, Mulvaney minor!" said the Form-master harshly. "I order you to give me the name."

"I—I—I'm afraid, sir."

"What! What are you afraid of?"

"I—I should be licked if—I gave the fellow away, sir!" stammered Micky.

"Nonsense! I will protect you!"

Mulvaney minor brightened up.

"Sure, then, I'll tell you with pleasure, sir, if you promise me that I sha'n't be licked for telling you, sir, intirely."

"You have my assurance upon that point, Mulvaney," said Mr. Linton majestically.

"Very good, sir."

"Now tell me who it was."

"I, sir."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"It was I, sir!" said Mulvaney minor meekly.

Mr. Linton almost staggered. There was a breathless howl of laughter from all the Shell. They could not keep it back. The cool, astounding impudence of Mulvaney minor simply took their breath away. Mr. Linton gazed at him like a man in a dream.

"It was—you, Mulvaney!" he panted at last.

"Yes, sir."

"You fastened my gown to Crooke's jacket?"

"Yes, please, sir."

"And what did you do it for?"

"To see what would happen, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Linton. "Well, Mulvaney, you will now see what will happen." He picked up his cane. "Come out here!"

Mulvaney minor came out.

"Hold out your hand!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the master of the Shell.

"But, sir, you promised—"

"What!" Mr. Linton lowered the cane involuntarily.

"You promised I shouldn't be licked if I gave you the name of the fellow, sir," said Micky Mulvaney meekly.

Mr. Linton stuttered with rage.

"That—that—that was because I supposed that it was another boy—"

"I couldn't help what you supposed, sir, could I?" murmured Micky, still meekly. "I only know what you said, sir. I relied on your word when I owned up."

Mr. Linton breathed very hard. The Shell were breathless. They wondered what the Form-master would do. They fully expected him to take the new junior by the shoulders and thrash him till his arm ached. It would perhaps have been no more than Mulvaney minor deserved for his impudence. But Mr. Linton did not. He controlled his temper with difficulty, and laid the cane on the desk.

"That was a trick, Mulvaney," he said. "However, I gave you my promise, and I shall keep it. I shall not cane you as you deserve."

"Thank you, sir!"

"But I shall give you an imposition of a thousand lines, and you will be gated on Saturday afternoon!" said the master of the Shell grimly.

"Oh, howly Moses!" ejaculated Mulvaney minor, in dismay. "I—I—I'd rather have the licking, if you don't mind, sir!"

"But I do mind!" said Mr. Linton coldly. "Go back to your place, Mulvaney! And if you are guilty of any further impertinence you will be cased soundly!"

And Mulvaney minor went back to his place, and he was as good as gold the rest of that morning. Mr. Linton's keen eyes were upon him, and Mulvaney minor had to be very wary. But he gave the Form-master no excuse for using the cane, and escaped unscathed from the Form-room when morning lessons were over.

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CHAPTER 14.

Halves!

BLAKE of the Fourth tapped Mulvaney minor on the arm in the Form-room passage.

"Message for you," he said.

"Get it off your chest, darling!" said Micky.

"Your major wants you."

Micky Mulvaney made a grimace.

"What for?" he asked.

"Well, I fancy it's a shopping!" grinned Blake. "I heard him telling Darrel that you had dropped him over this morning, and that he was going to teach you to behave yourself. You're to wait for him in his study."

Micky Mulvaney groaned dismally.

"Sure, a thousand lines and a gating from Linton are enough!" he said. "Paddy might go easy on a chap, I think. I suppose I'd better go."

"I suppose you had," said Blake. "Your major's a prefect, and prefects generally want to be obeyed by fags."

Mulvaney minor walked away to the Sixth Form passage, and entered his major's study. The study was empty. Mulvaney major was not there. Perhaps he wanted the waiting for the punishment to impress upon Micky's mind the fact that the way of the transgressor was hard. If so, he was mistaken in his hope, for Micky was not at all depressed as he waited for the prefect to come in.

He amused himself by looking round the study, and he turned things out and about with cheery unconcern. In Mulvaney major's desk he came upon a whole sheaf of impot. paper, written out, and he gazed at it in surprise.

"Lines, by Jove!" he said. "How many, I wonder?"

He looked the sheaf over. It was in a sprawling junior schoolboy hand, and the impot. was a very large one. There were five hundred lines in all from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Micky Mulvaney's eyes glistened.

"Five hundred, by Jove! I—"

"You young rascal!"

Mulvaney major entered the study. Micky looked up, not in the least abashed by being discovered at the prefect's desk.

"Hallo!" he said coolly.

"What are you doing at my desk?"

"Looking into it," said the junior calmly. "I suppose I can amuse myself by looking round my brother's quarters if I like?"

"Shut that desk at once!"

Bang! The lid of the desk descended with a crash like a gunshot, and Mulvaney major jumped.

"There you are!" said Micky.

"You noisy young savage—"

"Faith, some people are niver satisfied. I say, Paddy—"

"Don't call me Paddy!"

"I mean Pattikins. I say, can I have those lines?"

"What lines?"

"You've got a whole heap of lines there—"

"Oh, that's Levison's imposition!" said Mulvaney. "I haven't looked at it yet. No, you can't have it. What do you want it for?"

"What do you want me for?" asked Micky, without replying to the question.

Mulvaney major frowned.

"I've been thinking it over, and I've decided to lick you. It's the only thing to be done, and it will be for your good in the long run. If you start here with a jolly good hiding, it may keep you out of lots of trouble. And I can't have any favouritism. Any other kid who tripped a prefect up in the passage would be licked, and you can't expect me to make an exception for you."

Mulvaney minor eyed him warily.

"Now, look here, Pattikins—"

"Shut up!" roared the prefect, snatching up a cane.

"Now hold out your paw!"

"Which paw?"

"Which ever you like! You're going to catch it with both!"

"I say, this isn't playing the game, Paddy. If I were your major—"

"Hold out your hand!"

"Besides, I'll let you trip me up in the passage, if you like, and call it square!" Micky offered. "That's cricket."

"Will you hold out your hand, or will you have the cane round your shoulders?" asked Mulvaney major, in a concentrated voice.

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Micky sighed, and held out his hand.
"Go easy, Pattikins, for the sake of old times," he pleaded.

Swish! Mulvaney major did not go easy—far from it. He brought down the cane with a terrific swipe. Micky jerked his hand away just in time, and the cane swept down, missing the prefect's own leg by about a quarter of an inch. Mulvaney major almost lost his balance as his arm swept down and met with no resistance, and he stumbled a pace forward. Micky promptly brought both his hands down on top of his major's head, before the prefect could recover himself, and shoved with all his strength. and Mulvaney major fell on his knees.

"Why, you—you—what—I—" he stuttered.

Before he could rise, Micky had reached the door.

He paused one instant, to jerk the key out of the lock, and stick it in the outside of the keyhole, and then he was outside, slamming the door behind him.

Mulvaney major charged furiously across the study, and grabbed the handle of the door, and dragged at it.

Click! The key turned as he grasped the handle. The door rattled, but it did not open. Mulvaney major dragged at it in vain. He was locked in his study; and he heard a low chuckle in the passage outside.

"You young villain! Unlock that door!" he shouted, hammering on the panels with both fists.

"Paddy, old man—"

"Open the door."

"Not unless you make it pax."

"Wha-a-at! Pax with a fag! I'll—I'll—I'll smash you!" yelled Mulvaney major. "I'll write to the pater to take you away! I'll report you to the Head! I'll pulverise you if you don't open the door!"

"Make it pax!"

"You—you—you— Help!" roared Mulvaney major. "Kildare—Darrel—Rushden—Langton—somebody—come and—"

"I've taken the key out of the lock," said Mulvaney minor calmly. "If anybody comes along, I'm going to throw it out of the passage window into the ivy. You'll be a giddy prisoner for the rest of the day, Paddy."

Mulvaney major gasped with rage.

"Micky! Open this door! I—"

"Make it pax, then."

There was a pause. Mulvaney major did not want to be locked up in his study all the afternoon; and he knew how he would be chipped if it came out that he had been made a prisoner in his study by a fag. To descend from the window, or to break the lock, would attract rather too much attention for a dignified prefect of the Sixth Form. He felt himself driven to making terms with his minor.

"I—I—I'll let you off," he stuttered. "Open the door!" "Not just yet; prisoners have to ransom themselves," said Micky calmly.

"What! If you think I'm going to give you any tin—"

"I don't want any tin."

"What do you want then, you rascal?"

"Those lines in your desk. They're no good to you, and they'll do nicely for me."

"Open the door!"

"Can I have the lines?"

"Ye-es!"

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes!" gasped Mulvaney major.

Micky Mulvaney opened the door, and smiled sweetly at his brother. Mulvaney major's hands were simply itching to be upon him; but he was a fellow of his word. Micky opened the desk, and took out the sheaf of impot. paper.

"So long, Paddy," he said.

