

UNDER HIS THUMB!

Complete School Tale. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

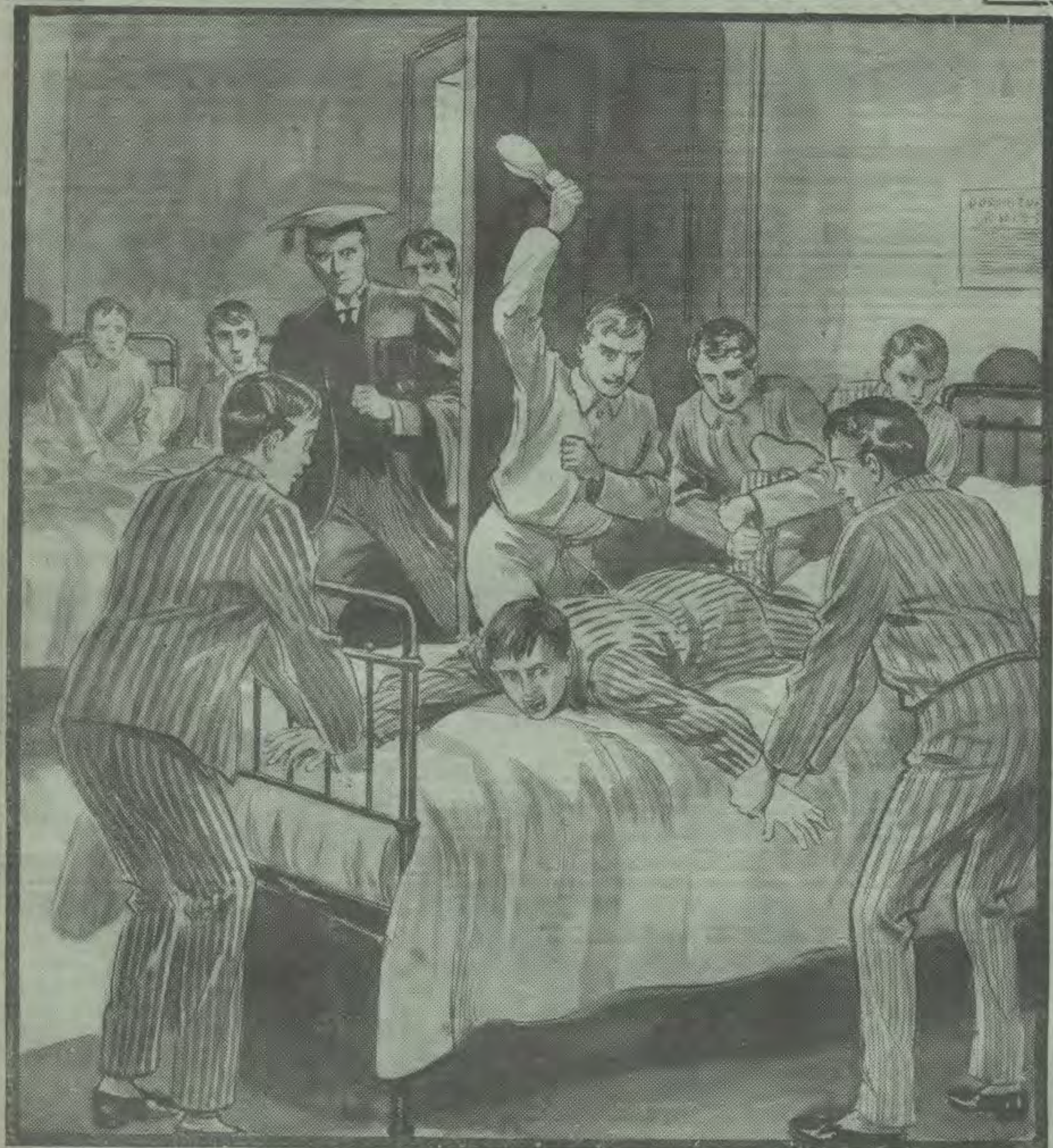
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UNDER HIS THUMB!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Monty Lowther took his book from the table, and punted it across the study. "There goes Virgil!" he said. "And here goes us!" chuckled Tom Merry. And the Terrible Three bolted from the study. (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER 1.

"Britons Never—Never—"

"PRETTY kettle of fish!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Very pretty!" groaned Manners.

And Tom Merry grunted in sympathetic disgust.

The Terrible Three, the heroes of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, were evidently in a misanthropic mood.

There were reasons.

They were sitting at the table in their study, in the Shell passage in the School House, with a volume of Virgil propped up against the inkstand.

They had whole sheaves of impot paper before them, which they were laboriously covering with more or less legible caligraphy.

There was no doubt, of course, that Virgil was a very great poet, and that it was a very great advantage to have a close and thorough acquaintance with his works. But the Terrible Three of St. Jim's were of opinion—an opinion widely shared by other fellows—that it was possible to have too much of a

good thing. In fact, there were times—not infrequent—when they regarded the pious Æneas as a terrible bore, and sincerely wished that he had actually been drowned in that famous storm in the First Book of Æneid.

It is possible to get "fed up" on the greatest of poets, especially poets who persist in the bad habit of composing their works in a dead language. The Terrible Three considered that Virgil's language, being dead, ought also to be buried, especially on a bright and sunny half-holiday in spring.

But there they were, planted in the study, with a volume of Virgil, sheaves of impot paper, extremely bad tempers, and five hundred lines each, to be written out and handed in before tea-time to—that was the worst of it—to Cutts of the Fifth! For Cutts of the Fifth, the old enemy of Tom Merry & Co., had become captain of St. Jim's, and one of his first steps, as captain of the school, was to make his new power felt by the juniors he disliked.

The fact that Tom Merry & Co. had strenuously opposed his election made Cutts of the Fifth all the more bitter. The

Next Wednesday:

"DESPERATE MEASURES!" AND "PLAYING THE GAME!"

No. 320. (New Series). Vol. 8.

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fact that Tom Merry himself had actually been for a few days captain of the school, till he resigned that lofty position under pressure from the Head, made Cutts all the more determined to give the Terrible Three the time of their lives.

And he was doing it.

It was in the power of the captain of the school to inflict canings and impositions, and never had that privilege been so freely used as during the few days that had elapsed since Cutts of the Fifth became captain.

The chums of the Shell were the special objects of his wrath.

And Cutts was very clever—too clever for them, as the juniors ruefully confessed. He did not impose punishments without reason. There was always a good reason, that could be explained plausibly to the Head or the Housemaster, if the juniors had chosen to carry an appeal to those high quarters.

The trouble was that Tom Merry & Co., being human and schoolboys, were by no means perfect, and their manners and customs left much to be desired, from the point of view of the powers that were.

Not that there was any harm in them. But they broke all sorts of rules in moments of thoughtlessness, and thus gave Cutts his opportunity. And Cutts never allowed an opportunity to pass unimproved. He understudied the little busy bee in improving each shining hour, so far as finding fault with the Terrible Three was concerned.

It was always open to the juniors to appeal to the Housemaster, and Mr. Railton would have given them justice. But justice, in the strict sense, was not exactly what they wanted. Cutts was giving them justice, and they found it a worry.

"Five hundred lines!" said Lowther, with a deep groan, as he jammed his pen into the ink with such force that the nib cracked. "Oh, blow the pen!"

"It's scandalous!" growled Manners. "Kildare never used to give us such whacking imposts. Five hundred lines keeps a chap going all the afternoon!"

"That's what the beast's done it for!" grunted Tom Merry.

"And such a ripping afternoon!" sighed Monty Lowther.

He groped in the table-drawer for a new pen-nib, and rose and walked to the window as he fitted the nib to his pen and looked out into the quadrangle.

The spring sun was shining there, glimmering on the fresh new green on the old elms.

In the distance he could see the playing-fields, with a football match going on on Big Side, with a crowd of fellows round the ropes shouting.

Cutts was playing for the First Eleven, taking the captaincy of the First Eleven along with the captaincy of St. Jim's.

And he was playing well. Cutts, gambler and smoker and blackguard generally as he was, could play a good game of footer when he chose, and he chose now. Cutts knew that he needed to consolidate his position as captain of the school, and he was trying by every means to make himself popular and to ingratiate himself with the Sixth. The Sixth Form, of course, were not overpleased at having a captain from the Fifth. But Cutts was very diplomatic and tactful, and in football matters, at least, he was winning golden opinions from all sorts of people. It was only his old enemies who felt the weight of his hand, but they found it very heavy.

A shout from the football-ground came faintly to Lowther's ears as he stood at the open window.

"Goal, goal!"

"Well kicked, sir!"

"Bravo, Cutts!"

Lowther turned away from the window with a snort.

"That beast Cutts has just scored a goal against the Grammarians!" he said.

Two separate and disgusted snorts answered him.

"Just like him!" said Tom Merry.

"The rotter!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther sat down to the table again and ground

out more lines. He had done a hundred, so far, and four hundred remained to be done. Monty Lowther felt that he would have liked to tie up Virgil, Æneas, and Cutts of the Fifth in a bundle and drop them over the bridge on the Ryll.

"It's sickening!" said Tom Merry, pausing in his labours. "Five hundred lines! And what did we do?"

"Simply put blacking in Herr Schneider's silk topper!" said Lowther. "Why, anybody might have done it if he'd thought of it! And it was Schneider's own fault. What did he mean by sticking his beastly, irregular German verbs at us?"

"He did look a picture, didn't he, when the blacking oozed out?" said Tom, his face breaking into a smile. "It was worth a hundred lines or so."

"But not five hundred!" groaned Manners.

"No fear! And Cutts didn't care twopence if we drowned Schneider in blacking!" said Monty Lowther. "It was simply a chance at us, and he jumped at it."

"Schneider's a beast, too! If he'd complained to Railton we should have been caned, and had done with it. He knew Cutts would be harder on us than Railton."

"Of course he did! That's why he went to Cutts."

"We've got to stand it. We can't appeal to Railton, and explain to him that we blacked the inside of Schneider's topper."

"Ha, ha! No!"

There was another distant shout, and the Terrible Three listened to it.

"Cutts is going strong," Tom Merry remarked. "He plays a good game of footer. Of course, we want St. Jim's to win, whether Cutts is captain or not."

"Oh, of course!" growled Lowther, quite without enthusiasm.

"And that's the match we were going to play!" said Tom meditatively. "If I had remained captain of the school we should have played them, you know."

"With a First Eleven composed of juniors!" grinned Lowther. "Cutts has more sense than you had, Tommy. He isn't trying to shove the Fifth Form into the First Eleven. He's got nine of the Sixth in the team."

"Oh, he's as deep as a well, of course! He always was too clever for us!" said Tom Merry in despair.

"And here we are, shut up on a lovely half-holiday, grinding out beastly lines!" said Manners. "It's sickening! And missing the last football match of the season! Look here, are we going to stand it?"

"We've got to!"

Manners laid down his pen. Manners was generally a very quiet fellow, but he could get his back up occasionally, and it was very much up now.

"I'm fed up!"

"So are we, but—"

"It's a half-holiday quite done in if we do these rotten lines! We could do them just as well in the evening, but Cutts has fixed tea-time for them to be handed in, just to muck up the half-holiday!"

"Of course he has! But—"

"And they're playing the last match of the season!"

"Oh, I don't want to watch Cutts' performances!" said Monty Lowther. "I'd as soon be here as watching that cad showing off his footer."

"And Study No. 6 have gone out on the randan!" pursued Manners.

"They have!" sighed Tom Merry. "Cousin Ethel is staying with the Glyns, you know, and they are going cycling with her. What a ripping afternoon for a spin!"

"And we're penned up here!" snorted Manners.

"And our impositions are penned up here," added Monty Lowther, who never could resist the temptation to make a pun, good or bad—generally bad.

"Oh, don't be funny! That's the last straw!" said Manners, exasperated. "Look here, you fellows, Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What price clearing out, then?" demanded Manners.

Tom Merry and Lowther looked very thoughtful.

Cutts had full authority for acting as he had done, and if they directly disobeyed his orders in this way they would be putting themselves very much in the wrong. Unless the lines were taken in at the time specified, Cutts would come down heavily upon them, and they would have no defence.

And yet—

Cutts was technically in the right, but actually he was in the wrong. He was taking advantage of his new position to feel his ancient grudge against the Terrible Three. That was the truth of the matter.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, jumping up as he came to a sudden resolution. "I'm not going to stand it! Cutts can go and eat coke!"

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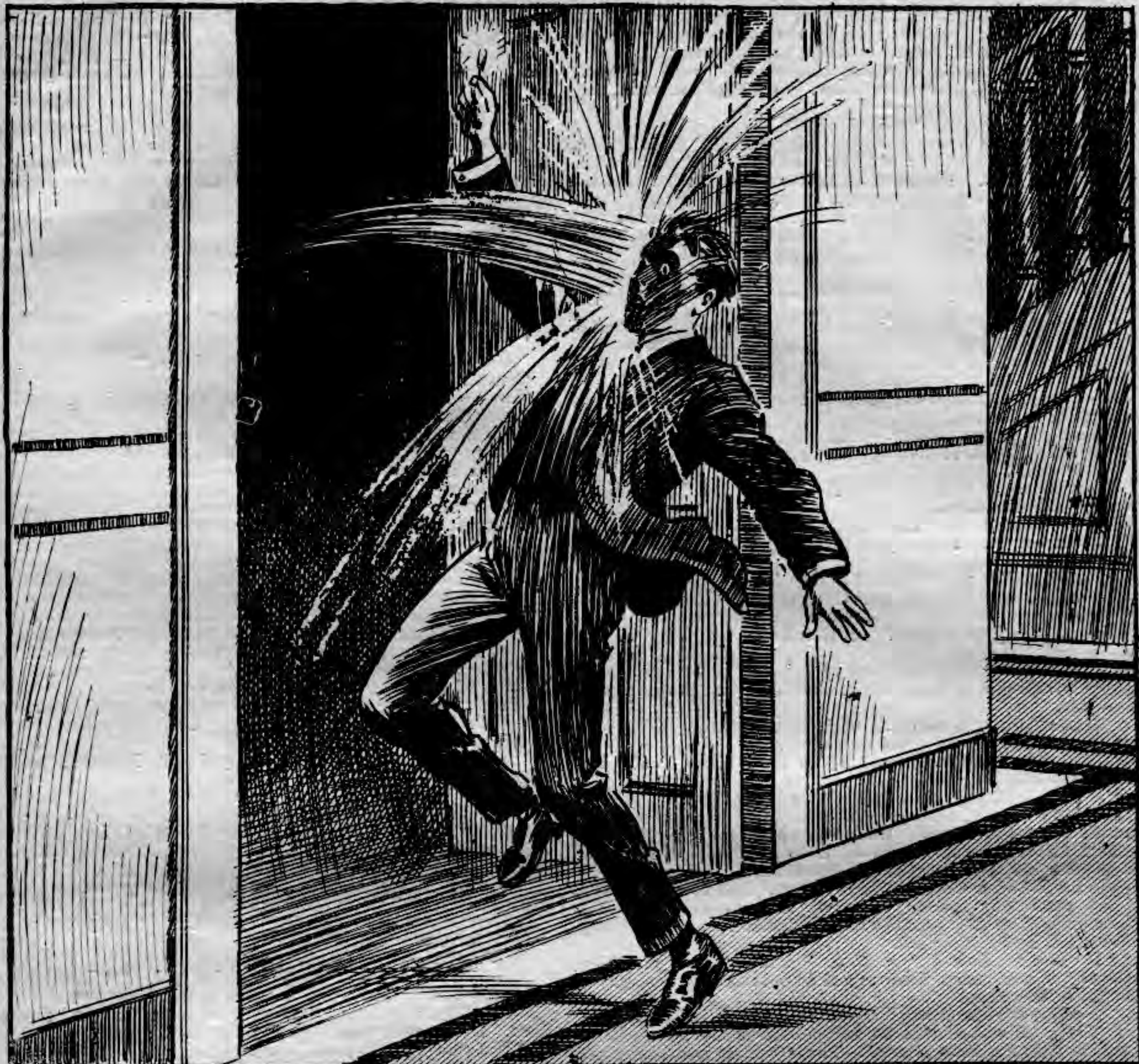
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Cutts uttered a yell and staggered back as a stream of liquid caught him full in the face. "Oh! Oh! Yow!" he yelled. And from Tom Merry's study there came a yell of laughter. "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 11.)

"There will be trouble," said Lowther dubiously.

"Well, that won't be anything new."

"Juniors at school are born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," said Manners solemnly. "Let's chance it."

"We can slip round the back for our bikes, and get after Blake & Co," said Tom Merry. "They haven't started long. We can overtake them before they get to Glyn House very likely."

The temptation was too strong.

Outside, the sunny weather and the fresh breeze seemed to call to the chums of the Shell with a call that was not to be resisted.

Monty Lowther took Virgil from the table and punted it across the study, and the long and graphic account of the adventures of the pious Æneas crashed into the grate.

"There goes Virgil!" said Lowther.

"And here go us!" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three bolted out of the study.

CHAPTER 2.

Broken Bounds.

"HEAH we are, deah gal!" Thus exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. Four juniors jumped off their bikes in the avenue that

led up to Glyn House, on the outskirts of the village of Rylcombe. They were Blake and Digby and Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the owners of that famous apartment, Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's.

Cousin Ethel was standing near the gate, with a smile on her sweet face, her bicycle leaning against an old oak. Bernard Glyn of the Shell was with her, holding his bicycle. Glyn's people lived near St. Jim's, and his sister Edith was a great chum of Cousin Ethel's; and when Ethel came down to visit Edith Glyn, Glyn of the Shell always made it a point to ask her cousin Arthur and his friends over to tea. Needless to say, that invitation was never neglected. The Terrible Three had been unable to come, owing to Cutts's kind attention in the matter of lines. But Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy had turned up cheerfully.

"Heah we are!" said Arthur Augustus. "Weady for the wide, deah gal?"

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"Quite ready, Arthur. Isn't Tom Merry with you?"

"Sowwy! No; he's detained."

"I'm sorry!" said Ethel.

"Yaas, it's wathah wotten," said Arthur Augustus, with a sad shake of the head. "You see, things are gettin' into a weally wotten state at St. Jim's. The old school is goin' to the beastly bow-wows, you know, and I for one don't weally see how it's goin' to be stopped."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"DESPERATE MEASURES!"

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. Order Early.

And Arthur Augustus looked properly solemn over that dreadful prospect that was opening out before St. Jim's.

"Dear me!" said Ethel. "What has happened?"
 "You know old Kildare has cleaved off," said D'Arcy. "He was our skippah, you know. He's got an aunt, or something, ill somewhere—"

"His uncle, fathead!" said Jack Blake.
 "Well, I knew it was somethin' of the kind," said Arthur Augustus. "It is weally quite immatewial whethah it is an uncle or an aunt. The point is, that old Kildare has had to cleah, and we've got a new captain. We elected Tom Mewwy; but the Head pwessed him to wesign, you know, because he is a juniah—which I wegard as widiculous. We were givin' the seniahs a high old time, I can tell you."

Cousin Ethel laughed.
 "Perhaps the Head did not approve of giving the seniors a high old time?" she suggested.

"Pewwaps not," assented Arthur Augustus. "You never know how to take these blessed headmastahs, you know. They don't look at things as we do. But the wesult is, that Cutts of the Fifth is captain of the school, and he's goin' to wemain captain unless old Kildare comes back. And we all wegard it as wotten."

"Rotten!" agreed Blake.
 "Beastly!" said Herries.
 "The limit!" growled Digby.
 "Simply unspeakable!" said Bernard Glyn. "Cutts is a waster, and he's down on us."
 "Yaas, there's the wub," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "He's down on us—us, you know! What's the mattab with us?"

"Nothing, I'm sure," smiled Cousin Ethel.
 "Nothin'. Quite wight. But Cutts doesn't like us. There's no accountin' for tastes, you know. Cutts was always a fellow of vewy bad taste. I nevah did appwove of his waistcoats."

"And the long and the short of it is that he's playing the giddy tyrant, and he's detained Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther," said Blake.

"Sheer beastly tyranny!" said Digby.
 Cousin Ethel looked quite concerned.
 "And didn't they do anything to be detained for?" she asked.

"Well, practically nothing."
 "Weally nothin', deah gal. They simply put some blackin' undah the leather inside Herr Schneider's silk toppah. Of course, he looked wathah odd when the blackin' wan down his face. He has a vewy wed face, you know, and stweaks of black on it had a wathah strikin' effect. But of course they didn't mean any harm, you know. It was simply a little joke, and some cad must have told Cutts who did it—they didn't tell him themselves."

"Levison or Mellish!" growled Herries. "Pair of rotten sneaks! Cutts makes them report to him things that go on in the Lower School."

"I suppose Herr Schneider was angry?" Ethel suggested.
 "Yaas; he was extwemely watty. But a few licks with a cane would have been enough. There was no need to detain thwee unfortunate pwactical jokahs for a whole half-holiday. But that is Cutts all ovah."

"There'll be a row soon if he keeps on," said Bernard Glyn, with a sage shake of the head. "He caned me yesterday, you know, just for setting an electric bell in the Sixth Form passage to ring whenever Knox came out of his study and stepped on the mat. The beast always goes for us when we've done something, so we can't appeal to the House-master about it."

"That's the worst of it," said Blake. "If he'd only drop on us for nothing, as Knox does sometimes, we should have him on the hip. But he's always so jolly careful to be in the right that there's no catching him."

"Yaas, wathah! He's so awf'ly deep, you know."

Cousin Ethel smiled.
 "But wouldn't it be a good idea not to break any of the rules, and then he couldn't go for you?" she suggested.

The juniors grinned. Cousin Ethel was evidently not well-versed in the manners and customs of schoolboys.

"You see, a chap can't be perfect," Blake explained. "We're all good chaps—very good indeed—quite above the average—ahem!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "But everybody's human at times," said Blake.
 "Yaas, that's it, you know."

"Well, we won't bore Cousin Ethel with Cutts and his iniquities," said Bernard Glyn. "Let's get off. We've got to get back to tea. Edith's going to have a ripping spread ready for us. We'll stop at the Feathers for some ginger-beer. We can ride as far as that."

"Good egg!"
 And Cousin Ethel and the juniors mounted their machines. As they rode down the avenue into the Rylcombe road there was a sudden ringing of bicycle bells, and three riders came into sight. They were Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell.

"Bai Jove! Heah the boundahs are!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Hip-pip!" exclaimed Blake, as the Terrible Three, raising their caps to Cousin Ethel, circled round and joined the party. "Has Cutts let you off?"

"No fear!" said Tom Merry. "We hooked it."

"But the impot—"

"We'll do that later."

"Hurrah! Britons never shall be slaves!"

Cousin Ethel looked very grave.

"But won't Cutts be very angry?" she asked.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tom Merry. "I don't care if he doubles the impot. I'd rather do a thousand lines this evening than five hundred in the afternoon!"

Cousin Ethel said no more. She was a little anxious for Tom Merry & Co; but they were there now, and it was too late to consider the wisdom—or otherwise—of their action in bolting and leaving their imposition undone.

And the Terrible Three meant to enjoy the afternoon while they could, and leave all consideration of consequences till later, in the happy-go-lucky manner peculiar to schoolboys.

They rode down the avenue together, and turned into the Rylcombe road in a merry party. Two juniors in St. Jim's caps were walking down the road towards Rylcombe, and they stopped and stared at the Terrible Three and the rest of the cyclists. The chums of St. Jim's recognised Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, the two juniors who were more than suspected of acting the spy for Cutts in the School House.

"Hallo!" called out Levison. "You three fellows are detained, sin't you?"

"Mind you own bizney!" rapped out Manners, as he passed.

"If Cutts gets after you—"

"Go and eat coke!"

And the cyclists swept on, Lowther playfully catching Levison's cap as he passed, and tossing it over the hedge.

The wheelers disappeared in a cloud of dust, and Levison, gritting his teeth, scrambled through the hedge for his cap.

He came back into the road scowling.

"They've broken bounds!" he said. "They were detained for the afternoon, Percy."

Mellish nodded.

"They've got an excursion on," he said. "I heard some of them talking about it. They're going down the river to the Feathers, where they have those ripping cakes and ginger-beer. I jolly well wish I were going too!"

"Not likely to ask you!" sneered Levison.

"Or you, either!" growled Mellish.

"We can put a spoke in their wheel, all the same," said Levison. "Are you sure they are going to the Feathers?"

"I heard them saying so this morning."

"Good! Cutts will be glad to know of that. The match will be over by the time we get back to the school. Come on!"

Percy Mellish looked uneasy.

"I—I say. If Cutts gets after them they'll know we sneaked!" he muttered.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care if they do. Cutts will look after us, if we stand by him. And he'll be glad of a chance of making those rotters sing small in the presence of Miss Cleveland."

"Yes; but—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Levison and Mellish walked away quickly towards St. Jim's, Levison grinning, and his companion still looking a little uneasy.

CHAPTER 3.

The Heavy Hand!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed that spin in the bright spring weather.

Through fresh and leafy lanes they reached the towing-path, and then the route lay along the gleaming, shihing Ryll, the shining river on one side and woods and meadows on the other.

It was a pleasant ride, and it was no wonder that the Terrible Three forgot all about Gerald Cutts and all his works.

The Feathers was a riverside inn, with a long, pleasant

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garden, shaded by apple trees, extending down to the towing-path.

It was a warm afternoon for the time of year, and the sun was shining brightly in the old garden when the cyclists dismounted at the gate.

"We'll have the ginger-pop in the garden," said Tom Merry. "It's ripping there under the apple-trees."

"Yaas, wathah!"

They wheeled the machines into the garden, and sat down in a happy crowd on the old benches round one of the tables.

George, the old waiter, who looked almost as ancient as the lattice-windowed, red-tiled building itself, came out to supply their wants.

"Gingah-beer, deah boy, and some of those wippin' little cakes," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yessir," said George.

"Wathah a pity we didn't think of asking Figgins & Co. to hop along," Arthur Augustus remarked, as the waiter disappeared. "Fatty Wynn would have liked those cakes."

"Never thought of it," said Blake. "I think they're out on their bikes, too. I saw Kerr mending a puncture just after dinner."

"You know, we're on topping terms with the New House bounders now," Tom Merry explained to Cousin Ethel. "They are up against Cutts as much as we are. He's awfully down on Figgins and Kerr and Wynn, because they won't stand his nonsense!"

"Yaas," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Old Figgay called him an ass yestahday, and got a hundwed lines. It was worth a hundwed lines."

There was a sound of fellows jumping off bicycles at the gate, and three juniors came into the garden, with faces flushed and rosy from their ride.

"Talk of angels!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Here comes those New House bounders."

Arthur Augustus extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat pocket and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed Figgins & Co., of the New House at Jim's, with something very like disfavour. He had mentioned them in a casual sort of way, without the slightest suspicion that they were near at hand. Arthur Augustus had often confided to Blake that Figgins of the New House seemed to regard Cousin Ethel rather as his cousin than as Arthur Augustus's cousin. And, unsuspecting as the swell of St. Jim's was, he could not help thinking it a little curious that the New House Co. should have "happened" along at that particular moment, on that particular afternoon. It really seemed as if Figgins had arrived there with malice aforethought, with the knowledge that he would find Cousin Ethel there. But if Figgins had been guilty of any deep and crafty calculations like that his face did not betray the fact as he came up the garden path with his chums. In fact, an expression of great astonishment came over Figgins's rugged, good-humoured face as he spotted the School House fellows.

"Fancy meeting you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, what a surprise!" said Kerr blandly.

"Just imagine finding you fellows here!" said Fatty Wynn. Tom Merry laughed.

"There's room here for some more," he said. "You happened along quite by chance, of course."

Figgins coloured a little.

"Well, I—I said to Kerr that it was a ripping afternoon for a ride, didn't I, Kerr?" he said, appealing to his Scottish chum.

"You did!" said Kerr solemnly.

"And—and I said we'd ride down to the Feathers, and sample their ginger-beer and cake," said Figgins. "I—I was really thinking of Fatty. Fatty is so fond of the cakes here."