"Get out!" gasped his brother.

"Would you like me to come to tea with you this afternoon?"

"No!" roared Mulvaney major. "I give you one second to get out!"

"Ta-ta, then. Keep your wool on!"

And Mulvaney minor skipped into the passage, with the impot. paper under his arm.

Mulvaney major slammed the door after him, and then fanned his fevered brow.

His anticipation of what would follow his minor's arrival at St. Jim's had been dark. But the reality seemed to be yet worse than the anticipations. Mulvaney major felt that a whole term with his minor would turn his hair grey. And in the simplicity of his heart he had asked Tom Merry to keep an eye on his minor, and see that he was not slaughtered by the Shell fellows. Just now he felt that he would be willing to divide his term's pocket-money among the Shell fellows if they would only slaughter his minor.

Mulvaney minor walked away cheerily to his study, where he deposited the lines in his desk, and safely locked them up.

That evening he started to work on the lines Mr. Linton

had given him; and he made his writing as like as he could to that upon the impot. paper he had obtained from his major.

As he was a new boy, Mr. Linton's knowledge of his handwriting was of the slightest; and as Levison, who had written that impot., was in the Fourth, the Shell-master would not be likely to know his hand either.

The astute young rascal had escaped exactly one-half of his long imposition, by borrowing that imposition.

The next morning he presented himself to Mr. Linton, after lessons, with his thousand lines.

Mr. Linton gazed at the sheaf of paper in surprise. He had not expected that impot. to be written out quite so quickly; indeed, he had expected that it would keep Mulvaney minor busy all Saturday afternoon.

"My imposition, sir," said Mulvaney minor meekly.

"You have lost no time with it," said Mr. Linton, somewhat graciously. "Put it on the table. You may go."

And Mulvaney minor went. He met Levison in the passage; and Levison noticed that he was grinning gleefully. Mulvaney gave him an affable nod.

"Much obliged to you, Levison," he said.

"Eh!" said Levison. "What are you obliged about, you ass?"

"For whatever you did to get an impot. of five hundred lines from my major," replied Mulvaney minor, with a chuckle; and he walked on, leaving Levison, of the Fourth, utterly mystified.

CHAPTER 15.

Detained!

MULVANEY MINOR had soon dropped into the way of things at St. Jim's. His propensity for practical jokes was strong—but he had learned not to give it rein as far as Mr. Linton was concerned. The master of the Shell had no sense of humour at all, in that way. But the other Shell fellows had to bear the brunt of Micky Mulvaney's peculiar sense of humour, and he had more than one fight on his hands in consequence.

Kangaroo was a very good-tempered fellow, but he cut up rusty when he found his "bags" sewn up one morning. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was very equable as a rule, but when he discovered Dig's white rabbit in his hat-box, he had a very painful explanation with Mulvaney minor.

Gore, having the doubtful advantage of sharing his study with Mulvaney minor, had the chief share of his humorous attentions. Gore had really asked for it, by constituting himself the new junior's enemy from his first arrival in the school. George Gore soon wished that he had made friends with Micky Mulvaney instead of enemies.

Gore kept cigarettes in his study—and one evening when he was indulging in a quiet smoke, his cigarette went off like a squib, giving his nerves quite a startling shock.

Gore kept a pipe in his locker—and he breathed fury when he found it stopped up with sealing-wax.

Mulvaney major had anticipated that his minor would always be in hot water; and he was right.

But, upon the whole, the fellows liked Micky Mulvaney.

He was so frank and hearty and breezy and good-natured, that one could not help liking him.

He was always cheerful, too, which made him a pleasant companion. Even his detention on Saturday afternoon was not allowed to make him downhearted.

"Sorry you're detained," Tom Merry remarked to him, on Saturday morning. "Your major's refereeing for us in a match with the Grammarians this afternoon."

"Sure and if I was free I'd play for ye," said Micky.

Tom Merry laughed.

"The eleven's made up," he said; "and we don't generally play new kids, without a trial, in the regular fixtures, my son. You could come and watch."

"I'll ask my major to beg me off," said Micky. "A prefect is bound to have some influence with a Form-master, don't you think so?"

"You'd want somebody with influence with your major to get him to do it, I fancy," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I'll thry, anyway."

And Mulvaney minor did "thry." But his major was adamant. Not only did he refuse to beg Micky off from Mr. Linton, but he announced that he was glad that his minor was detained, and declared that he would have him detained for every other half-holiday in the term, if he could.

"You'll be out of mischief, anyway, for the afternoon," said Mulvaney major, with satisfaction. "Now clear out of my study."

"Oh, Paddy, alanna—"

"Get out!"

"Faith, and is that what you call brotherly, Pattikins?" asked Micky, more in sorrow than in anger.

Mulvaney major did not reply; but he reached for a

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cricket-stump, and Micky skipped out of the passage just in time.

There was evidently no escape from his afternoon's detention. And a lot of use it was having a major in the Sixth, as Mulvaney minor indignantly declared to a grinning group of juniors.

"Sure, and it's unbrotherly he is!" said Micky. "And such a nice quiet, well-behaved minor, too. It's ashamed of him I am, and I shall have to make him see that he can't be unbrotherly like this!"

"Your major's going great guns after the match," Jack Blake remarked. "There's going to be a feed in his study—he's got Kildare coming, and half a dozen of the Sixth—and it's going to be ripping. I've got to do the shopping for him. If you weren't a young ass, you might go to the feed, as he's your major."

"Sure, he didn't tell me about it, or I'd have been as good as gold," said Micky. "Whin are ye going to do the shopping?"

"After dinner. The feed's got to be ready for five o'clock."

And after dinner Jack Blake was busy fagging for Mulvaney major. The prefect had entrusted him with a sovereign, to be expended on good things for the little celebration in his study. Jack Blake was very skilful at shopping, and he obtained the very best value for the money, and quite a good pile of things were placed in Mulvaney major's study when he had finished.

After the football match with the Grammar School Blake had to go and get tea ready in Mulvaney major's study for the prefect and his guests.

Having finished his shopping and bestowed the proceeds in the prefect's study, Jack Blake changed for the match.

Tom Merry & Co. were on the footer-ground when the Grammarian juniors arrived. Mulvaney major, the referee, was with them, in Norfolk jacket and whistle complete.

At the window of the Shell-room, Mulvaney minor stood watching the distant playing-fields.

For once the cheerful face of Mulvaney minor was clouded. He would dearly have loved to join the crowd of juniors gathered round the junior football-ground, where Tom Merry's eleven were beginning a tough match with Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School.

But it was not to be.

He was detained until half-past four, and as the kick-off was at three, his detention would last as long as the football match.

As he had done his lines—or, at all events, Mr. Linton supposed that he had done them—he was not compelled to work during his detention; so he stationed himself at the Form-room window, to watch the match—as well as he could through the elms, and over the heads of the crowd of fellows surrounding the ground.

He could catch only glimpses of the play, but that was better than nothing, and he was soon excited with what he saw. Fellows passing down the Form-room passage were astonished to hear yells inside the Shell-room.

"Go it, Tom Merry! On the ball, Figgins! Run, you beggars—run! Look out! Don't let him get the ball! Oh, you fathead—you omadhaun—you spalpeen! Now, then, look out in goal! Look out—oh, well saved—well saved—hurrah!"

The first half ended with the score level, one to one. Micky watched the commencement of the second half, and then he quietly went to the door of the Form-room and looked into the passage. Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that, and saw that there was no man.

He quietly quitted the Form-room, and tiptoed down the passage.

On that fine, sunny half-holiday the School House was deserted; Mulvaney minor was probably the only fellow remaining within the walls.

He reached the Sixth-Form passage and entered his major's study. Mulvaney major was busy on Little Side, and he had forgotten the very existence of his minor. But Mulvaney minor had not forgotten his major, or his major's feed.

The bundles brought in by Mulvaney major's dutiful fag were piled in the cupboard. Micky collected them up quickly, stuffing the smaller packages into his pockets, and, taking the larger ones in his hands or under his arms. Then he quitted the study.

Two minutes later he was back in the Form-room, and the plunder was hidden in his locker.

Micky Mulvaney indulged in a prolonged chuckle.

"Sure, perhaps Paddy will wish that he had asked Mr. Linton to let me off!" he murmured.

And he returned to his post at the window.

The football match was going strong. St. Jim's fellows

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and Grammarians were fighting hard for the odd goal that meant the victory.

Fortune favoured St. Jim's.

After a brilliant attack, Tom Merry sent the leather whizzing in, and it lodged in the net, and the crowd roared "Goal!" And in the Shell Form-room Micky Mulvaney echoed the shout with all the force of his lungs.

"Goal! Goal! Hurrah!"

A few minutes later Mulvaney major blew the whistle. The game was over, and St. Jim's juniors had won by two goals to one. The players streamed off the field.

Mr. Linton glanced in at the door of the Form-room, and Micky Mulvaney turned away from the window.