"They're spiffing!" said Fatty Wynn seriously. "They're much better than the cakes we get at the school shop or at Mrs. Murphy's. You see—"

"So we came along," said Figgins.

"That's it," said Kerr.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Sit down!" said Jack Blake hospitably.

"I feah, Figgins—"

"Here comes the cakes and the ginger-beer!" said Tom Merry. "Sit down!"

Figgins & Co. sat down. Figgins, somehow, found himself seated beside Cousin Ethel. He generally did. He appeared to be quite unconscious of the fact that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass was turned upon him, with a gleam that ought to have bored a hole in him.

"I suppose you'll be coming to St. Jim's while you're staying at Glyn House, Miss Cleveland?" Figgins remarked. "You really must come to tea in the study, you know."

"My cousin is coming to tea in Study No. 6 in the School House, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"Quite so," agreed Figgins heartily. "We'll all come over, Gussy."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"You can rely on us, Gussy," said Kerr affectionately. "We won't leave you in the lurch on an occasion like that."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Certainly," said Fatty Wynn. "We'll come over, especially if there's a good tea. But we know you'll do us all right."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Not another word!" said Figgins. "Depend on us. We'll make a special note of it. What day did you say it was?"

"I did not say any day."

"We're at your service any day for an occasion like that," said Figgins. "We'll put off any other engagement."

"Most certainly!" said Kerr. "Pass the cakes, Fatty, and don't scoff the lot."

Arthur Augustus's face was a study. Cousin Ethel concealed a smile behind a chunk of cake. The juniors piled into the cakes and ginger-beer with great heartiness. A substantial tea was awaiting them at Glyn House, certainly. But after the ride back they would be ready for that. But the pleasant afternoon was not destined to end so pleasantly.

There was a buzz of cheery talk in the old garden, and the juniors did not notice the sound of the gate opening.

They had been an hour or more in the garden of the inn, and they were thinking of anything but Cutts of the Fifth, when the form of the captain of St. Jim's came striding down the path towards them. Monty Lowther was the first to catch sight of him, and he uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"My hat! It's Cutts!"

Cutts halted by the table.

He raised his cap slightly to Cousin Ethel. He had come there especially to humiliate Tom Merry & Co. in the presence of their girl chum, but, so far as Ethel was concerned, his manners were polite enough. Cutts of the Fifth prided himself upon being a polished Chesterfield, though he could be a blackguard of the first water as well.

After that salute to Ethel, however, he took no further notice of the girl, but turned his whole attention to the juniors.

"So I've caught you!" he said curtly.

The Terrible Three rose to their feet. At the first sight of Cutts, of course, they knew that there was going to be trouble. Their eyes were gleaming. Cutts was captain of the school, and in authority over them; but there was a limit to their obedience.

"So it seems," said Tom Merry quietly. "I suppose Levison has sneaked to you. I'll see Levison about that."

"You were detained for the afternoon," said Cutts.

"Quite so."

"Have you done your lines?"

"No."

"You have broken bounds against my express orders."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Cutts, old man, do you ever read Shakespeare?"

Cutts stared at him, surprised by the unexpected question.

"Eh? What do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"Do you remember the lines—jolly good lines!" said Lowther blandly—"about—lemme see—'Man, vain man, dressed in a little brief authority, plays such fantastic tricks before High Heaven as make the angels weep'? Are you trying to make the angels weep, Cutts?"

There was a chuckle from the juniors, and a smile broke out on Cousin Ethel's troubled face. Cutts grew crimson with wrath.

He raised his hand and pointed to the gate.

"Go—at once!" he said.

"What!"

"I order you to return to the school immediately!" said Cutts harshly.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther exchanged glances. Were they to obey that harsh order—to be ordered like dogs out of the presence of Cousin Ethel? If the girl had not been present, probably they would have obeyed. But—

There was a big "but." They knew pretty clearly that Cutts had chosen this moment in order to humiliate them as cruelly as he could. And their blood was up.

After that quick exchange of glances, Tom Merry deliberately sat down again. And Manners and Lowther, taking their cue from their leader, followed his example, and sat down with equal deliberation. There was a pause.

CHAPTER 4.

War!

CUTTS of the Fifth stood with his hand raised, pointing to the gate.

It was a dramatic attitude, and if the three Shell fellows had obeyed his command it would have been a score for Cutts.

But as they did not obey, and showed no intention what-

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ever of obeying, Cutts's dramatic attitude became a little ridiculous. A chuckle was heard from the porch of the inn, and old George, the waiter, discreetly disappeared as Cutts turned a furious eye upon him. Gerald Cutts's dramatic right arm dropped slowly to his side.

"Do you hear me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Tom Merry calmly.

"Do you intend to obey me?"

"No."

There wasn't any doubt or hesitation about that answer; it came short and sharp—straight from the shoulder, as it were.

It was war now and open rebellion. Cutts of the Fifth stared at the Terrible Three, his face crimson—a little non-plussed. He had taken up an attitude of lordly command from which he could scarcely retreat without looking absurd. But if the Shell fellows did not choose to obey him, what was to be done? To report them at St. Jim's, and cause them severe punishment, was easy. But that would come afterwards. For the moment it looked as if Gerald Cutts had the worst of it.

Arthur Augustus broke the painful pause. Arthur Augustus generally was ready with a remark or two.

"Pewwaps you had bettah wetire, Cutts," he suggested gently. "You are weally de twop heah, you know. You have intewwupted a vewy agreeable conversation."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lowther.

Cutts breathed hard.

"Will you obey me?" he repeated.

"No!"

"You know you are bound to obey my orders?"

"Rats!"

The reply was not respectful. But the Shell fellows did not respect Cutts, and that accounted for it.

Cutts clenched his hands hard.

"If you make me use force——" he began.

"If you use force, Cutts, you'll have to use it on the three of us at once," said Manners calmly.

"On the whole cwozd of us, you mean!" corrected Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, slipping his eyeglass into his pocket, to be ready for business, as it were. "It would be quite imposs for me to stand by while my fwends were bein' tweated with violence."

"What-ho!" said Figgins heartily. "You'll have to deal with the whole family, Cutts. You'd better hop it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go!" shouted Cutts.

Monty Lowther shook his head with irritating solemnity.

"No go!" he remarked.

And there was a laugh.

The laugh finished Cutts's patience, which was already at an end. His wrath boiled over, and he made a jump at the Terrible Three. He collared Tom Merry, who was nearest to him, and dragged him violently away from the table. Tom Merry resisted forcefully, and there was a crash as the table rocked and half a dozen ginger-beer bottles went to the ground.

Tom Merry returned grasp for grasp, and fought fiercely; but it would have gone hard with him in the grip of the athletic senior if his chums had not come to the rescue.

But Manners and Lowther were upon Cutts in the twinkling of an eye.

And as the Shell fellows seized him, the Fourth-Formers rushed to their aid.

Cutts struggled for a few moments in the midst of the horde of juniors, and then went down under the rush, and disappeared from sight beneath a sprawling heap of them.

"Sock it to him!" roared Blake.

"Sit on him, Fatty!"

"Wipe up the ground with him!"

"Bwavo! We'll give the awful wottah a lesson in mannahs, you know, for makin' a beastly wow in the pwesence of a lady!"

"Pile in!"

"Squash him!"

"Hurrah!"

Every fellow there was lending a hand, and as there were eleven fellows there was undoubtedly a sufficient number of hands. Cutts might as well have been in the tentacles of a particularly powerful octopus for all the use his struggling was to him.

He was stretched on his back on the turf, and Fatty Wynn sat upon his chest. Fatty Wynn's weight was no light matter. With Fatty Wynn sitting on his chest, Hercules himself might have given up the tussle in despair.

Cousin Ethel was on her feet now, looking pale and alarmed. It seemed to her as if Cutts was in the process of being really slaughtered.

"Don't hurt him!" she called out. "Figgins—Tom Merry—don't hurt him!"

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"We're not hurting him, bless you!" said Blake cheerfully. "Only a little bump or two for the good of his health!"

"Grooogh!" came in gurgling tones from Cutts of the Fifth.

"Stick to him, Fatty!" panted Tom Merry. "You asked for this, Cutts, and now you've got it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors, in a dusty and somewhat flushed and dishevelled crowd, gathered round the prostrate Cutts. The captain of St. Jim's was quite exhausted, and he panted feebly under the weight of Fatty Wynn. The fat Fourth-Former settled himself a little more comfortably on Cutts's chest, and there was a gasp from Cutts like air escaping from a puncture.

"Grooh! Gerrim off—he's squashing me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook an admonitory forefinger at Cutts of the Fifth, as his crimson face and blazing eyes glared up from the ground.

"You have bwrought this upon yourself, Cutts," he said severely. "You have only yourself to thank, for bein' such a beastly bully, you know!"

"Gerroff!"

"I twust you will have the gwace to apologise to Miss Cleveland for makin' this disgwaceful scene in her pwesence!"

"We'll bump him if he doesn't!" said Bernard Glyn. "In for a penny, in for a pound, you know. There will be trouble, anyway!"

"I'll report this direct to the Head!" said Cutts, in a choking voice. "Each of you young scoundrels will be flogged!"

"So you're going to report us?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, confound you!"

"And get us the hardest licking you can—what?"

"Yes," said Cutts, between his teeth.

"Then you may as well have some more, if you're going to do your worst, anyway," said Tom calmly. "Bump him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you dare——" yelled Cutts.

Bumping a senior was almost unheard of—and bumping the captain of St. Jim's was incredible, unthinkable, undreamt-of. But bumped the captain of St. Jim's was, and hard, too.

The juniors were in a mood to bump anybody just then. They were fed-up with Gerald Cutts and his tyranny. They had felt his heavy hand often enough, and it was their turn now. If they were going to be flogged, they might as well "take it out" of Cutts in advance; that was the way they looked at it. And they proceeded to take it out of Gerald Cutts in the most thoroughgoing manner.

Bump!

"Yow!" roared Cutts.

Bump! Bump!

"Yaroooh! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yah! Help! Oh! Stoppit! Yarooop!"

"Oh, please don't!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, in great distress.

"The wishes of a lady are commands, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "Besides, pewwaps the wottah has had enough."

"He seems to think so," grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him off with that," said Tom Merry generously. "Chuck him out on the towing-path, and have done with him."

"Good!"

Cutts, breathless and furious, and struggling wildly, was rushed along the path to the gate, and tossed bodily out upon the towing-path. He rolled in the grass there, panting for breath; and sat up, rumped and wild-eyed.

"Oh, I'll make you pay for this!" he gasped.

"Clear off!" commanded Tom Merry. "We give you half a minute to clear. If you're not gone by then, we'll duck you in the river!"

"Good egg!" chorused the juniors.

"Hurrah! Duck him, anyway!"

Cutts required less than half a minute to clear off. The hornet's nest he had brought about his ears was a little too lively for him, and he did not want to be ducked after being bumped.

He made a jump for his bicycle, and threw himself upon it, and pedalled wildly away down the towing-path—hatless, his collar torn out, and the split back of his jacket flying in the wind. Never, certainly, had a captain of St. Jim's been guilty of so ignominious a flight.

The juniors sent a yell of laughter after him.

"Bai Jove! Cutts has had to climb down this time, and no ewwah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as they turned back into the garden.

"There's going to be awful trouble over this at St. Jim's, though," said Digby soberly.

"Nevah mind—we have done our dutay, deah boy. We couldn't possibly allow Cutts to kick up a wow in the pwesence of a lady."

But the juniors were not in such a merry humour as they mounted their machines and rode back to Glyn House with Cousin Ethel. They knew that a storm awaited them when they returned to St. Jim's; and, in spite of themselves, it weighed upon their minds a little. Cousin Ethel was also disquieted and depressed with thinking of what would happen to her friends.

"Don't you wowwy, deah gal!" said Arthur Augustus comfortingly. "We were bound to have a wow soonah or latah with Cutts—he has been widin' the high horse too much, you know."

"But you will be flogged!" said Ethel, in distress.

"Pewwaps not. I shall explain the whole mattah to the Head, and put it to him as an old sport, you know."

Ethel smiled faintly; she did not think much good would come of Arthur Augustus putting it to the Head of St. Jim's as an old sport.

"Oh, we'll pull through, Ethel," said Tom Merry encouragingly. "Don't you bother! And we're going to have a ripping tea at Glyn's."

"Yes, there's that, anyway!" said Fatty Wynn, with satisfaction. "No good meeting trouble half-way—and if you do meet trouble, there's nothing like laying a solid foundation to keep your courage up. What have you got for tea, Glyn, old fellow?"

During tea at Glyn House the juniors made heroic attempts to appear cheerful; and succeeded so far that the clouds passed from Cousin Ethel's face. But when they left, and rode back to St. Jim's, their cheerfulness left them. They did not want Cousin Ethel to be worried, but they could not help being worried themselves.

"I'm sorry we've dragged you fellows into our row with Cutts," Tom Merry said ruefully, as they rode up to the school-gates.

"Oh rot!" said Blake. "We should stand by you, of course, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a bit rough on the New House chaps, though," Lowther remarked.

"Rot!" said Figgins, in his turn. "We're as much up against Cutts as you are. And it was bound to come. Cutts has been looking for trouble ever since he became captain, and we couldn't have fended him off much longer. My belief is that he's been watching for a chance to get up a really good case against us, to go to the Head."

"And we've played into his hands," said Manners.

"H'm! I suppose we have!" said Tom Merry. "Well, it can't be helped. We've got to grin and bear it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors wheeled their machines in, and put them up. And then, mustering up all their courage, made their way into the School House—to face the music.

CHAPTER 5.

Paying the Piper.

DARREL of the Sixth met the juniors as they came towards the School House. Darrel was looking very grim.

"You kids are wanted," he said.

"Yaas, we wathah expected that, Dawwel, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Is there goin' to be twouble?"

"Yes, I should say so, considering what you have done. All of you are to go to the Head's study—you New House chaps as well."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.

They went into the house. Several juniors met them in the doorway, all of them looking very grave.

"Sure, there's going to be throuble," Reilly of the Fourth told them, by way of warning. "Cutts came in awhile back in a ragin' temper. What have you omadhauns been doing to him?"

"Only bumping him," said Monty Lowther blandly.

There was a general exclamation.

"Bumping Cutts!"

"Bumping the captain of the school!"

"Oh, you duffers!"

"You asses!"

"Well, he asked for it," said Blake; "and we let him off the ducking, too."

"Yaas, he ought to have been ducked as well, but we let him off that," said D'Arcy. "But I suppose it's useless to expect anythin' like gwatitude fwom a fellow-like Cutts."

"Well, he didn't look very grateful," grinned Kangaroo of the Shell. "I should say that he was feeling anything

but grateful. He came in without a cap, and dusty from head to foot, and with his jacket split up. He went straight to the Head, just as he was."

"Oh, my hat! I suppose the Head is waxy?"

"I don't know, but I should imagine so," said the Cornstalk. "You'd better put some exercise-books inside your things, I should say."

The Co., with worried faces, made their way to the Head's study.

They found Dr. Holmes looked decidedly stern. He had a cane lying on the table before him as if in thoughtful anticipation of their arrival.

He ran his stern eye over the juniors, and they faced him in silence. They knew that they had no excuse to offer that would have satisfied their headmaster. Cutts, too, had had the advantage of telling his story first.

"Well?" said the Head grimly. "You are aware, of course, that I have received a report of your conduct from Cutts."

"I suppose so, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Have you any excuse to offer?" said the Head, taking up the cane.

"Yes, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"I am prepared to hear it," said the Head. "You three—Merry and Manners and Lowther—are the chief offenders. Cutts informs me that you were detained this afternoon to do lines, for an outrageous practical joke upon the German-master. Instead of doing your lines, you broke bounds. You do not deny it, I presume?"

"Well, no, sir."

"You did not do your impositions?"

"Not yet, sir. We're going to do them."

"You were directed to have them done by teatime. Is it not so?"

"Yes," confessed Tom Merry.

"And you disobeyed the order?"

"Ye-es."

"You do not, I presume, deny that the punishment was justly imposed—that it was you who placed the blacking in Herr Schneider's hat?"

"We did it, sir."

"Then your punishment was not in the slightest degree too severe," said the Head. "I should have caned you most severely if the matter had been brought to my notice. Cutts was not in the least too hard upon you. Yet you broke bounds, and when he found you, and ordered you to return to the school, you refused to obey him."

"I—I—we—"

"Is that the case, or is it not?" the Head demanded sharply.

"Well, yes, sir."

"Then you assaulted Cutts—"

"He started it, sir," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah—he acted in a weally outwageous mannah, in the pwesence of a lady."

"You see, sir—"

"Cutts tells me that as you refused to obey him, he intended to take you back to the school by force, as he was fully justified in doing. You resisted him, and then all of you assaulted him together."

The juniors were silent. Put like that, the matter did indeed look very serious—much more serious than they had supposed. They realised despairingly that Gerald Cutts was much too clever for them. He knew how to play the bully and tyrant without placing himself in the wrong.

"That is so, is it not?" demanded Dr. Holmes.

"I suppose so, sir."

"Cutts acted in a wotten mannah, sir, makin' a wow in the pwesence of my cousin, Miss Cleveland—"

"It does not appear to me to be Cutts who made the row, as you call it," said the Head. "He was acting with full authority in ordering Merry and Manners and Lowther back to the school. The disturbance was made by the juniors, who refused to obey the order of their captain!"

"Yaas; but—"

"It appears that you have no excuse whatever to offer; and, indeed, I can imagine none," said the Head.

"Undah the cires, sir—"

"If you have any excuse to make, D'Arcy, I am willing to hear it; but you must not waste time."

"As a mattah of fact, sir, we wegard our pwoccedin' as bein' quite justifiable. Cutts is a wottah, and a wank outsidah, and we do not wegard him as weally bein' a pwopah captain for the school. We considah—"

"That is enough, D'Arcy!"

"We weally considah, sir—"

"Silence!"

"Yaas; but— Leggo my arm, Blake! I am goin' to explain the mattah fully to the Head!"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake. "You're only making matters worse!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"DESPERATE MEASURES!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I shall cane you all," said the Head. "I have considered whether I should flog you for this outrageous offence against all the laws of the school. Upon the whole, I think that a severe caning will meet the case; but I warn you that if anything of the kind occurs again, you will be flogged publicly!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"I shall begin with you, Merry. Hold out your hand!"

Tom Merry held out his hand in silence.

There was no help for it; the juniors had to face the music, and they had to bear their punishment with as much fortitude as they could muster. Cutts had them on the hip this time, and they had no defence. Tom Merry received his caning without a sound or a word—six cuts, each of them extremely hard; but his face was quite pale when the infliction was finished.

Each of the juniors underwent the same punishment in turn, the doctor's stern face never relaxing for a moment as he dealt out the canings.

They had seldom seen their usually kind headmaster so stern and severe. The Head evidently considered it an occasion for impressing upon the juniors the value of discipline.

When the infliction was finished he dismissed them with a gesture, and the juniors made their way out of the study.

In the passage they paused, and regarded one another with glum looks.

"Well, this is a ripping end to a half-holiday—I don't think!" groaned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his hands painfully together. "I have always regarded the Head as an old sport, but I feah that I shall have to reconsidrah my opinion."

"The Head's down on us now," said Tom Merry gloomily. "After this, he will take Cutts's side, whatever happens. We've put ourselves in the wrong!"

"And played into that rotter's hands!" groaned Lowther.

"I suppose we've been silly asses!" said Manners. "But Cutts isn't going to get off scot-free after this. We're going for the beast!"

The juniors looked doubtful.

"Going for" the captain of the school, when he was backed up by the overwhelming authority of the Head, was a big order.

"I suppose it's up to us to make him sit up somehow!" said Kerr.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll think over it," said Blake, with a rueful grin. "I'm not looking out for any more whackings just yet, thanks. My hands feel as if they'd been boiled in oil. I never knew the Head was such a giddy old athlete!"

"He must have been doing Indian club exercise to get his muscle up on purpose!" granted Herries dolorously.

They made their way slowly and sadly down the passage. At the end of the passage they met Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts was spick-and-span now, and showed no sign of his unfortunate adventure at the Feathers. He glanced over the juniors with a mocking, cynical grin. They knew he had come there to meet them as they came away after their punishment to gloat over it, and they gave him black looks.

"You've had your lesson this time!" said Cutts.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Blake.

Cutts raised his hand.

"Take a hundred lines, Blake!"

"What!" said Blake sulphurously.

"I will put down the impertinence of you juniors, or I'll know the reason why!" said Cutts grimly. "Now I'm captain of the school I'm going to keep you in order. You won't have the time you did when Kildare was here. I never approved of Kildare's easy-going ways with you young cads!"

"You rotter!" burst out Tom Merry. "Old Kildare was worth a thousand of you!"

"Take a hundred lines, Merry—in addition to those you already have to do!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands hard. He did not say anything more. It was useless to argue with a fellow who had all the power in his hands.

"Now clear off!" said Cutts, in his most unpleasant and bullying tone. "And don't let me have any more of your cheek, that's all!"

This time Cutts's order was obeyed. The juniors would cheerfully have given worlds, or whole solar systems, for the

pleasure of bumping Cutts on the floor of the passage. But their punishment was too recent for them to think of doing that. Bumping Cutts was a pleasure that had to be paid for too dearly. The juniors knitted their brows and walked on in silence.

Cutts of the Fifth looked after them with a smile. It was the hour of his triumph, and he had his old enemies just where he wanted them—under his thumb!

CHAPTER 6.

Very Good!

THAT evening was not a happy one for the Terrible Three.

They had lines to occupy every spare moment—lines as thick, as Manners put it poetically, as leaves in Vallambrosa.

And it was a long time before their unfortunate palms recovered from the castigation they had received in the Head's study.

But they did not think of leaving the lines undone. They had been told to take them in to Cutts before bedtime, and they knew that they had to do it.

But their feelings towards Cutts were almost homicidal.

If Cutts would have let them alone, they would have let him alone; but their old enemy was evidently determined to take advantage of his position to make them pay for all their old offences. Cutts had not forgotten a single old grudge, and every old grudge was to be fed fat now—now that he had them in his power.

"There's no blessed end to it!" said Tom Merry, as he laid down his pen, after wearily writing the last line of six hundred. "The rotter will go on from bad to worse!"

"Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind," said Lowther tragically.

"Oh, don't blow Shakespeare at us now!" said Manners irritably. "I'm feeling inclined to slaughter Cutts!"

"And scalp him!" said Tom Merry meditatively.

"And boil him in oil!" said Lowther, with a sigh. "If we only could!"

The juniors reflected with pleased looks upon the ecstatic pleasure of boiling Cutts of the Fifth in oil for a few moments; but such a fate for Cutts was evidently out of the question.

"Have we got to stand it?" said Tom, after a pause.

"Looks like it."

"You see, this isn't the end. Cutts means to rain lines on us. It means all our time taken up—half-holidays booked ahead—a regular grind!"

"Blessed slavery!" said Lowther.

"And he will always have some jolly good excuse, so that we can't appeal to the House-master!"

"Trust him for that!" sniffed Manners.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"There's only one thing to be done!" he announced.

His chums looked at him inquiringly.

"If you've got any idea, get it off your chest," said Monty Lowther. "I'm blessed and blowed if I see what's to be done!"

"We've got to be good," said Tom.

"Good?" echoed Manners and Lowther.

"Yes, good!"

"How?"

Evidently being good was a resource that had never entered into the calculations of Manners and Lowther. Perhaps it was not in their line.

"Good's the word," said Tom firmly. "Cutts gets at us like this, you know, because we give him chances. We're always doing something or other—no harm in it—but something that gives him the pull over us. Well, we've got to stop it. We've got to be good—keep first-rate order—never break a rule—say 'Please, sir,' and 'Yes, sir,' and 'Oh, sir!' and 'No, sir,' like good little Georgie in the story-book!"

Monty Lowther gave a deep groan.

"Please, I'd rather be caned every day!" he said.

"We can do it when we get used to it," said Tom Merry, with heroic determination. "We're going to be good—thoroughly and utterly good—and never give Cutts a chance to get at us. If he starts punishing us without excuse, we'll appeal to the Housemaster on the spot, and get him squelched. Railton is just, you know. He'd be down on Cutts like a ton of bricks if he found him out in rotten bullying!"

"Yes, but—"

"Any chap can be a model of all the virtues if he tries hard enough," Tom Merry declared.

"But what an awful beast and prig such a chap would be!"

"Well, a chap can't have everything. We've got to crawl out from under Cutts's thumb, and the only way we can do it is by being awfully good."

"Oh dear!"

"No more larks!" said Tom resolutely. "No more sliding

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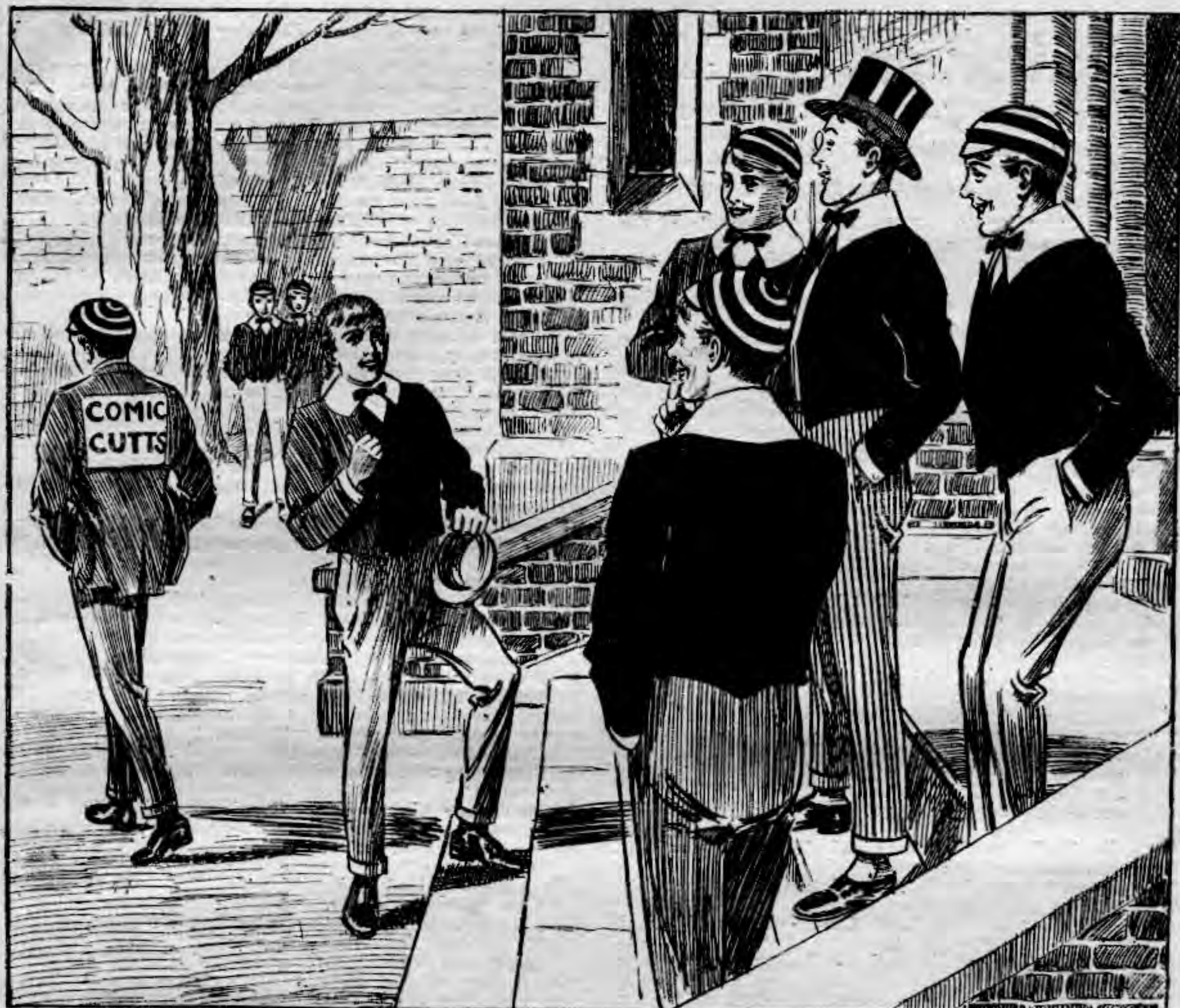
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Upon Cutts's broad back was attached a sheet of cardboard, and on the cardboard the two words in large letters showed up brightly in the sunshine—"COMIC CUTTS!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.
(See Chapter 14.)

down the banisters, or putting ink down Skimpole's back, or blacking in Schneider's topper. No more yelling in the passage outside the prefects' room and bolting. We are going to be so good that Cutts will be simply exasperated."