"You may go now, Mulvaney!" said the master of the Shell.

"Thank you, sir!"

And Micky lost no time. He ran out into the quadrangle, jamming his cap on the back of his curly head as he went.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, meeting him as he came off, with a coat and muffler on. "Did you see the game? We've beaten them!"

"Faith, and I did! I want you fellows to come to a feed to celebrate the giddy victory!" said Mulvaney minor. "I'm standing it in the Form-room!"

"Good, egg!" said Tom Merry. "We'll bring the Grammar chaps—they're going to stay to tea, anyway—and we'll bring our grub along, too, and make a regular bean-feast of it!"

"Right-ho!"

And the rival footballers, when they had changed after the match, trooped into the Shell-room, to partake of the hospitality of Mulvaney minor.

CHAPTER 16.

Mulvaney Minor Stands Treat.

JACK BLAKE, after changing, had gone to Mulvaney major's study, to perform his duties as a fag there. He told his chums he would join them later in the Shell-room.

Blake made up the fire in the study, and laid the tablecloth, and then opened the cupboard to take out the good things he had left there. He had to open the jam, boil the eggs, cut the ham, and the bread-and-butter, and make the toast. He stared blankly into the cupboard. He was prepared to perform all those various duties, but the materials were lacking. Not a single article remained of the pile he had placed in the cupboard before the match.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

Mulvaney major came into the study.

"Buck up, Blake!" he said. "The chaps will be here at five. And it's only a few minutes now."

"Have you taken the things away?" asked Blake.

"The things! What things?"

"The grub!"

"Of course I haven't," said the Sixth-Former testily.

"How could I take them away when I've been refereeing your blessed match?"

"But—but they're gone!"

"What!"

"Look here!"

Blake waved his hand towards the cupboard. Mulvaney major looked into it. The cupboard was in the same state as that of the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard—quite bare. Mulvaney frowned at the junior.

"Did you put the things there?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—the whole quid's worth!"

"Then somebody has taken them away while we've been on the ground. Some of the New House kids perhaps—"

"Figgins & Co. were in our team," said Blake, shaking his head, "and the New House kids wouldn't raid a prefect's study, anyway!"

"Then who—what—"

"Blessed if I know!"

Mulvaney major gave a sudden yell.

"My minor!"

"Your minor!" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes!" roared Mulvaney. "The young rascal has been in the House all the time! It's just one of his tricks! Oh, I'll—I'll smash him! I'll— What are you laughing at, you silly young ass?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I—I didn't mean to laugh! I— Ha, ha, ha!"

Mulvaney ran at him and lifted his boot. Blake dodged out of the study just in time, and fled, still laughing.

Mulvaney major clenched his hands.

"It must have been Micky! My hat, I'll squash him—I'll—"

"Hallo!" said Kildare cheerily, coming along the passage. "Tea ready—what?"



A PROUD MOMENT FOR BILLY BUNTER!

(An incident from "Bunter's Black Chum!" the grand long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, which is contained in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

"Nunno! The grub's been raided!"

"What!"

"My minor—at least, I think it was my minor——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kildare.

"There's nothing to cackle at!" yelled the incensed Mulvaney. "I'm going after him—I'm going to scalp him—laughter him——"

"Ha, ha, ha! You'd better come to tea in my study—I don't suppose you'll get the grub back, and you can lick your minor afterwards——"

But Mulvaney major did not stop to listen. He rushed down the passage. Darrel of the Sixth met him on the stairs.

"Tea ready?" he asked.

"Not yet! Seen my minor?"

"Your minor! No—what——"

Mulvaney dashed past him, leaving Darrel of the Sixth staring. He dashed up the stairs to the Shell passage, and burst into his minor's study. A junior was sitting at the table, bending over a book, and Mulvaney major grabbed him by the shoulder and yanked him to his feet.

"Now, you young scoundrel, where——"

"Dear me!" ejaculated Skimpole—it was Skimpole. "What is the matter, my dear Mulvaney? Is anything wrong?"

Mulvaney hurled him away. Skimpole staggered, and fell violently into the armchair. He grabbed at his spectacles, and set them straight upon his nose, and blinked at the enraged prefect in amazement.

"My dear Muldoon——"

"Where's my minor?" roared the senior.

"Your—your minor! I think he is standing a feed somewhere!"

"A—a—a feed!" stuttered Mulvaney, with an instant inward conviction that he would never see the raided supplies again.

"Yes; I was told so. I was unable to go, as I am engaged in studying Professor Balmcrumpet on the subject of Determinism——"

"Where is he?"

"Professor Balmcrumpet? I really do not know. Probably in London——"

"Idiot! Where is my minor?"

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"RALLYING ROUND FIGGINS!"

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"Oh, your minor! I think he is in the Form-room. But, my dear Muldoon—"

The prefect dashed out of the study as hurriedly as he had dashed into it. Skimpole blinked after him, greatly surprised.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "He seems quite excited about something."

But Skimpole had no time to bother about trifles like that. In a few moments he was deep again in the abstruse lucubrations of the famous Professor Balmcrumpet.

Mulvaney major raced downstairs, and dashed along the Form-room passage. He reached the door of the Shell Form-room, and the sound of merry voices saluted his ears.

"Pass the eggs, Lowther!"

"Done to a turn, by George! You're a dab hand at frying bacon, young Mulvaney! Don't leave the frying-pan about the Form-room, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, this jam is spiffing!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway pass the jam, deah boy!"

Mulvaney did not need telling further what was becoming of the supplies intended for the delectation of a select party of Sixth-Formers in his study. He tore at the handle of the Form-room door.

But the door did not open.

Micky Mulvaney had guessed that his major would probably "tumble" to what had become of his feed, and he had carefully locked the door after his guests were all within the Form-room.

Mulvaney major hammered on the door.

"You kids, open this door! Do you hear?"

"Hallo! Is that you, Paddy?"

"Open the door, you young villain!"

"Faith, and what do you want?"

"I—I—I want to slaughter you!" stuttered Mulvaney major. "I'm going to break every bone in your body! Let me in!"

"Not good enough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Merry, Blake, D'Arcy, Noble! Open this door at once!"

"Sure, and they can't! I've got the key in me pocket!" said Mulvaney minor cheerfully. "Thry coming down the chimney, Paddy darling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Sure, I'll leave you a sardine, Paddy, and a lump of sugar!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mulvaney major kicked the door again, and gave a gasp of pain. The door was harder than his toe. He limped away furiously down the passage. He found Kildare and Darrel and Rushden and Langton in his study when he returned there. They were ready for tea, but the tea was going on in the Form-room of the Shell—with other guests!

"Better come and have tea in my study," said Kildare, laughing.

And Mulvaney major admitted that he had better.

Meanwhile, the feed was proceeding in the Shell-room without interruption, and with great enjoyment. Tom Merry & Co. had brought in supplies, but the major portion of the feed was that supplied—unwittingly—by Mulvaney of the Sixth.

St. Jim's fellows and Grammarians enjoyed themselves exceedingly. Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School, proposed the health of the founder of the feast, and Mulvaney minor chimed in:

"Sure, that's my major!"

And, with cheers and laughter, the health of Mulvaney major was drunk.

And when the feed was over, Tom Merry & Co. escorted their departing guests as far as the school gates. All the fellows agreed that Mulvaney minor was one of the best, and also that they wouldn't care to be in his shoes when he met his major again.

It was a painful meeting when it came off, and for the whole of the next day Micky Mulvaney was observed to prefer standing up to sitting down. And Mulvaney major's fag noticed a broken cane in the prefect's study. But, as Micky said, it was all in the day's work; and as soon as the effect of that tremendous licking had worn off, there was no cheerier fellow in St. Jim's than Mulvaney minor.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of TOM MERRY & CO. next week, entitled "RALLYING ROUND FIGGINS!" by Martin Clifford. Order your copy in advance, and don't forget to order "CHUCKLES!" at the same time.)

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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 who is employed as a clerk in London by a German named Muller, goes to Berlin on a holiday, and there meets with an adventure which alters the course of his whole life. Chance throws him into the company of Max Elton, a famous British airman and inventor, who has established himself on the German coast in order to keep an eye on the secret preparations for war with Britain, which Germany is carrying on on a huge scale. Osborne joins Elton in his work, and learns that the airman is in danger of his life from German Secret Service agents, of whom Jerry's own employer, Muller, is the chief. After an exciting adventure, Elton and Jerry are motoring to London, when they are run into by a car driven by Muller. Elton is left for dead by the roadside. His last words enjoin Jerry to take some important papers to Sir Edmund Black, the British Foreign Secretary. The lad therefore trains to London, jumps into a taxi, giving the driver the direction, "Downing Street." As the taxi leaves the terminus a burly man jumps on to the footboard, enters the cab, and, taking Jerry by surprise, easily overpowers him with the aid of a chloroform pad. It is Hendricks, one of Muller's spies, who has secured his prisoner so easily. Jerry is imprisoned in his captor's house, where he endeavours to enlist the sympathy of Hendricks' English servant, a man named Harris. He only partially succeeds, but manages to break out of his room one night. In the passage he comes face to face with Hendricks, who is armed with a revolver. At the critical moment, Harris switches off the electric light, and Hendricks immediately fires in Jerry's direction.