Monty Lowther's humorous face broke into a grin.

"Well, there's something in that," he remarked. "If Cutts doesn't get a chance at us he will be awfully wild."

"One way of getting our own back on him," said Manners, brightening up. "After all, it's not a bad idea. I'm not dead-set on sliding down banisters, as far as that goes."

"Or yelling outside the prefects' room and bolting!" grinned Lowther.

"And it's a waste of blacking, putting it in Schneider's topper!" added Tom Merry. "Waste not, want not, you know."

"Exactly!"

"We'll begin by turning over a new leaf this very evening," said Tom. "We've got to take these lines in to Cutts. We're going to be meek and respectful—so meek and respectful that Cutts will be ready to bite us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Somewhat cheered up by the prospect of ragging Cutts in a way which would not give him a possible chance of getting back on them, the Terrible Three collected up their many lines and left the study.

They made their way to the Fifth-form passage sedately, walking in a solemn row. Tom Merry gave a discreet tap at Gerald Cutts's door.

"Come in!" rapped out Cutts.

They entered.

Cutts of the Fifth had Gilmore and Knox of the Sixth with him. There was a scent of cigarette-smoke in the study, but no cigarettes were to be seen. Monty Lowther coughed,

in order to let Cutts know that he had observed the scent of tobacco.

"Well, what do you want?" said Cutts, eyeing them.

"Our lines, please, Cutts," said Tom Merry meekly.

Cutts stared at him. He had expected their severe punishment to have some effect on the Shell fellows, but he had hardly expected this meekness. Meekness was not exactly an attribute of the Terrible Three. Cutts cast a triumphant glance at Knox and Gilmore. His glance said as plainly as words could have said that he had succeeded in bringing the three most rebellious juniors in the School House to heel at last.

"Put them on the table," said Cutts.

"Yes, please, Cutts."

"Thank you, Cutts!" said Manners.

"Thank you so much!" said Lowther solemnly.

Cutts began to look a little puzzled. Meekness was all very well, but there was such a thing as overdoing it. He frowned as he looked over the lines.

"Do you call this writing?" he asked unpleasantly.

"Yes, please, Cutts."

"Well, I don't. If you think this kind of scrawl will do for an imposition, you're making a mistake."

"Thank you, Cutts."

"You'll do a hundred each over again, and let it be a bit more civilised next time," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes, Cutts. Anything else?"

"Look here, what little game are you playing?" demanded Cutts, with a black look. "Not so much of your 'Yes, Cutts,' and 'Thank you, Cutts.' Do you hear?"

"Oh, certainly, Cutts!"

"Thank you very much, Cutts," said Lowther. "You've only got to give your orders, and we shall obey them—if we

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can't anticipate your wishes. Of course, whenever we can anticipate your wishes we shall do so."

Gilmore chuckled and, Knox grinned. Cutts's dark brow became darker.

"I suppose you fags think this sort of thing funny!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"What sort of thing?" he asked.

"You are trying to pull my leg, you young hound, and you know it!"

"Oh, Cutts! As if I'd pull the leg of the captain of the school—a person in authority over me!" exclaimed Tom Merry in a shocked tone. "I'd rather pull the leg of—of the Emperor of China! I would, really!"

"If you are asking for a licking—" said Cutts, breathing hard.

"No, thank you, Cutts!"

"You're awfully kind, Cutts, but we won't bother you."

"Not at all, Cutts dear!"

Gilmore and Knox broke into a cackle again. Cutts of the Fifth flushed with rage, and jumped up and seized a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Merry!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.

"What for?" he asked.

"I'm going to cane you for your cheek!"

"Very well. And when you have caned me I shall go straight to Mr. Railton and tell him every word I have said, and ask whether I ought to be caned for it," said Tom calmly. "There you are!"

And he held out his hand.

Cutts gripped the cane hard, but he did not lash at the extended hand. It was outstretched invitingly before him, and he longed to bring the cane down upon it with a sounding swish, but he did not. He lowered the cane.

"Get out of my study!" he said.

"Yes, Cutts."

"And bring me the hundred lines each to-morrow."

"Thank you, Cutts."

"Good-night, Cutts!"

"So good of you, Cutts!"

And the Terrible Three bowed gracefully to Cutts and walked out of the study, closing the door with meek gentleness.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gilmore and Knox in chorus.

Cutts glared at them savagely.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

They cackled again.

"Why didn't you cane them, Cutts, old boy?" asked Gilmore.

"And get hauled over the coals by Railton!" said Cutts savagely. "No, thanks! I'm not going to put myself in the wrong. Those young scoundrels have the laugh of me for once, but it won't last long. You'll see. And stop cackling, you silly fatheads, or else get out of my study, confound you!"

In the passage the Terrible Three were chuckling as they made their way to the junior common-room. They had succeeded, at last, in pulling the leg of the redoubtable Cutts, without any ill-consequences to themselves. And there was solace in that, and it cheered them upon their unaccustomed path to goodness.

CHAPTER 7.

Levison in Luck.

"**H**EAH they are!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cheerfully, as the chums of the Shell came into the common-room.

"We've been waiting for you," said Blake.

"Something's on, you know," remarked Digby mysteriously.

"Levison!" explained Herries.

The four chums of Study No. 6 had been conversing together in low tones, with a considerable degree of animation. There was evidently something "on."

"What's the little game?" asked Tom Merry. "Nothing against the rules of the House, I hope, young fellows?"

"Whom are you calling young fellows?" demanded Blake warmly.

"Ahem! Don't raise your voice, Blake," said Tom childishly.

"What! Why shouldn't I raise my voice if I want to, I'd like to know?"

"We don't talk to chaps who raise their voices," Monty Lowther explained. "Raised voices might disturb the serenity of the noble Cutts."

"Wh-a-t!"

"We have sworn to love, honour, and obey Cutts of the Fifth, and we can't take part in anything that would worry him, you know."

"Gone off your silly dots?" asked the mystified Blake.

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"Look here, we've been discussing about dealing with Levison!"

"You know Cutts gets all sorts of information about things that go on in the Lower School," said Digby. "It's pretty plain that Levison tells him. Levison or Mellish, or both, must have sneaked to Cutts this afternoon, and brought him to the Feathers after you, and caused all the trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Most likely," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"Well, I suppose we are not going to let the cad sneak about us and not warm him?" said Blake indignantly.

"No fear!" said Herries, with great emphasis.

"We are goin' to make Levison sowwy for himself, deah boys, and of course you will want to take a hand."

Tom Merry shook his head gravely.

"That depends on what you're going to do," he replied. "Are you thinking of taking Levison by the hand and talking to him sweetly, like a Dutch uncle?"

"Talk to your grandmother!" growled Blake. "I'm going to take him by the neck, and talk to him like a coke-hammer, if you want to know."

"And bump him—hard!" said Herries.

"And slaughter him!" said Digby.

"And wag him baldheaded, you know, deah boys! I weally considah that the time has come to make an example of Levison."

"Then I'm afraid we can't have a hand in it," said Tom Merry regretfully. "We have just sworn a solemn swear to be good."

"Oh, come off!" said Blake.

"Honest Injun. No larks! No rags! No nothing!" said Tom Merry categorically. "We're going to be good—awfully good—rippingly good—too good to be true, in fact."

"If you're trying to be funny—" began Blake.

"Serious as a whole bench of giddy judges. The fact is, we're not going to give Cutts another chance at us," explained Tom. "By being good we shall disarm him. The soft answer turneth away wrath, you know."

"Not Cutts's wrath," said Digby sagely. "Cutts's wrath can't stand any number of soft answers. They only make him more ratty."

"That's one of our objects," said Tom blandly. "The rattier we make him, the better, so long as we don't give him any excuse to go for us."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Jack Blake nodded his head thoughtfully.

"I see," he said slowly. "I admit there's something in that. Only we're bound to rag Levison for sneaking, you know. He can't be allowed to go on."

"Mustn't do anything for him to sneak about," said Tom, with a shake of the head. "That's the best plan. Think how wild Cutts will be if he can't find a single excuse for a whole week for giving us lines."

"Bai Jove, there's somethin' in that, you know," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "Only it's wathah wuff on us to have to let that wottah Levison off!"

"Forgive him, and hope that he'll turn over a new leaf," advised Monty Lowther.

"Oh crumbs! He won't turn over any new leaves—they're not in his line. I believe the beast sneaked about Lumley-Lumley to-day. Cutts found out, somehow, that he had been down to the village to see old Grimes without permission."

"Heah the wottah comes," said D'Arcy.

Levison of the Fourth came into the common-room with Mellish. There was an unusual swagger about Levison just now. As a rule, he was not a very important member of the Fourth Form, and he was quite in the shade in the School House. Tom Merry & Co., the leaders of the House, took very little notice of his existence. Levison repaid their contempt with a bitter dislike, and of late he had had several opportunities of gratifying that amiable feeling. The fact that Levison was a favourite with the captain of the school, and that anyone who offended Levison soon found himself in trouble with Cutts, made the cad of the Fourth a much more important person than he had hitherto been. Fellows who would not have stood any "cheek" from him formerly, now treated him with marked civility, and Levison had already assumed bullying airs towards some of the smaller boys.

By reason of his influence with Cutts, he hoped to be able to assume the upper hand over even the Terrible Three, though that was not an easy task.

Levison glanced at the group of juniors with a sneering smile as he came over towards the fire, near which they were standing. He sat down in an armchair, purposely knocking his boot against Monty Lowther's leg.

Formerly, Lowther would have told Levison what he thought of him in choice language; but he didn't now. He drew his leg away, and carefully dusted the mark of Levison's boot from his trousers, and said nothing.

Levison drew a deep breath.

It was his first tentative essay, as it were, in making himself unpleasant to the chums of the Shell, and it seemed to promise well. He wondered how much they would stand. He determined to put that to the test at once.

"Don't jabber so near me, you fellows," he said, as Lowther began blandly to talk about the football match of the afternoon. "You bother me."

"Certainly not, Levison," said Lowther politely.

"Stand further off, can't you?" snapped Levison. "You're taking the fire away from me."

"How far off shall we stand?" asked Manners suavely.

"Get to the other side of the table, confound you!" said Levison, in aggressive and domineering tones.

The Terrible Three moved quietly to the other side of the table.

Levison's loud and unpleasant voice had been heard by every fellow in the common-room, and when the Terrible Three were seen to obey his order there was a buzz of amazement. Some of the juniors stared at Tom Merry & Co. as if wondering whether they were dreaming. For the champion fighting-men of the School House to allow the biggest rotter in the House to bully them was an astonishing thing.

"Faith, and phwat does it mane intirely?" muttered Reilly, in wonder.

"Gone off your dot, Tom Merry?" demanded Kangaroo bluntly.

"Hush!" said Tom.

The Cornstalk looked perplexed.

"Hush! What for?" he asked, looking round.

"You'll disturb Levison."

"D-d-disturb Levison!" gasped Noble, almost staggering with surprise. "Wha-a-at do you mean? What does it matter if I disturb Levison?"

"Hush!"

"Look here——"

"Levison wants to be quiet!" Tom Merry explained calmly. "We mustn't disturb him. He would be angry with us."

"Angry!" yelled Kangaroo. "And what the dickens does it matter whether Levison is angry or not, you howling duffer?"

"Hush!"

"Sure, and it's mad they are intirely," said Reilly, with a shake of the head.

"I guess they're pulling Levison's esteemed leg," murmured Lumley-Lumley. "Look how the silly ass is sucking it all in! He really thinks they are afraid of him."

Levison certainly did. He seemed almost to expand with satisfaction. He had hardly dared to hope that such a state of things would come to pass; but he could not doubt his ears. He was a person to be feared, even by the Terrible Three, who feared nobody else. He—Levison—was going to be cock of the walk in the School House for the future—at least, as long as Cutts of the Fifth was captain.

"Not so much talk there!" he called out.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Kangaroo. But Monty Lowther replied sweetly:

"Just as you like, Levison."

"Oh, certainly, Levison."

Manners fetched the footstool, and placed it for Levison's feet carefully. The whole common-room watched him with dumb amazement. The Terrible Three were singing small with a vengeance now, and before Levison, of all fellows! It took the whole crowd's breath away to watch it.

"Now bring me a cushion for my head!" snapped Levison.

"Yes, immediately."

Manners brought the cushion, and adjusted it behind Levison's head in the armchair. Levison, almost intoxicated by triumph by this time, went a little further—further than he would have gone if he had retained his habitual caution.

"Clumsy ass!" he growled. "Don't knock it against my head."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said Manners.

"Get away, you fool!" said Levison; and he gave Manners a rough push that made him stagger. Manners bumped against the table.

It was unfortunate after all the trouble the Terrible Three had taken to be very good. But Manners lost his temper at that moment, and did not stop to think. He caught Levison's collar with his left hand, and the cushion with his right, and in a second Levison was yanked out of the chair, and Manners was belabouring him frantically with the cushion.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Take that, you cad! Take that, you sneak! Take that, you rotter!"

Whack, whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. "Manners, hold on! You're spoiling the whole show! Ha, ha, ha! Hold on!"

But Manners didn't hold on, excepting to Levison, and the cushion rose and fell with terrific force and speed, and the yells of Levison of the Fourth rang through the School House.

CHAPTER 8.

No Good!

"CAVE!"

It was a sudden warning from a fellow near the door.

But it came too late!

The cushion was still rising and falling, and Levison was still struggling and yelling like a lunatic, as Cutts of the Fifth strode into the room, a cane in his hand, and a frown upon his face.