(Now go on with the story.)

An Astounding Surprise!

Three times the automatic-pistol flashed in succession, and the bullets buried themselves in the wall. Hendricks fired again, and this time the bullet struck the ceiling. Caught in a Rugger football tackle around the knees, he was tumbled heavily to the ground. The flash of his weapon had revealed his position while not showing Jerry's, and the latter had taken swift advantage of the fact.

And then sounded the hard slamming of a door.

The brief moment of illumination had showed Jerry the open door of a bed-room—probably that from which Hendricks had been aroused—and he had bolted inside. At once his fingers groped for and found the key. He turned it. At the least, he had won a brief respite.

Beside himself with rage, Hendricks rushed to the door and began to batter upon it. Then he recollected himself, and switched on the light, calling to Harris. But the chauffeur had vanished. Swearing horribly, the German bounded up the stairs, snatched at the bar Jerry had dropped, and was down again and hammering mightily upon the panels.

The thunder of his blows overcame all else. It smothered the sound made by a furiously-driven motor-car dashing up outside the house, the chugging of its engine as it came to a halt, and a man sprang out, to run up the steps to the front door, the repeated rat-tat-tatting that followed. Whoever was the arrival, he was in an extreme hurry.

Bang, bang, bang! the knocker went to work, but Hendricks heard it not. Harris, wherever he had hidden himself, did hear, however, and hurried to the door. The man outside entered so hastily as almost to knock him down.

"Where's Hendricks? What means the noise inside?" demanded the man of the scared servant.

"Hendricks! Upstairs!" repeated Harris.

"Yes. What—Here, out of the way!" And the man ran across the hall, and flew up the stairs as though a legion of pursuers was at his heels. "Don't fasten the door!" he called out as he ran.

At the sight of Hendricks smashing at the splintered panels of the door, the man came to a standstill.

"Are you mad? Stop that noise—stop that noise at once, you fool, I say!" he cried excitedly. "Do you want everybody—Hendricks, what do you do?" And before a reply could be given he went on. "Quick! I must get away—away at once—d'you hear? Another pistol—ammunition—money. I must have them—now; the money most of all! I have lost all!"

"Why, Krug, was ist?" cried Hendricks, his bloodshot eyes filled with surprise. "What mean you—?"

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"That I must get away at once. They are hard upon me. What is that?" he broke off suddenly, in fresh alarm.

There was a sound as of smashing glass quite near. Through the broken door the voice of the second man had penetrated, reaching the ears of Jerry. Muller had returned—the Chief, whose arrival had been expected. The man's agitation was evident, although Jerry could not hear all he said.

Shut in the room, Jerry had turned on the light, and at once set to work to strengthen his defence. The bed he had run against the door, and on to it had heaved the heaviest articles of furniture he could shift quickly. No one should get in easily. Afterwards—well, that was to be seen. He, too, had not heard the arrival of the motor-car, but the sound of the engine reached him plainly as soon as Hendricks' hammering ceased. Dashing to the window, he threw up the blind and smashed the glass with the nearest thing handy. Hendricks' answer he heard easily, and Muller's following words of surprise.

"Dot schelm of an Engländer at der Hook," Hendricks replied to his Chief. "I got him, brought him here; I shut him up. But to-night he get loose. If he go away our lives vas not wort—"

Muller broke in impatiently, raising his voice.

"Osborne! But the boy is dead. I know it. But whoever he is, we cannot wait. We—I must get away. All is discovered. That cursed Elton—Quick, man; don't stand staring there. They are after us now. Money; get it!"

Jerry, quiet as a mouse, listened greedily, though he could not understand all Muller said. But one thing was clear; Muller—the whole gang of spies—was in imminent danger. They meant leaving, and this meant his own escape. He could have shouted with joy. His intention to attempt escape by the window died.

But he ran to the window none the less, for through the broken glass came the sound of a second car, heavy and powerful, nearing the house. He pushed out his head, heedless of the violent running to and fro within. A long car ran up, two men within her. But it was not she he had heard, for she was soundless. It was a car following that made the noise, and the lights revealed that she was packed with men. The chauffeur of Muller's car became awake to their approach, leaped from his seat, and started to run.

"Stop there, in the King's name, or I fire!" shouted a

crisp, commanding voice from the second car, and the runner came to an abrupt halt.

It was amazing, thought Jerry, but clear enough that Muller was in trouble. What had the man done that the officers of the law should have got on his track? Well, he must wait. But something still more amazing was happening. Events were moving so swiftly, it was difficult to keep check on all and understand their meaning.

From the first car Jerry saw a small man descend nimbly—not the driver—and Jerry heard him say distinctly, in a clipped voice:

"The house, sir. Got 'em, I think!"

There was no mistaking the voice of Neb, Max Elton's man.

The little man stood aside to allow the driver to get out and pass him at a run up the steps, and at the sight of the slim, wiry figure Jerry had a shock. He must be mad; excitement must have turned his brain. For that figure—the face was not to be seen—belonged to Max Elton, Max whom he had last seen lying, white and still, in the surgery of the Stalham doctor's house.

"Why, the door's open!" called out the man.

It was Elton's voice. Jerry reeled back from the window.

And then he heard a shot.

Elton Explains.

Sometimes good news is just as hard to realise as bad. Jerry made no effort to realise his; he had heard Elton's voice, and that was good enough for him. The next thing was to get near the man himself. With eagerness he set himself to pulling down the defence he had erected. As he drew back what was left of the door a man came racing to the top of the stairs. Jerry stepped out. Their eyes met.

It was Elton all right.

Jerry shouted his name, sprang forward, and gripped his hand. He had forgotten his wounds, and the return grip he received made him wince.

"Jerry, this is worth half a lifetime to me," Elton said. Just that; nothing more. But it is not by words alone that pleasure and joy find expression.

"So it is to me!" Jerry said simply.

But the occasion was not one to be wasted in talking about themselves, and when Elton asked him if he knew who was in the house, he replied in a business-like way:

"Two were here so far as I know—Hendricks and a man called Harris; he's English. But Muller came a few minutes ago—"

"And now he can't be found."

He turned to the stairs and called over the banisters.

"The man we were after was here, inspector; search out well for him. If he gets away we've all our work to do over again. And not so lucky next time probably!"

"If he's here, sir, we won't miss him!" came back a cheerful reply.

"And have you got Hendricks?" cried Jerry eagerly.

"The sufen-faced chap who looks like a pugilist? Yea. He met us in the hall. Got him without any trouble," replied Elton.

It was like the man to put it so easily. He had been the first to meet Hendricks when the latter, pistol in hand, came running down the stairs, intent upon forcing or shooting a way of escape. Levelling his weapon, the German had shot point-blank at Elton, who had ducked, and then, calmly stepping inside his arm, knocked him down and out with a scientific shot to "the point" that would have been creditable in a professional boxer.

"The chauffeur's not much account," said Jerry. "He's English; I almost feel sorry for the poor beggar."

"We landed him. And now what have you been doing with yourself, Jerry? Look a bit the worse for wear. And why has this door been smashed into a good imitation of firewood?"

"That's Hendricks' work; I was inside."

"Has every appearance you've been spending quite an exciting time!" And Elton laughed.

"More exciting than pleasant. I was beginning to wonder if I'd get away alive. It was your coming settled it." And Jerry also laughed. "But you; how did you—why, I thought—"

"Had kicked the bucket. No wonder. Wait a bit, old man, until we've had a wash and a brush up and some grub—haven't had a bite for the past eighteen hours—too busy. Then we'll sling yarns to one another. I want to hear about you!"

But the leisure time of which Elton spoke was not yet. The two prisoners—Hendricks' language when he caught sight of Jerry was terrible; Elton said he felt almost sorry he was so well acquainted with the German language—were handed over to the policemen who had accompanied Elton and carried off to a safe lodging for the night; and

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then began a close and systematic ransacking of the premises.

It was a lengthy business, but the reward was great. They collected evidence sufficient to make evident the workings of the largest and most villainous gang of German Secret Service agents of which the authorities had ever had knowledge. When the searchers had finished, the police-inspector's only regret was that Muller had contrived to escape, and so many of the gang had been absent from the house when the raid took place.

Muller's escape was a sore disappointment. By some means or other the arch spy must have succeeded in getting away from the back of the house. Perhaps he had friends in the locality with whom he found a secure hiding-place. The raid had been too hurried to admit of the assembly of a large force of police and the drawing of a cordon about the place.