Tom Merry groaned under his breath.

"Oh, my hat! Here we are again!"

"Yaas, wathah! This is what comes of bein' too good, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was wathah too sudden a change, you know."

"Manners!" shouted Cutts. "Release Levison instantly!"

Manners let Levison go as if he had suddenly become red-hot. Too late he remembered his heroic resolve to be good.

"Yes, Cutts!" he said meekly.

Levison staggered away from the Shell fellow, his hair ruffled, his face flushed, crimson, and panting with pain and rage.

"Now, what's the cause of this?" demanded Cutts, in his most magisterial tone. "Manners, you have attacked Levison, and made a disturbance that's been heard over the whole house."

"So sorry!" murmured Manners.

"He—he came for me like a wild beast!" half sobbed Levison. "He whacked me with the cushion! Ow! You saw him? Ow—ow!"

"Hold out your hand, Manners!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Levison pushed Manners first—shoved him against the table! You know you did, Levison!"

"You can cane us both if you can either," said Manners, almost reconciled to a caning if Levison was to have one as well.

Cutts hesitated for a moment. To punish his staunch supporter in the Lower School was not in accordance with his plans at all. But it was necessary for him to keep up an appearance of administering strict justice.

"Did you push Manners, Levison?" he asked.

"Well, I gave him a bit of a shove," admitted Levison sullenly.

"Then you are to blame as well, though not to the same extent. Manners, you have committed what I can only call a savage assault upon Levison."

"Oh, crikey!" murmured Manners.

"I shall cane both of you. Hold out your hand—now the other—now the other again—and the other!"

"Ow—ow—ow—ow!" groaned Manners.

Cutts laid on each of the four cuts with terrific vim. Manners was almost doubled up by the time the last cut was administered. He backed away, gasping, and looking quite pale. Cutts turned to the cad of the Fourth.

"Now you, Levison!" he commanded.

Levison stared at him.

"You—you're going to cane me?" he gasped.

"Certainly! It's my duty as captain of the school to administer even-handed justice," said Cutts severely. "Hold out your hand at once!"

Levison, with his features set in a black scowl, held out his hand. His eyes were glittering with rage. But his scowl broke into a grin as the cane came down. Cutts did not lay it on Levison as he had laid in upon Manners. The cane scarcely flicked Levison's outstretched palm.

"Now the other!" said Cutts, as grave as a judge.

Levison smiled, and held out the other hand. Again a flick.

"Now keep order here!" said Cutts, as he went towards the door. "If there's any more disturbance here you'll hear from me, I warn you."

And Cutts walked away.

The chums of the School House gazed at one another with feelings almost too deep for words. Gerald Cutts had done them again. If he had caned only Manners, when both Manners and Levison had been rowing, an appeal to the Housemaster would have been of some avail. But he hadn't. He had administered strict justice by caning both the delinquents—only he had caned Manners savagely, and he had caned Levison in a way that would hardly have hurt a fly. It was made abundantly clear to all the fellows there that Levison was a privileged person, who was not to be

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really punished for anything, and yet in a way that made it impossible for them to take any step.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" groaned Blake. "Oh, Cutts is as deep as a well! There's no keeping one's end up against a fellow like Cutts."

"No feah!" said Arthur Augustus dolefully. "Fortunately, Mannahs gave him an awful whackin' befoah the beast came in."

"Yes, that was real luck, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley. Levison looked vauntingly at the juniors.

"You'd better mind your P's and Q's," he remarked. "I'll make some of you sit up before I'm done with you if I have any of your rot, you mark my words!"

"I'll mark your chivvy if I have any of your gas!" said Kangaroo savagely.

Levison sneered, and walked out of the common-room. "This is a pretty state of things, and no mistake!" Clifton Dane remarked. "Cutts meant us to see that Levison's not to be touched."

"Oh, of course he's bound to back up his special sneak," said Tom Merry bitterly. "But you were an ass, Manners!"

"I lost my temper," confessed Manners. "I couldn't let that cad shove me, could I? And I'm jolly glad I gave him a licking, anyway."

"And he's jolly well going to have a dormitory ragging to-night for sneaking to Cutts this afternoon!" said Blake savagely.

But Blake's proposition, which would have been hailed with enthusiasm at any other time, was received in silence now.

"We shall have Cutts down on us," said Kerruish, after a pause.

"Blow Cutts!"

"Can't back up against the captain of the school," said the Manx junior, with a shake of the head. "Better let the cad alone."

Blake shook his head obstinately. But it was clear that most of the Fourth were of opinion that the best thing to do was to keep clear of Cutts. They felt that they would never be able to catch their tyrant in the wrong, and a row in the dormitory at night would give Cutts another opportunity of coming down upon them heavily.

"Are we going on being good?" asked Lowther, as the Terrible Three left the common-room a little later.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, old chap. Let's give it a good trial. It's the only way to keep our end up with Cutts."

"Oh, all right," groaned Lowther. "We'll try it. But depend on it the beast will find some way of getting at us all the same."

"I don't see how he can if we don't let him," said Tom. But there was a certain amount of doubt in his tone. He did not feel sure of that.

"Well, you cads, what are you plotting now?" asked Levison's voice at their elbow.

And Tom Merry, without stopping to think, let out a back-hander that sent Levison staggering along the passage, to fall in a heap four or five yards away. Cutts—Cutts seemed to have the gift of ubiquity—was on the scene in a twinkling.

"Merry!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"I saw what you did—a cowardly——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry, his eyes flashing, losing his temper in the same unfortunate way as Manners had done. "Cheese that rot, Cutts!"

"What!"

"Levison's a beastly, sneaking cad, and you're another for backing him up!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in a voice that rang the length of the passage. "That's what we think of you, and now you know it!"

Cutts raised his hand.

"Merry, you are gated for Saturday afternoon. You will stay in and write lines. Another word, and I'll cane you as well, on the spot."

Tom Merry's lips were open, to utter a good many other words, but his chums grasped him and dragged him away. The Terrible Three reached their study, Tom Merry breathing fury.

"Gated for Saturday!" he gasped. "My hat! I—I——" Words failed him.

Lowther grinned feebly.

"Are we still going to be good?" he murmured.

"Blow being good!" said Tom Merry forcibly. "We're going to declare war on Cutts, and make him sit up, and we won't give the beast a minute's rest."

And Manners and Lowther, with deep feeling, said "Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Dormitory Ragging.

JACK BLAKE'S face wore a grim expression when he went into the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House that evening.

He was very quiet, however.

When Darrel of the Sixth saw lights out in the dormitory, there was nothing to indicate that anything unusual was on the tapis.

Levison had cast an anxious look about upon his Form-fellows, but they were not looking at Levison.

The sneak of the Fourth was not feeling quite easy. He knew that he was suspected of sneaking to Cutts, and after what had happened that afternoon the juniors could hardly be in doubt about the fact that he had sneaked.

True, if they ragged him they would receive punishment afterwards at the hands of the captain of St. Jim's; but that would not undo the ragging, and Levison did not like being ragged.

The cad of the Fourth did not go to sleep after "lights out." He knew that some of the others were remaining awake also, and he wondered why—uneasily.

Footsteps were heard to pass the door about a quarter of an hour after Darrel had gone. Jack Blake grinned to himself in the darkness. He knew that Cutts was making his rounds, in the hope of hearing some disturbance.

The footsteps paused for a moment outside the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, and then passed on and died away.

Cutts was satisfied. But Blake did not move immediately. He allowed another quarter of an hour to pass. It was not till ten o'clock rang out from the old clock-tower that Blake sat up in bed.

Then he called out softly:

"You fellows awake?"

"Yaas, wathah!" came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bed.

"I'm awake!" came Herries's deep voice.

"What-ho!" said Digby.

"Turn out, then!" said Blake.

He slipped out of bed and lighted a candle. Half the Fourth-Formers sat up in bed, in the flickering light.

Herries and D'Arcy and Digby turned out, and after a pause Reilly and Kerruish followed suit. The rest remained in bed.

"Levison!" said Blake quietly.

Levison snored.

"Are you asleep, Levison?"

Snore.

"Yank him out by the ankles!" said Blake.

Levison suddenly sat up.

"Look here, what's the little game?" he exclaimed.

"Not asleep after all?" said Blake pleasantly. "I thought not! Get up!"

"I don't want to get up."

"You see, it isn't a question of what you want, but of what you've got to do," explained Blake.

"I'm not going to get up."

Blake came towards the bed, and Levison sat up, his face full of spiteful fear and apprehension.

"If you touch me, I'll shout!" he exclaimed. "Cutts will hear, and—ow!"

Blake grasped him, and he came out of bed in a heap, and bumped on the floor.

"If you yell," said Blake calmly, "you'll get this slipper—well laid on. We don't want Cutts here. Cutts would be superfluous."

"Yaas, wathah! Cutts would be decidedly de twop."

"You are going to answer for your sins now, Levison," said Blake. "Stand up!"

Levison stood up.

He would have given a great deal to shout for Cutts; but the slipper in Blake's hand was ready, and the expression on the face of the Yorkshire junior was ruthless. Levison knew that Jack Blake was not to be trifled with at that moment.

"Gentlemen," said Jack Blake, glancing round at the wide-awake juniors in the flickering light of the candle—"gentlemen, you are all aware that Cutts, our new and respected captain, has mysterious ways of getting information about us. He has dropped on us for all sorts of things we thought he knew nothing about. I accuse Levison of being a sneak and spying on us to report to Cutts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Do you deny it, Levison?"

"Yes, I do!" growled Levison.

"Faith, and we'll all know it's thrue intirely," said Reilly.

"Did you tell Cutts to-day that Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were going with us to the Feathers?" demanded Blake.

"No."

"Then how did he know they were there?"

"How should I know?"

"Why did Cutts only pretend to cane you in the common-room instead of giving you the real article?"

Levison was silent. That incident had given him thoroughly away, and he knew it. He had no defence to make; all the fellows knew that he had sneaked, and he knew that they knew it.

"Gentlemen," said Blake, "is Levison guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" said all the juniors at once.

"You hear that, Levison?"

"You'd better not rag me!" said Levison, clicking his teeth. "I'll let Cutts know all about it in the morning, if you do."

"And after that, you've got the cheek to say you're not a sneak?" exclaimed Herries.

"Levison's guilt is quite demonstrated, deah boys. I pwopose that we give him a feahful waggin', as a lesson."

"Hear, hear!"

"Pile in!"

"Quiet!" chided Blake. "Don't wake the house. It would be just like Cutts to be spying on us. Levison having been found guilty, I hereby sentence him to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and boiled in oil, tarred and feathered, and whacked with a slipper. As the whole sentence cannot, unfortunately, be carried out, we must be satisfied with simply whacking him with a slipper; but the whacks shall be well laid on."

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck him across his bed. If he tries to yell, jam a cake of soap into his mouth."

"Yes, rather."

"Let me go!" shrieked Levison, struggling fiercely as the Fourth-Formers grasped him. "Let me go! Help! Cutts! I—groo—hoo—yowwww!"

Levison's cries died away as a cake of soap was crammed into his mouth.

Then he was flung face downwards across his bed.

Four juniors held him there, outspread; and Jack Blake got to work swiftly and energetically with the slipper.

He was afraid that Levison's yells might have been heard, swiftly as they had been checked by the soapy gag; and he did not mean to lose time.

The slipper rose and fell rapidly.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Gerrroogggh!"

Levison made a wild, mumbling sound as Blake piled in with the slipper. The loud whacks echoed through the dormitory.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Groooooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in, deah boy! Give the wottah beans!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, I can heah footpwwints—I mean, footsteps!"

"Cave!"

Blake brought down the slipper in a final tremendous whack as the dormitory door was thrown open. Levison succeeded in ejecting the soap from his mouth, and let out a fiendish yell. Mr. Railton strode into the dormitory, with Gerald Cutts at his heels.

"Blake!" rapped out the Housemaster.

Blake dropped the slipper.

He had expected Cutts, but not Mr. Railton. It was like Cutts to bring the Housemaster upon the scene to catch the juniors in the very act of a ragging in the dormitory by night.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Blake.

"Oh, bai Jove," murmured D'Arcy in dismay, "there's goin' to be a wow now!"

Arthur Augustus was right. The School Housemaster was very much down upon dormitory raggings; and quite rightly so, as a rule. Mr. Railton's face was grim and stern as he strode towards the juniors, a cane tightly grasped in his hand.

"What are you attacking Levison for?" he demanded.

"Sneaking, sir," said Blake directly.

"I didn't!" howled Levison.

"You have no right to punish him for that, even if he did so, and he denies it!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "I shall severely cane every junior who is out of bed, and I shall begin with you, Blake!"

Mr. Railton began with Blake, and Blake felt that life wasn't worth living by the time he had finished with him. Never had the Housemaster laid it on so hard. The other juniors waited their turn quaking, and they went through it, one after another. Cutts of the Fifth stood watching the scene with a quiet, grave face, not showing, in the presence of the Housemaster, any of the cynical satisfaction he was feeling. He did not intend to let Mr. Railton suspect

that he was using him simply as an instrument for paying off old grudges against the juniors.

The caning finished, Mr. Railton ordered the juniors back to bed. They were glad to go, with many suppressed groans.

Mr. Railton glanced round the dormitory with a stern eye. "If there is any further disturbance here, I shall come back," he said.

He left the dormitory, followed by Cutts, taking the candle with him. Cutts had not spoken a word.

In the darkness there were sounds of anguish from many beds.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Groogh!"

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

"My hat! Yow-ow!"

"Blake, you silly ass!" groaned Kerruish. "If you propose any more dormitory raggings, we'll—we'll—suffocate you! Ow!"

There was a mocking chuckle from Levison.

"I fancy you've got it a bit worse than I did," he remarked. "How do you like it?"

"Shut up, you rotter!" growled Blake.

"Shut up yourself!" retorted Levison.

And Blake did not even hurl a pillow at him. For that night, at least, even the most warlike junior in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's felt that it was better to leave Levison severely alone.

CHAPTER 10.

The Inventive Genius.

TOM MERRY & CO. felt that it was the limit.

During the following few days they were made to feel the heavy hand of the new captain of St. Jim's more heavily than ever.

Cutts did not give them any rest.