"I think we shall get him all right, sir, before long," the police-inspector told Elton reassuringly, and Elton laughed. "You're more hopeful than I am, Ralph!" he said. "A fellow who has Muller's cunning is not to be taken easily. We've barely scotched him."

Then Elton and Jerry went down to the silent-running motor-car, and Neb—it wasn't until later that Jerry learned how important a part that horsey individual had played in the business—as calmly as though the raiding of a house and the rescuing of one of his master's friends from probable death, were the most natural thing in the world, respectfully said that he was glad to see Mr. Osborne again, and where would his master like to go now.

"Sir Edmund Black's house!" Elton replied. "Jerry, it's time that our information was given in to the right man. After what you've gone through—a question and answer had made known to Elton how Jerry had kept safe the precious secret he shared—" old man, the sooner we tell what we know the better."

So to the house of the Foreign Secretary they went, woke up Sir Edmund, and, to a man who was as wide awake and keen of brain as though it were four hours after midday instead of four hours after midnight, Elton told of his discoveries as to the great secret preparations Germany was making under the mask of the Zuyder Zee drainage scheme that she had forced her neighbour, Holland, into undertaking.

"A fleet of transports capable of carrying an army of two hundred thousand men, aeroplane and dirigible balloon accommodation, stores of all kinds, artillery, and the means of transport, the accumulation of huge commissariat stores," said Sir Edmund, not a muscle of his hairless, lined face moving as he checked off the items on his fingers. "Mr. Elton, and you, Mr. Osborne, appear to have stumbled upon a matter of some importance to this country."

"Well, sir, I wouldn't exactly say we stumbled upon these finds," smiled Elton. "We went out to see what we could see, and this is what we found."

"You were more fortunate than Mr. Swinford," observed Sir Edmund gravely.

Jerry remembered hearing of Mr. Swinford's case. An enthusiastic airman, he had been flying across the Zuyder Zee—that was some five months back—and his monoplane had met with an accident. Such was the first report. Then it had got about that Mr. Swinford had really been shot. The German Government had been approached, a complaint made, and ultimately it had been admitted that a drunken Prussian private had shot at and killed the Englishman. Germany had apologised very profusely, paid the sum of five thousand pounds to Mr. Swinford's widow, and condemned the venturesome private to ten years' imprisonment.

It had been quite an insignificant price to pay for preventing Mr. Swinford from making known the extraordinary sights he had quite innocently seen; for he was merely an amateur who made aviation his hobby. The English people had made a great fuss at the time, but resentment died down when the Government accepted the German explanation and Germany made such handsome reparation.

"Well, Mr. Elton—and, of course, I include you, Mr. Osborne," the Minister said—"England is greatly in your debt, and at some future time I— You understand perfectly well that no public use can be made yet, anyway, of this vitally important information with which you have furnished me. But it shall not be forgotten. My Cabinet must know of it, even if its reply for diplomatic reasons must be a private one. I thank you both, and later you will give me the pleasure of calling upon me again, I hope!"

They shook hands, and, driving down to St. James's, Elton insisted that Jerry should stay with him for the night at one of the clubs of which he was a member.

"We'll have a bath and grub, and then we'll talk," he said cheerfully.

But Jerry was asleep before the club was reached. The bath was managed with difficulty, and he was too tired to

eat. Not until breakfast next morning was there the opportunity for the two friends to talk, and for Jerry to learn by what extraordinary miracle his friend had contrived to come to life again.

"It's really no miracle at all," declared Elton, when Jerry, hard at work on kidneys and bacon, mentioned the word. "I was just insensible—that's all, and after a bit I came round."

"But Dr. Williton was positive you were dead—said you couldn't have survived the shock and the fall!" cried Jerry indignantly.

"But you survived yours, old man, and mine was no worse. And Dr. Williton is really a very young man. His experience doesn't extend very far. As a matter of fact, I did lie unconscious for just on thirty-six hours where you left me. Then I woke up feeling right as rain—all but this cut on the forehead, a pleasing little memento I'll carry as long as I'm alive!"

"Dr. Williton's a—a— No, he's worse than a fool!" declared Jerry; there was some excuse for the indignation he felt.

"Admittedly he's not brilliant," agreed Elton; "but don't get too angry with the poor chap. He did us one good turn."

"What's that?"

"Was the means of sending you to London," Elton replied. "And, Jerry, I haven't said so before, but it was jolly good of you to remember what I said about that information getting to Black if anything happened to me. The wonder is that the motor accident didn't knock it and everything else clean out of your head."

"I didn't do much good," Jerry said regretfully.

"Ah, my lad, that's where you make a mistake! You did everything. You see, I'd left Neb in London, and had wired him I intended coming to town by the train you went by. My 'plane met with a bit of an accident, or I'd have flown from Roslea. Didn't tell you when we were chasing Muller; was too busy. Neb saw you at Liverpool Street all right. He also saw the taxi you went off in, and took the number. He's really intelligent, is Neb, and has eyes like a cat. Well, he went up to Roslea, found where I was, and when I came round, and as I didn't want him for a bit, asked permission to go to London. There, it seems, he nosed around a bit—made inquiries about the taxi, traced the owner. It was in Hendricks' name, you'll be interested in knowing. The fellow was posing as a diamond merchant."

"And where was the house I was taken to?" Jerry asked.

"Comberton Road, Highbury. Well, when I got a wire from Neb, saying he had located Mr. Osborne—I was in Fifehire at the time—"

"Here, hold on!" interrupted Jerry. "You left yourself lying in Stalham. How did you get to Scotland?"

"Oh, that's all right, Jerry! When I got the better of my knock on the head—wasted a day over it, and getting my 'plane put right—I started on Muller's track. Remember that list of names? Hardness, Fife, was the name after Roslea. I concluded that Muller would make for there. He had. I was too late, more is the pity. Forty-eight poor fellows—"

"I saw the paper last night. Hendricks showed it me."

"But I started to run Muller down—exposed my hand too soon, I'm afraid, and he got scared—started on the run home. That was where you were boxed up, Jerry. I didn't know. But along came Neb's wire, and I just put two and two together. And that's all, old man."

"A wonderful stroke of luck," muttered Jerry.

"No, Jerry." And Elton's eyes took the serious expression Jerry had seen before. "Don't you remember what I said before? Providence, old chap, that's what it is—not luck."

And Jerry willingly agreed his friend was right.

An Unexpected Visitor.

The police had a busy time following upon the raid upon 195, Comberton Road, Highbury, and they learned quite a lot—sufficient to give the daily newspapers a new interest to their readers. But there was a deal discovered that did not get into the newspapers. The Chief at Scotland Yard, following upon a long interview between Max Elton and Sir Edmund Black and other members of the Cabinet, saw to that.

No need to put Germany on the alert, or to let it be known that the English Government was acquainted with more than it was expected to know, argued Elton. And the Foreign Secretary agreed with him.

So no hint was dropped that there had been discovery of a matter likely to lead to international complications. The daily papers gave it out that the prisoners—Hendricks and Harris—were members of a body of militant Socialists, or something of the kind.

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And so the work in the Zuyder Zee went gaily on, and General Zophel, reading of the Hardness "accident," congratulated himself that Krug was going on very nicely, and, since Krug—Zophel knew nothing of the name of "Muller"—could not inform him to the contrary, not having caught sight of Max Elton when he ran into the house as Muller ran out of it, hugged the delusion that Elton had been put beyond the chance of doing further mischief.

Matters were shaping most pleasantly. Soon the time would arrive for Germany's effort to be made. France was bothered with her African rebellion, the tribesmen being most active, audacious, and well supplied with money and rifles. Where the last two came from, someone in the German Secret Service could have told, no doubt. In addition, the diplomatic negotiations between France and Austria were going badly. France would have quite enough on her hands without giving a hand to Great Britain when her troubles came.

And there was a deal of native unrest in India and South Africa. So much so that the Government had been obliged to take the serious steps of sending troops from England.

A few more home troubles of the kind that Herr Krug was manufacturing, by the assistance of the well-stocked laboratory the police discovered at Comberton Road; a few more successful attempts to remove men of the Elton type—General Ranger, England's finest military strategist; Rear-Admiral Sir Everard Berryman, "the fighting sailor," as he was called; and Sir David Went, Colonel Driver, and others of the Flying Corps—and the order of mobilisation would be given, "The Day" would arrive, and England as an empire—so Germany was assured—would cease to exist.

What Herr Zophel didn't know—and, consequently, the Kaiser and his Kriegminister were likewise ignorant—was that Max Elton was very much alive, that Herr Krug's plans were known, and himself was being hard put to it to escape being captured.

Elton and Jerry Osborne were working indefatigably, and the harder they worked, the more clearly did it become apparent that Muller had succeeded in organising throughout England a system, the ramifications of which seemed to cover the entire country, and with representatives among the most unlikely persons. Scotched, Muller was by no means rendered helpless.

From wherever he was hiding, he contrived to direct matters. At Woolwich, Southampton, and York, at Sheerness, Plymouth, and Enfield, accidents of a mysterious nature suddenly occurred, and this in spite of the strictest surveillance of buildings and inspection of workmen. Warships were damaged, docks blown up, explosions occurred at powder and arms factories, great warehouses of stores were wrecked. The man must have had agents everywhere. And when he gave them the word, they acted.

But the efforts of Elton and Osborne did to some extent mitigate and minimise these disasters—disasters which the newspapers vigorously asserted to be the handiwork of the creatures of Anarchy. Not a breath of public suspicion was raised against Germany.

It may be that in its heart the great British public did suspect, and more than suspect, the truth; but the Government had given a lead, and the nation, in the spoken and the written word, followed readily.

But there were long and anxious meetings between the naval and military authorities—meetings at which men spoke without reserve. There were discussions of national defence, of counter-moves to possible Teutonic aggression, plans and schemes soberly and stolidly debated. And sometimes at these meetings Max Elton would be present, and always was Jerry Osborne with him, though it was little that young man did besides listen. But he came to know, and be known by England's prominent men, and the advantage was one to bear good fruit later.

Important enough such meetings were, but to Jerry not wildly exciting. What he liked better was to be with Elton, in the latter's car or 'plane, speeding to this or that place to carry warning, conduct a search, or put into action some ingenious plan mutually thought out between them.

He learned to drive a car, to steer and control a 'plane, helped at every turn by his friend.

"If they'd only give you and me, Jerry, a free hand," he said one day, as they sat in a tiny alehouse of an east coast fishing village, "I reckon we'd knock up a scheme between us that would upset this German invasion business like blowing down a pack-of-cards house. But they're not original. Best of fellows, all of 'em, but limited—too bound by what's been done about, shy of anything up to date, or a bit beyond that."

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next Wednesday. Please order your copy in advance.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 312.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday. "THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," 10. Every Saturday, 2.

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl; English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

Miss A. Johnston, Dromcondra, Keilor Road, Essendon, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

D. N. D. Shaw, 53, Mint Road, Fort Bombay, India, wishes to correspond with an English boy reader, age 16.

E. Kennedy, 76, Florence Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers all over the world.

J. Ryan, Howley Avenue, St. John's, Newfoundland, wishes to correspond with boy readers in South Africa and New Zealand.

R. Anderson, care of Hartsman's News Agency, Hampton Road, Hampton, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Manchester, age 15-16.

H. Parker, care of Seymour House, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with American and Canadian girl readers, age 16-18.

J. F. Drake, Kilkee Hotel, Chapel Street, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

K. Lette, 233, Malop Street, Geelong, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

S. Wood, 1842, Retallack Street, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in the Colonies and England, age 16.

G. J. Leslie, Semaphore Road, Exeter, South Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

Miss K. M. Almonde, Kinglock Street, Windsor, Christchurch, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with boy readers, age 16-18, living in England or U.S.A.

B. Hamilton, care of Mrs. W. Hamilton, 270, Crinan Street, Invercargill, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-16, living in England.

W. Ryan, Howley Avenue, St. John's, Newfoundland, wishes to correspond with boy readers in South Africa and Australia.

H. C. Trewicke, "Windaroo," Nowell Street, Neutral Bay, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and postcards, age 14-18.

J. J. Black, State School, Mount Leyshon, Charters Towers, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers in Great Britain, age 18-21, interested in postcards.

Miss T. McNamara, "The Willows," 347, Humffray Street North, Ballarat East, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a college boy or girl reader in the United Kingdom or America, age 14-17.

H. Nairn, Junior Clerk, Railway Station, Kensington, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15-16. H. A. McDonald, of the same address, would also like to correspond with a girl reader, age 16-17.

D. G. Brough, "Coryton," Bay Street, Croydon, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Scotland, age 15-16.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

NOT SO SILLY AS THAT!

A young Lancashire mill-worker had a mental relapse, which resulted in his being sent to the county asylum. After he had been there a few days he was visited by some of his former workmates, and met him in the grounds.

"Halloa, Benny!" cried the visitor. "How's tha gettin' on?"

"Ah'm gettin' along first-rate, thank ye," answered Benny.

"Ah'm very glad to hear it," said the visitor. "Ah suppose you'll be coomin' back to work again soon—eh?"

The inmate looked at his visitor incredulously.

"Wot!" exclaimed he. "Leave a big house, and a big, grand garden like this to coom back to work! Mon, dost think Ah'm wrong in my head?"—Sent in by S. Evans, Walsall.

JUST WHAT SHE WANTED!

The lecturer had been describing some of the sights he had seen abroad.

"There are some spectacles," he said, "that one never forgets."

"I wish you would tell me where I could get a pair of them!" exclaimed an old lady in the audience. "I am always forgetting mine!"—Sent in by A. McIntyre, High Shields.

WISE GIRL!

Mistress: "I see that another soldier has called for you, Mary. I thought you had only one sweetheart?"

Cook: "Oh, no, mum! Two. You see, one's a regular, and the other's a reserve."—Sent in by F. A. Watson, Shipley, Yorks.

GETTING ON!

Aunt: "Are you getting on all right at school, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Yes, auntie. I have got the best position in the class."

Aunt: "Indeed! Where is that? At the top, of course?"

Tommy: "No. Near the fire!"—Sent in by F. H. Wright, East Ham.

HE COULDN'T ANSWER.

Son: "Why does mother hang the clothes out in the sun, papa?"

Papa: "To make them white."

Son: "What makes the Africans black?"

Papa: "The sun."

Son: "Then why is it that the sun makes mother's clothes white, and yet it makes the Africans black?"

Papa (angrily): "Go and feed the chickens at once!"—Sent in by W. Hammond, Forest Gate, E.

VERY COLD!

An American and a Scotsman were discussing the cold experienced in the winter months in Scotland.

"Why, it's nothing at all compared to the cold we have in the States," said the Yank. "I can recollect one winter when a sheep, jumping from a hillock into a field, became frozen on the way, and remained in the air a solid block of ice."

"But," argued the Scotsman, "that is against the laws of gravity. It is impossible!"

"Ah, but you see," replied the tale-pitcher serenely, "the law of gravity was frozen, too!"—Sent in by R. F. Davis, Finsbury Park, N.

VERY SOLICITOUS!

Nurse: "That boy is here again. He says his master is anxious to know how you are to-day."

Dangerously Sick Man: "Heaven bless him, whoever he may be. He is very solicitous about my health. Nurse, ask the boy whom his kind-hearted master is."

Nurse (coming back): "He says his master is the undertaker, Mr. Plume, from round the corner."—Sent in by J. Middleton, Newcastle.

THAT BEAT HIM!

"With mother's compliments," said the little boy, handing the butcher a large bone.

"Look here," snorted the butcher indignantly, "next time I kills a bull without bones I'll make her a present of five pounds!"

"Yes, but next time you find a shoulder of mutton bone in a sirloin of beef, mother says she'd like to buy the whole carcase as a curiosity!"—Sent in by T. Mair, Scarborough.

JOLLY CHEAP!

First Lady: "What are you going to give your husband for a Christmas present?"

Second Lady: "A hundred cigars."

First Lady: "What did you pay for them?"

Second Lady: "Oh, nothing! For the last few weeks or so I have been taking one or two cigars from Jack's box every day. He hasn't missed them, and will be pleased with my little present and the fine quality of the cigars."—Sent in by G. Marsh, Walkden.

GOT HIM!

A hansom cab-driver had just picked up a fare, and was driving furiously along a crowded street when the wheel of his cab just happened to graze the horse which a very thin youth was driving.

"Now then, can't yer see me?" bawled the latter angrily. "No, yer whip's in front of yer!" retorted the cabby, as he whipped up his horse again.—Sent in by J. Mack, Manchester.

MOVE ON, PLEASE!

It was a very busy street car, which was overcrowded, and a young Irishman as conductor. Another stop, and still the passengers flocked in. At last, in desperation, Pat yelled out:

"Will them in front please move up so that them behind can take their places, and will leave room for them who are nayther in front nor behind?"—Sent in by S. Girstein, Hull.

NOT TO BE DONE.

One day a farmer went to a hotel to deliver eight dozen eggs. The eggs were counted, and there was found to be one over. Despite all the hints of the proprietor of the hotel

for the farmer to give the egg that was over in with the others, he was obstinate, and refused.

"Look here, farmer," said the proprietor, "if you give the egg in with others, I'll stand you a drink."

"Done!" said the farmer instantly.

"What'll you have?" asked the proprietor, proud at having made the obstinate old farmer give way.