He was paying off old, long scores, and he was paying them off with interest. And every time he came down upon Tom Merry & Co. he contrived so skilfully that there was no chance for them. Somehow or another, they were always in the wrong, or could be made to appear in the wrong. Indeed, Cutts succeeded in impressing upon the minds of the Head and the Housemaster that the Co. were "up" against his captaincy, and were giving as much trouble as possible, which naturally brought upon Tom Merry and his chums the frowns of the powers that were.

Cutts had them, as it were, in a cleft stick, and there seemed no end to it.

For the more he punished them, the more he made them appear rebellious and insubordinate, and in need of correction.

On Saturday afternoon Tom Merry had the pleasure of sitting in his study and writing out lines while all the other fellows were out of doors in the bright spring weather.

Tom's mind was busy while he was mechanically grinding out lines.

He had told Manners and Lowther that the Co. were going to declare war on Cutts of the Fifth; but as yet the war had not prospered. Cutts seemed to have it all his own way from start to finish.

They were under his thumb, and he was keeping them there. But from day to day the Co. were growing more and more exasperated, and it was certain that sooner or later there would be an outbreak.

Tom Merry knew that; and he knew, too, that the outbreak, when it came, would probably have the result of placing them more firmly than ever under Cutts's thumb, and lowering them still further in the good graces of the Housemaster.

How was Cutts to be stopped and punished, without results altogether too painful to the juniors? That was the problem that Tom Merry had to solve, and it was a knotty one.

Tom thought it over while he was doing his lines. The lines were finished at last, and it was nearly teatime. Tom rose from the table with a sigh; for a fellow of his tastes it was decidedly "rotten" to pass a whole sunny afternoon indoors. He walked along the Shell passage to the end study, which belonged to Noble, Dane, and Glyn. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane were out, but Bernard Glyn was there. Glyn was one of the juniors whom Cutts had marked down to be punished, and that afternoon he, as well as Tom Merry, had had lines to do.

The excuse had been easy enough to find. Glyn was an inventive genius, and what he did not know about mechanics and "stinks" was not worth knowing. His experiments in chemistry—euphoniously termed stinks by the St. Jim's fellows—sometimes caused the Shell passage to be pervaded by weird smells, and fellows had often come along to the end study breathing fire and slaughter on that account. Most

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of Cutts's punishments were unpopular; but even the juniors felt that he wasn't going too far in dropping on Glyn for making the passage "hum" with his deadly smells. Cutts had chosen his opportunity, and descended on Glyn—confiscated a whole set of smell materials, and detained him for the half-holiday as a penalty.

Bernard Glyn was not writing lines when Tom Merry looked in. He had scribbled through his imposition hastily and finished it, to have it ready for Cutts; and he was occupying the remainder of his detention in his favourite pursuits. There was a strong odour in the study as Tom looked in, and he coughed. Bernard Glyn, in his shirt-sleeves, was busy at the table, and he turned his head as he heard the cough.

"Finished your impot?" asked Tom.

"Yes, that's done. Come in!"

"Ahem! I'd rather stand in the doorway, if you don't mind," said Tom, with a sniff. "What on earth is that horrible niff for?"

Glyn glanced with satisfaction at a queer-looking compound he was stirring in a metal bowl.

"It's my new invention," he explained.

Tom Merry sniffed again.

"Seems to me that every blessed invention you make smells worse than the last," he remarked. "Is that the stuff Cutts was down on you for making?"

"That's it."

"And what is it for?"

"It's a jolly good invention," said Glyn, his eyes glistening. "It's for burglars, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't suppose the most enterprising burglar would burgle any of that stuff," he said.

"Ass!" said Glyn politely. "It's to catch burglars. You know, the ordinary idea of a burglar alarm, an electric bell rings, or something like that, and the burglar scoots off safe and sound. Well, my invention will enable the police to track him down. There is a concealed electric button, you see. The burglar presses it in trying the handle of the door—door of a room, or a safe, or anything—a hidden spring works, there is a squirt, and a stream of this liquid is ejected over him."

"My hat!"

"The smell will cling to him for at least twenty-four hours. He can't possibly get rid of it," exclaimed Glyn. "In twenty-four hours the police will be able to nose him out, if they've got any noses. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Glyn. "I think it's a jolly good invention, and will practically abolish burglary in the long run. I've used a lot of fearful things in making it—asse-fetida chiefly—and I believe it's the very worst smell that ever has been invented."

"Well, it seems like it," confessed Tom Merry. "I think you've hit the mark there."

"Oh, this is mild, compared with what it is at full force," said Glyn. "Wait till I let you smell the whole mixture."

"Thanks! I'd rather not."

"It will simply make you stagger," said Glyn, with deep enthusiasm. "It's something like very old fish, and something like carbide of calcium in its strongest state, and something like drains out of order, and something like

"Great Scott! It must be a regular ripper," said Tom Merry. "I wish we could give Cutts a good ducking in it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's eyes suddenly glistened. He had spoken carelessly; but his own words suggested a new idea to him.

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He came into the study, braving the deadly odour, and closed the door excitedly.

"I say, Glyn, old man, that's a wheeze!"

"Eh, what's a wheeze?" asked Glyn, who was busy now pouring his fearful concoction into a brass saucepan.

"About Cutts!"

"Oh, blow Cutts!"

"He will want blowing, and airing, and lots of things, if we can work this wheeze on him," grinned Tom Merry. "Never mind the burglars—they haven't done anything to you, and I don't suppose it would be any good for that, any way."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Instead of using that stuff as a burglar-catcher, we'll use it as a Cutts-catcher."

"What!"

"Suppose we managed somehow to swamp some of it over Cutts."

Bernard Glyn burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! We could do it! What a wheeze!"

"It would make him feel that life wasn't worth living, I should think, for twenty-four hours or so!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By George, he would have to be isolated! Nobody would want to go near him," grinned the schoolboy inventor. "He'd have to keep out of the Form-room, and keep on his giddy lonesome till the niff wore off. He'd never be able to wear the same clothes again. But how are we going to do it?"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought.

"What about chucking it over him when he's in bed?"

"He'd know at once where it came from," said Glyn, with a shake of the head. "You see, he's smelled it once already."

"H'm! Yes. It will have to be an accident, then."

"An accident?" said Glyn doubtfully.

"Yes. You've got a squirt here?"

"Lots. I use 'em for—"

"Blow what you use 'em for. Have you got a big squirt that would hold about a pint of that awful stuff?"

"Yes, or a quart."

"Good egg! Could you rig it up mechanically, with some of your electric wires and things, to go off by itself?"

"Of course I could, easy as falling off a form."

"Then that's the game. Rig it up here. You've a right to do as you like in your own study, haven't you?"

"I suppose so."

"Then, somehow or other, we'll get Cutts to come spying here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The thing goes off, and

Bernard Glyn roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ripping, and easy as winking, if we can get Cutts to come. I could arrange a wire with an electric-button under the mat there at the door. Soon as anybody treads on the mat, the button is pressed, the squirt lets fly, and a regular rain of smell-stuff bashes right at the chap coming in, swamps him from head to foot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

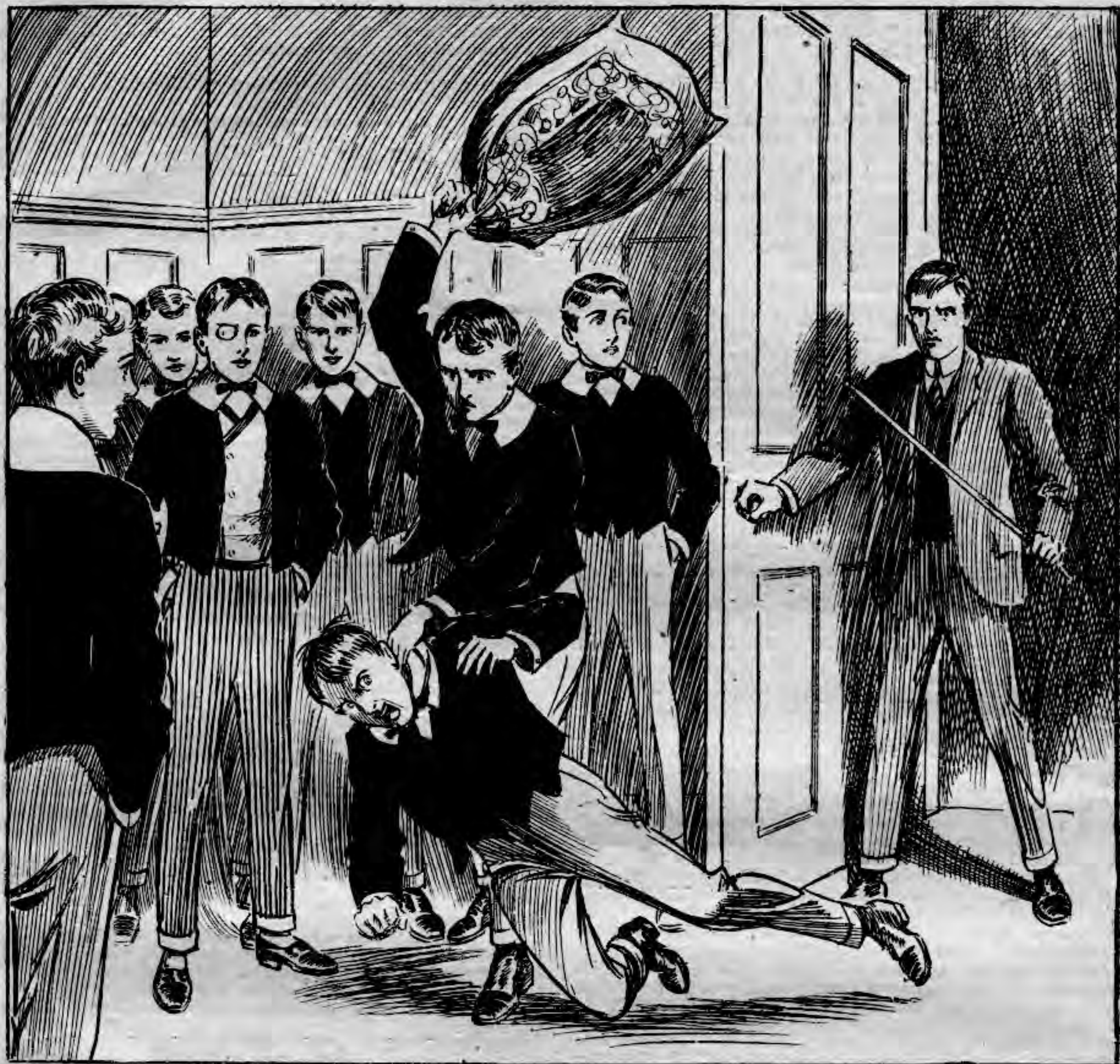
"But how shall we get Cutts here?"

"Easy enough. We'll drop a word before Levison about something going on here. He reports everything to Cutts. Cutts will come to investigate, and find out what it is, and he'll find out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in eager, suppressed tones the two Shell fellows discussed the details of the plot; and, later on, in Study No. 6, the whole of the Co. were let into the secret, and the roars of laughter that came from Study No. 6 brought a fag with a message from Cutts, imposing fifty lines each all





Manners caught Levison's collar with one hand, and the cushion with the other hand, and in a second he was belabouring Levison with it. "Take that, you cad—take that, you sneak—" "Cave!" The warning was too late, and Cutts strode into the room, a cane in his hand. "Oh my hat, here we are again!" groaned Tom Merry. (See Chapter

round for making so much noise. But the chums of the School House did not care for the lines. Their chance had come at last for getting back on Cutts, of the Fifth, and they rejoiced, reckless and regardless of mere lines.

CHAPTER 11. Cutts Kindly Obliges!

LEVISON pricked up his ears. He had come along the passage with his usual quiet, almost stealthy, footfall, and he paused as whispering voices fell upon his ears.

The gas was not yet lighted in the passage. In the dusk he saw four juniors standing near the big window. Their backs were to him, and they were talking in whispers; but Levison's quick ears could hear the whispered words.

Levison had no scruple whatever about eavesdropping. It was quite in his line—indeed, it was the chief means by which he obtained so much useful information for his friend Cutts of the Fifth.

He drew back quietly into the shadows and listened. Tom Merry was speaking.

"But suppose Cutts should spot it, Glyn?"

"He won't!" Glyn whispered back. "He never comes to my study."

"And it will be out of the study to-morrow," said Kan-

garoo in the same cautious tones. "Cutts can't spot it unless he goes investigating this evening, and he won't do that. Why should he?"

"No, I suppose he won't," murmured Monty Lowther. "Only if he should find out—"

"Oh, he won't find out," said Glyn, "and it will be all ready to-morrow, and we can get it away, you know."

"There'd be a row if Cutts—"

"But he can't find it out."

"I hope not. I— Hallo! Did you hear anything?"

"There's nobody in the passage, is there?" said Kangaroo, glancing round in the dusk.

Levison crouched closer back in the shadow of a doorway.

"Can't be too careful," said Tom Merry. "Come away!"

The juniors went downstairs.

Levison came out of the doorway, his eyes glistening in the darkness. He had made a discovery.

Like many cunning persons, accustomed to deceiving another, Levison seldom suspected that he could be taken in himself. That the chums had known he was coming along the passage, and that the whispered conversation was wholly for his benefit, was a thought that never even crossed his mind.

Levison waited until the coast was clear, and then hurried away to Cutts's study. He found Cutts there, reading a pink paper and smoking a cigarette. Levison came in, and cautiously closed the door behind him.

"Hallo, what's on now?" asked Cutts.

"There's something on," said Levison.

"Tom Merry & Co. again?"

"Yes."

"Good!" said Cutts. "What is it? By Jove, I'm going to make those young beggars feel that life isn't worth living in this school. Tom Merry led me a pretty dance while he was captain of the school for a few days. One good turn deserves another—what?"

"He's led me a pretty dance for a long time," said Levison, with a scowl. "He's made all the fellows look on me as a sneak."

Cutts laughed.

"Well, what the deuce are you?" he asked.

Levison set his teeth.

"If you don't want to hear what I've got to tell you, Cutts—"

"But I do," said Cutts. "Get on!"