"Egg and milk," said the farmer.—Sent in by H. Weedon, London, W.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 312.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

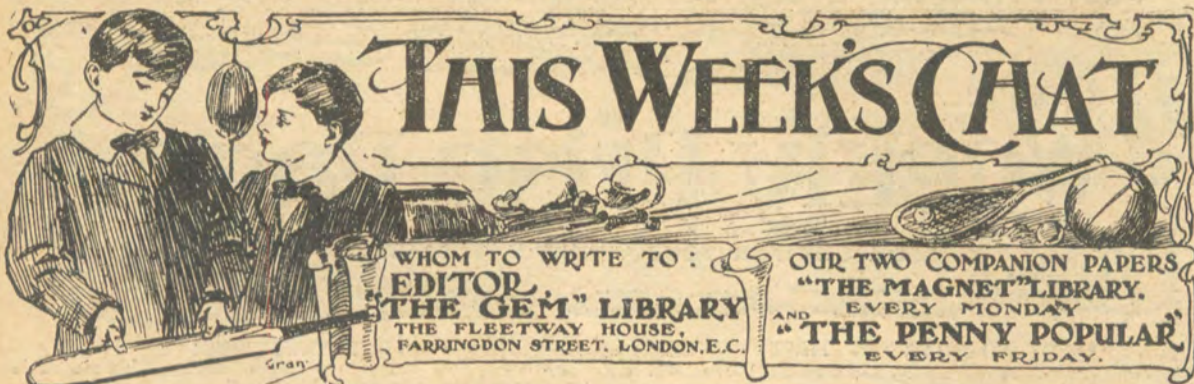
Readers are invited to send **ON A POSTCARD** Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

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.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"RALLYING ROUND FIGGINS!"

By Martin Clifford.

In our next grand, long, complete tale of the famous chums of St. Jim's College, Figgins of the New House calls upon all his chums to support him in his latest scheme—and loyally is his call responded to! Figgins, thus strongly supported, makes a terrific effort—and not in vain!

The Bishop's Medal—coveted prize—becomes his, but in the hour of his triumph, the victor does not forget how much he owes to Tom Merry & Co. for their generous sportsmanship in

"RALLYING ROUND FIGGINS!"**FROM THE READER WHO REALLY STARTED****"CHUCKLES!"**

A letter of exceptional interest on the subject of our latest new companion paper "Chuckles" comes from the reader who signs himself "Londoner." My chums will remember that it was this reader who really originated the idea of "Chuckles"—that is, the first suggestion of a new companion paper on the lines of "Chuckles" was put forward by him in the letter which was published on the Chat page of "Magnet," No. 299, last October. This is what "Londoner" says of the "finished article," now that he has seen the first few numbers:

"Dear Editor,—The moment when I opened No. 1 of 'Chuckles' was, without doubt, the proudest one of my whole life! To think that the letter I wrote you last autumn should have the credit of giving you the first idea of such a really magnificent paper! There is only one word to describe 'Chuckles'—it's simply topping! How on earth you can manage to give such value for one halfpenny beats me. I should think 'Chuckles' cheap at one penny personally. The paper far surpasses my anticipations. My idea was something quite small, and printed in the ordinary way. But, of course, all those colours make the paper so much brighter and nicer altogether. Frank Richards' stories about the Courtfield and Greyfriars boys are simply ripping. I am quite sure every 'Gemite' will read them eagerly. I am going to do all I can for 'Chuckles,' of course, by telling everyone about it, giving a whole lot of copies away, etc. I think it's the least we readers can do for you, Mr. Editor, considering all the trouble you have taken to give us what we ask for. In conclusion, I must offer you my heartiest congratulations on 'Chuckles,' which I am sure we all consider a very marvellous achievement.—Your grateful reader, 'Londoner' (P. J.).

"P.S.—The toffee in No. 1 was simply delicious, and I took twelve packets of it home, as I bought twelve copies, and we all enjoyed it awfully."

Many thanks, "Londoner"! I make no apology for devoting so much space to your letter, as I am sure all readers of the famous companion papers will be interested to hear your judgment on the paper that owes its origin to your happy inspiration.

I am delighted to hear you are so pleased with "Chuckles," and can only say that if all my chums are as enthusiastic as you, we shall make "Chuckles" the success of 1914!

RABBIT KEEPING.

By Meredith Fradd.

Vice-President United Kingdom Dutch Rabbit Club, and Rabbit Expert to "The Exchange and Mart."

It will be news to most readers that, taking the average, there is an exhibition of rabbits held in the United Kingdom every day of the week—with a large surplus—and that at many of these rabbit shows between 300 and 600 of these little animals come upon the judging table, while an entry of a thousand is heard of every year, and hundreds of pounds' worth of rabbits are on show during these exhibitions. Yet the statements that I have made are well within the mark, and it is with the object of interesting a still further mass of people that this article is written.

Prize rabbit-keeping is essentially a poor man's hobby, and the hobby pays many a man's rent; at the same time, every section of society is found rubbing shoulders in the attempt to become successful exhibitors.

To the thoughtful student of Nature, there is no more interesting study than the ways and the natural differences of the ten or eleven distinct breeds of fancy rabbits; and while, of course, it will be impossible in one series of articles to fully describe the minute details and characteristics of the separate breeds, I will touch upon each one.

To the ordinary reader the mention of a tame rabbit conjures up reminiscences of their childhood, when a poor miserable specimen of the rabbit tribe, with one ear up and one down—such a specimen would not be tolerated in a fancier's rabbitry nowadays—some sort of colouring bespattered over the body, stood for the household pet, until such time as its none too robust "Little Mary" revolted against a system that meant food at uncertain duration, that food chiefly composed of greenstuff given wet, and the morning arrived when a corpse occupied the hutch, and the dear old mother remarked—as they all seem to remark!—"Poor thing! you shall never have a rabbit for a pet again."

Lop-Ears and Angoras.

I will briefly describe the breed of rabbit that most nearly agrees with the pet of our childhood. It is the lop-eared rabbit, each ear must fall over, and the ears from the tip of one to the tip of the other must measure something between 24 to 30 inches, and in breadth each ear must measure between 6 to 8½ inches, the colour must be rich, the coats well conditioned, and the whole appearance of the animal must be of vigour and health, then you have a specimen worth anything from £10 to £25. But of all the breeds the Lop is the most delicate, consequent in a great degree upon the fact that excessive heat is necessary to grow the ears to length, it is bred in large quantities in London cellars in an atmosphere of unhealthy warmth, that would kill all the other breeds.

A breed in great favour with, and particularly fitted for ladies pets, are the Angoras; the long, silky, white, and at times coloured, fur of these animals give them a most pleasing appearance, and they look like diminutive sheep as they squat in their hutches; from a fancier's point of view, length and fineness of texture is the great characteristic, and best-conditioned show specimens may fetch pounds.

(Another splendid
"Rabbit - Keeping"
article next Wednesday.)

The Editor

A THRILLING STORY YOU MUST NOT MISS!

The Cigarette Clue!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Tale, dealing
with the Further Amazing Adventures of

SEXTON BLAKE, DETECTIVE.



As the detective's electric lamp flashed out, away darted the rats—big and little, brown and grey, fat and lean, splashing through the water and slime.

(See page 10.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lost—Twenty Thousand Pounds.

THREE-QUARTERS after one o'clock were being chimed from the Royal Exchange one Saturday afternoon late in autumn as Herbert Fillingdon, "walk-clerk" to the Metropolitan Consolidated Bank, passed on his way to the Bank of England to make his afternoon lodgment.

A youth yet under one-and-twenty, Herbert was no millionaire—his salary, indeed, being only thirty shillings per week, while he could rarely call a five-pound note his own, save, perhaps, just prior to his annual holiday—yet in his daily work he regularly carried the wallet of a millionaire.

In that very wallet at the present time lay notes and securities to the tune of twenty thousand pounds; but that was nothing unusual. The scrip belonged to his employers, not to himself, and, so far from being weighed down by anxiety for his charge, Herbert, through long familiarity, regarded his satchel pretty much as a baker's boy considers his basket, its contents, however valuable, like so many loaves of bread.

He threaded his way through the bustling, whirling throng quietly enough; through men rushing round to finish their week's work, past young fellows dashing off to commence their week-end play; he had ample time for his business, though the next clock-chime would give the signal for the closing of the Bank doors.

In the Bank itself haste and bustle were intensified, those final fifteen minutes of the week are the busiest of all that period. But order and method ever reign within the well-regulated precincts of "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street," and, despite the hurrying crowds, Herbert had no difficulty in gaining his accustomed place at the paying-in desk.

Unfastening the steel chain that attached the wallet to his person, Herbert unlocked the big purse and placed it on the

counter before him, waiting the consideration of the cashier.

At that moment the attention of the youth was temporarily distracted from his front. Feeling a smart shoulder-tap, Herbert looked round, and found a man standing close behind—a well-dressed young fellow, with something of a foreign look, his black beard and whiskers closely cropped and trimmed "imperial" fashion, his waxed moustache stiffly twirled and pointed.

"Pardon, sir," said the man politely, "but can you say to me if I am right in the apartment where one draws so moneys?"

"Oh, the Issue Department, you mean!" replied Herbert. "No. It is that building across the courtyard." Then, turning more fully, he pointed through the doorway, saying: "Cross the court. You will see the name marked over the entrance. Look sharp. They will close the door directly."

"Merci! M——" began the other, with a bow. Then he interrupted himself hurriedly. "Sacre! Peste en soit! Malheureux! But I have scorch my fingaire! I am so maladroit!"

In defiance, probably in ignorance, of the regulations, the Frenchman carried a smouldering cigarette in his hand; the fire had reached his flesh and burned his fingers.

"Ah! Ouh! Ugg!" ejaculated the man, tossing away the stump, shaking his singed fingers, and shoving them into his mouth; then, grimacing, he withdrew, vanishing in the quickly closing crowd.

"Serve you right, mossoo! No business to smoke here!" muttered Herbert, with a chuckle, as he turned to attend to his own affairs.

The incident had occupied only a few seconds; the youth had not moved from the spot, but on turning again to the counter the board was bare, the wallet was no longer where he had placed it.

With an anxious thrill, Herbert glanced right and left. The case might have been pushed aside, but he saw no trace of it.

Poof! The cashier, anxious to get through his work, must have reached across the counter for it.

"Hi! Got my wallet? That of the Metropolitan Consolidated? I put it down here just now. It's all right, I suppose?" called Herbert to the Bank teller.

"Metro. Con. wallet? No. Haven't seen it. Waiting for it. Fork it out sharp!" snapped the cashier, pausing in his work to look up.

In a flash the youth realised that he had been robbed. He saw, as clearly as though he had witnessed the occurrence, that while his attention was momentarily distracted by the Frenchman behind, someone had slipped away the bag in front.

He glanced up and down the counter. The precious wallet was not on the board. His eyes roved over the crowd of customers equally fruitlessly. Even the Frenchman had disappeared.

"I've been robbed!" gasped the young clerk, in affrighted amazement to the expectant cashier. "My wallet has been stolen! It contained twenty thousand pounds!"

Then the very stupendousness of the catastrophe exercised a sobering effect, like a heavy douche of cold water, and, more coolly, fairly collectedly and concisely, Fillingdon told his story.

Prompt was the action of the cashier. Such robberies are infrequent at the Bank of England, but, of course, they offer constant temptations, and every precaution is taken to prevent fraud, every measure ready to detect it should it prove at first successful.

The cashier touched an electric knob, and in an instant tell-tale bells were ringing in all parts of the building, conveying the alarm throughout the entire establishment.

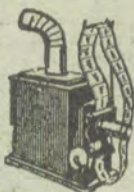
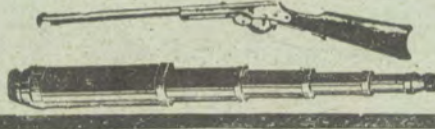
Like magic a couple of stalwart attendants stopped the door, all outer exits were blocked and guarded. Everyone

(Continued on cover, page iv.)

FREE**For Selling 12 Packets of KEW SEEDS
at 1d. per Packet.**

To further advertise our Famous Kew Seeds we give every reader of this paper a magnificent present absolutely FREE simply for selling or using 12 packets at 1d. each. Our up-to-date Prize List contains hundreds of different kinds of **FREE GIFTS** for everyone, including **Ladies' and Gents' Gold and Silver Watches, Ostrich Caters, Furs, Cycles, Telescopes, Chains, Rings, Accordions, Cinemas, Gramophones, Air Guns, Engines, Toys, etc., etc.** All you need do is to send us your Name and Address (a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of fully guaranteed Kew Seeds to sell or use at One Penny per packet. When sold send us the money obtained and we will immediately forward gift chosen according to the grand list we send you. **Start Early.** Send a postcard now to—

KEW SEED CO., Ltd.
(D. pt. 9), KEW GARDENS, LONDON.



(Continued from cover, page iii.)

within the building was submitted to a careful scrutiny and searching investigation. No matter how pressing his business, no one left the Bank without first giving a satisfactory account of himself and his belongings.

Yet, prompt as was the action, its application was too late. No trace of the wallet or its contents could be discovered. It had simply disappeared. No suspicious person had been remarked previously about the building, nor was the cigarette-smoking Frenchman brought to light. The impecunious walk-clerk had been defrauded of a fortune. Penniless Herbert Fillington had been robbed of twenty thousand pounds.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

On the Trail.

THAT same afternoon an official from the Metropolitan Bank sat closeted with Sexton Blake in the chambers of the latter in Norfolk Street.

"Now, Mr. Blake," concluded the banker, after a lengthy narration, "you have all the particulars of what has transpired, so far as we know them. The Threadneedle folks have placed the matter in the hands of the regular police, but our people prefer to trust to you entirely. You will please act for us, and we hope you will bring the criminal to light, and also recover the stolen property." "What is the latter, exactly? Of course you have a list of the contents of the wallet?"

"Bless me, yes, Mr. Blake! Dear me! I should have given you that at first. There you are. On that slip you have an exact inventory of the contents of the wallet when it left our premises."

"H'm!" mused Blake, glancing keenly over the list. "No specie, I see. That's fortunate, as coin is always difficult to trace. Still more lucky, twelve banknotes are for one thousand pounds apiece. The thieves won't change those readily on this side of the water. Twenty hundreds, fifty twenties, twenty tens, and twenty fives, the balance in cheques, etc., making a gross total of twenty thousand. The cheques, I suppose are valueless to the thieves? The notes, by their number, have been stopped?"

"Quite so, Mr. Blake. As you point out, the cheques are of no value to anyone but their owners, being all crossed. The notes have all been stopped. None of the larger notes could possibly be changed in this country. The tens and fives might perhaps be passed privately, but they would at once be challenged on presentation to any banker or money-changer. We have struck while the iron is hot; the rogues have had no time to dispose of their plunder, and will hardly find an opportunity now, unless by the aid of Continental knaves and 'smashing shops.'"

"But you have something more to tell, perhaps some other document to show?" said Blake, looking keenly at the other as the bank official paused.

"Well, yes," laughed the manager, "though I don't know how you guessed it. I have another document—a human document—for your inspection. I brought along with me that wretched lad, Herbert Fillington, the cause of all the trouble. Thought you might want to examine him for yourself. I left him in your outer office in charge of your boy."

"Do you suspect the lad of complicity in the fraud, sir?"

"Um! Well, no! We don't, but the Bank of England folks do. Fillington has been with us for some years, and we have always found him steady and straightforward; a little careless, perhaps; but one can't expect old heads on young shoulders. I think the lad is straight enough, but that is rather for you to find out, Mr. Blake."

"Who will lose the money, should it not be recovered, sir?"

"Why, in a way, Fillington himself. You see, Mr. Blake, Herbert's uncle, Mr. Tromper, is one of our shareholders. He is a very wealthy man, holding a large amount of our stock, and he became security for young Fillington. Should the money be lost, Mr. Tromper will be required to stump up, and in that case the lad may say good-bye to any chance of ultimately succeeding to his uncle's fortune, or any part of it."

"More, our bank directors had resolved to transfer young Fillington to our West End branch at the beginning of the year, giving him a very good billet there; but, of course, unless he is entirely cleared of all complicity in the present unpleasant affair, that will fall to the ground. Still further, he will undoubtedly be dismissed from our service altogether, as we cannot afford to retain an official on whom rests the slightest breath of suspicion."

"Ah, we must try to avoid that, if things are as I hope!" replied Blake. "Hard lines that, for a bit of carelessness at the worst. We'll have the young fellow in, and I'll look him over for myself."

In obedience to his master's call, Tinker ushered in the suspect.

Fillington was a tall, neatly-dressed, frank-faced youth, in no way differing from hundreds of other City clerks. Naturally terribly shaken and distressed, his manner was very nervous, but he recounted the whole matter exactly as he had done at first, answering all questions without hesitation and with the utmost candour, his wistful, eager eyes meeting those of his interrogator with a fixed, frank gaze.

The lad was able to give a very full description of the supposed Frenchman who had distracted his attention. Fairly clever with his pencil, Herbert even produced a little sketch of the man's face, declaring it sufficiently accurate for identification should anyone come across the original.

"I am quite of your opinion," remarked Blake gravely to the bank-manager after a full investigation of the youth. "That lad is no thief, but an honest boy. He may have been guilty of carelessness, but nothing more. Perhaps not much of that. Remember, he, all unconscious, was doubtless pitted against a gang of clever rogues."

"I will do my best in the case, if only for the sake of this poor lad, menaced with undeserved ruin."

(How the stump of a cigarette gives the first clue which puts the famous detective on the track of a gang of expert criminals; and how the gang, after many exciting incidents, are run to earth at last, makes an enthralling tale which will appeal alike to new readers and to regular followers of the amazing career of Sexton Blake, Detective. There are also two other grand complete stories in this splendid number of THE PENNY POPULAR—now on sale everywhere. Price 1d.)