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Oh, cheese that, and get on!" said Cutts.

"Well, there's something going on in Glyn's study," said Levison sullenly. "They've got something there—I don't know what it is—some of Glyn's precious inventions, perhaps. But it's something up against you. Whatever it is, it's going to be taken out of the study to-morrow, and they think there's no chance of you dropping in this evening and finding it out."

"Well, that's right enough. I never thought of dropping in there this evening," said Cutts.

"But now you know—"

"Now I know," grinned Cutts. "I shall make it a point to drop in there—rather! You don't know what the thing is?"

"No. They shut up before I heard about that," said Levison. "It's something or other they're making a big secret about, and after this evening it won't be in the study. That's all I know."

Cutts rose to his feet.

"Then I'll jolly soon know what it is," he said. "They're planning some trick on me. I'm pretty certain of that. I remember Glyn made a mechanical dog once that he played tricks with. Lemme see, I've got to have a reason for going there, though."

"Glyn had some lines—"

"He's brought me his lines," said Cutts, with a nod towards a sheaf of impot. paper on the table. "I'm getting quite a collection. Has anybody been complaining lately about smells in the Shell passage?"

"I heard Gore grumbling about it to-day."

"Good! That will do. I'll drop in and explain to Glyn that he really can't do these things, if he's there. If he isn't there, I can have a look round the study, and find out what they're up to," said Cutts.

Levison nodded, and left the study. He grinned as he walked away. The chums of the School House were booked for trouble again, and that was a cheery and pleasant thought to the amiable Levison. And two or three juniors who watched him over the banisters grinned too as they saw him grin. The grin was really on the side of Tom Merry & Co. this time.

Cutts did not lose any time. He was really curious to know what was going on in the end study which the juniors were so very careful to keep concealed from him.

He made his way to the Shell passage. The terrible Three were chatting in the doorway of their study with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. They glanced at Cutts, and he gave them a frown and walked on.

The chums of the Shell smiled at one another.

Cutts was evidently on the track.

"Now look out for the circus!" murmured Monty Lowther. And the juniors, with difficulty, suppressed their chuckles.

Cutts reached the door of the end study, and turned the handle without knocking. Cutts never wasted any politeness of that kind upon juniors.

He threw open the door.

The study was in darkness. Bernard Glyn evidently wasn't at home. Cutts glanced into the dark study, and felt in his pocket for a match.

He struck the match upon the door, and held it up, and advanced into the study to light the gas, in order to make his investigation.

But as his boot pressed upon the rug inside the door, there was a faint click from the direction of the table.

Then—

Swoosh!

Splash!

Cutts uttered a yell, and staggered back, as a stream of liquid caught him full upon the face and chest. It was as if a hose had been suddenly turned upon him. The match fell from his fingers, and went out.

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Cutts threw up his hands wildly to his face. He was splashed all over, and the smell of the liquid with which he was splashed was simply terrific.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Cutts staggered into the passage, snorting wildly.

"Grooh! Groogh! Grrrrroogh!"

From the direction of Tom Merry's study came a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 12.

Making Things Hum!

"W! Ow! Yaroooh! Help! Grooogh!"

Cutts's frantic yells rang along the passage.

Doors opened all along the Shell passage, and amazed fellows hurried out to see what was the matter. They stared at the staggering, snorting Cutts, whose face had been turned to a queer purplish tinge by the liquid that had spurted and splashed over it. Cutts was reeking with the perfume—his skin, his hair, his clothes, were drenched in it, and the smell of it pervaded the passage, and made the fellows cough as they came out of their studies.

"Great Scott!"

"What's the matter?"

"It's Cutts!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What a ruff!"

Cutts rushed towards the Terrible Three. He brought an overpowering scent along with him.

"You young scoundrels!" he roared. "You did this on purpose."

"Did what?" asked Lowther blandly.

"Here, get away!" exclaimed Manners. "You don't smell nice, Cutts."

"Clear off, for goodness' sake!"

"Go and get a bath!"

"Or a disinfectant."

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! You don't smell vewy nice, Cutts. Have you been wollin' in bad eggs, deah boy?"

Bad eggs would have been a joke to the awful scent that hung round Cutts of the Fifth, and wrapped him, as it were, in a mantle.

The fellows scattered on all sides from Cutts. They simply could not stand it. The unfortunate Cutts had to stand it.

He was almost raving as he went down the passage. At the head of the stairs Levison met him, in amazement.

"Why, what the—"

"You young villain!" roared Cutts. "You're in this."

"I! In what? Groogh! Keep off! You make me ill! Ow, ow, ow!"

The enraged Cutts seized the sneak of the Fourth, and boxed his ears right and left. Levison yelled with anguish as he struggled out of the grasp of the captain of St. Jim's. Cutts had imparted some of the liquid and a considerable quantity of the smell to Levison, before the Fourth-Former got away.

The captain of St. Jim's went stamping down the stairs. His intention was to rush to Mr. Railton at once, and let him see what had happened, and bring the Housemaster on the scene.

Yells of laughter from the juniors followed him. They knew where he was going, but they did not care. They were not afraid of the Housemaster this time.

Glyn dashed along the passage to the end study. The smell there was terrific; but Glyn was inured to smells from his long and arduous experiments in "stinks." He ran into the study and lighted the gas, and threw the window open. Then he whipped up a wire from under the rug, and whisked the squirt off the table, and jammed it into a chest, with the apparatus attached to it. It did not take him many seconds to get rid of all evidence that a trap had been deliberately laid for Cutts.

Then he came out of the study. The passage was almost clear of fellows now—they did not like the smell. Some of them had shut themselves up in their studies, and others had cleared off downstairs.

Cutts, leaving a lingering smell behind him wherever he passed, dashed down the stairs, and ran along the passage to the Housemaster's study. He passed Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth; and that gentleman gave a loud gasp.

"Cutts! What is the matter? This dreadful smell—"

But he did not wait for information—he walked away quickly.

Cutts knocked hastily at Mr. Railton's door, opened it, and rushed in.

The School Housemaster rose quickly from his table, surprised by the sudden entrance of the Fifth-Former. He stared at the excited, purple face of Gerald Cutts.

"Cutts! What—"

Then the smell struck him, almost like a blow.

He gasped.

"Why, what—what—"

"I've been the victim of a trick—a horrible trick, sir!" panted Cutts. "You can smell this—"

"Indeed I can!" gasped Mr. Railton, jamming his handkerchief to his nose, and speaking through it in a muffled voice. "How dare you come into my study smelling in such a horrible manner, Cutts?"

"It's a trick."

"Leave my study at once."

"But I tell you—"

"Go!" snorted Mr. Railton. "You can tell me about it afterwards. I refuse to have you in my room smelling in such a revolting manner! Go, I tell you!"

"B-b-b-but—"

"Go!" thundered the Housemaster.

Cutts went—he had to. He simply raged down the passage. He was feeling in a murderous temper. He came upon Darrel of the Sixth, and caught him by the arm.

"Darrel—"

Darrel of the Sixth jerked his arm loose, and jumped away, going quite pale.

"Oh crumbs! What's the matter with you? Clear off, for goodness' sake!"

"I tell you, Darrel—"

But Darrel fled.

Cutts, breathing fury, went to his own study. Gilmore was there, smoking a cigarette. The cigarette dropped from Gilmore's fingers as Cutts raged in, and he stared at the captain of the school open-mouthed for a second. Then he shut his mouth hard, and put his finger and thumb to his nose.

"Grooh! Cutts—you horror—get out!"

"Gilmore, old man, I—"

"Get out!" shrieked Gilmore. "You smell horrid! Gerrou!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"I'll shove you out if you won't go!" yelled Gilmore. "I—no, I won't; you're too messy to touch! Let me pass, you horrible beast!"

And Gilmore rushed from the study, still with his fingers to his nose.

Cutts threw open the window, and put his head out. He was badly in need of fresh air. But fresh air was hard for Cutts to obtain. He seemed to foul the air, as it were, with the terrific scent he carried about with him. He jerked his head in, and threw off his drenched jacket, and tore his collar off. The study was already reeking with the terrible smell.

"Oh, good heavens!" groaned Cutts. "I can't get rid of it! What is it? Some horrible chemical! They must have planted it on me on purpose. Oh dear! Yow-ow!"

The study was reeking, and he could not remain there. He dashed out again, and ran up to the Fifth Form dormitory. Every fellow he passed rushed away from him as if he carried the plague about him. In the dormitory he tore off all his clothes, and started operations with soap and water. He did not spare the soap and water. And now the scent began to abate a little.

Breathing fury, Cutts dressed himself again with a change of clothes, and left the dormitory. He left a lingering scent behind him there.

The worst of it was gone now; but it still clung to his hair, to his skin; it seemed to be wedded to his whole person. He was still more unpleasant to the smell than the worst of election eggs.

Wherever he appeared yells of laughter and sudden flight marked his coming.

Nobody wanted to be near him.

He caught sight of the Terrible Three, and rushed towards them. In his fury he forgot his usual caution. There was no evidence whatever to connect the Shell fellows with what had happened to him, and a punishment without inquiry would have given them grounds for an appeal to the Housemaster—a resource he had hitherto deprived them of. But he was in too great a fury to think of caution now. He only wanted vengeance, reckless of results.

But the Terrible Three were not easily caught. They would not have been sorry for a "scrap" with Cutts, under circumstances that placed him in the wrong, but they did not want to have any of his terrible scent imparted to them. They fled, and Cutts chased them wildly downstairs.

"Run for it!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Wun like anythin', deah boys," chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from the doorway of Study No. 6.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts paused, and charged at the chums of the Fourth, who were standing in a yelling group in the doorway of their study. They whipped back into the study at once, and slammed the door and locked it. Cutts pounded in vain upon the door.

"Open this door!" he shrieked.

"No fear!" came Blake's reply through the keyhole. "You smell too fearful, Cutts! We don't want to catch it, whatever it is."

"Wathah not, Cutts, deah boy. I don't know what fwightful complaint you've got, but I feah it may be infectious, you know."

"Clear off!" howled Herries. "The scent's coming through the keyhole, Cutts. Clear off, and get yourself disinfected!"

Cutts bestowed a thundering kick upon the door. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came up the stairs three at a time. Mr. Linton did not like disturbances, and the disturbance now was really alarming.

"Cutts, what are you doing?" he rapped out.

"These young scoundrels—"

"Moderate your language, please, Cutts!" said Mr. Linton sharply. "You—what—why—what is that horrible odour? Is there anything the matter with you, Cutts?"

Mr. Linton's finger and thumb went to his nose.

"Matter!" yelled Cutts. "These young villains have—"

"G-g-goodness gracious! This is—is unbearable! Please keep your distance, Cutts."

And the master of the Shell fairly ran for it.

Cutts ground his teeth, and went downstairs. The juniors in the passage below scattered towards the door on the quadrangle. They did not want to have the highly-scented captain of St. Jim's near them just then.

"Merry! Lowther! Come here!" roared Cutts.

"No fear!" replied Tom Merry promptly. "You smell too sweet, Cutts! Why don't you go and take a bath in Sanitas?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts tore towards them, and the juniors instantly fled into the dusky quadrangle. The captain of St. Jim's paused, panting, in the doorway. He knew that he would never catch them there.

Yells of laughter came ringing in from the dusk. The juniors were thoroughly enjoying the discomfiture of the Fifth-Former. They felt that they were getting their "own" back on their tyrant at last.

Cutts stood for some minutes, breathing hard, wondering what he should do. He had got rid of some of the smell, and the rest it seemed impossible to get rid of. He ran to his study again, and drenched himself with eau-de-Cologne, which scented him very highly, but seemed to make no improvement in his general odoriferousness. Then he strode away to the Head's study.

CHAPTER 13.

Cutts Does Not Prosper.

DR. HOLMES sniffed as Cutts of the Fifth came into his study.

For the scent entered with Cutts of the Fifth, and it was powerful, and, added to the strong odour of eau-de-Cologne, it was decidedly peculiar and pungent.

Dr. Holmes fixed a stern glance upon the captain of St. Jim's.

"If you please, sir—" began Cutts.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand.

"Cutts, I must say that I am surprised. I may say disgusted. I do not approve of the foolish habit of using scent. You have apparently been using it in extraordinary quantities. Kindly leave my study, sir, and get rid of that extraordinary odour."

"I can't, sir."

"What! Why not?"

"It's a chemical, sir, and I've been drenched with it," panted Cutts. "I've put on the eau-de-Cologne to drown it as much as possible. It was much worse before."

The Head coughed.

"It was worse? Then it must have been very bad indeed," he said gaspingly. "Dear me, Cutts, I must say that it is most unpleasant—overpowering, in fact. Really, Cutts, if you have been careless enough to spill evil-smelling chemicals upon your person, you should not come into my study immediately afterwards."

"I didn't spill it, sir. It has been thrown over me by the juniors. I report Glyn of the Shell to you, sir, for doing it. My clothes have been ruined. I shall never be able to wear them again. I have changed down to the skin, sir, and already my things are beginning to hum—I mean smell."

"They are, indeed," said the Head, taking out his handkerchief. "But this is a serious matter, Cutts. You say Glyn drenched you with this horrible chemical compound?"

"Yes, sir. He had some sort of booby-trap fixed up in his study, all ready for me. Will you see about it, sir?"

The Head rose with a slight sigh.

"Really, Cutts, I should like to be able to depend upon

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the captain of the school to keep the juniors in order," he said. "However, drenching a senior with chemicals is certainly a serious offence. I will see into it."

And the Head followed majestically as Cutts led the way to the Shell passage.

He kept at a good distance from Cutts. Getting near Cutts made him feel quite faint.

"Is Glyn in his study, Cutts?" he asked.

"I think not, sir."

"I will send for him."

The Head called to Toby, the page. Toby came up, and backed away quickly as he caught a whiff from the unfortunate Cutts.

"Oh lor!" he ejaculated.

"Toby! Don't make ridiculous exclamations, please!"

"No, sir. Oh crikey!"

"Toby!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir; but—but there's a awful smell!" gasped Toby. "Master Cutts, he do seem to 'ave a fearful hodour, sir!"

Cutts scowled furiously. He was only too painfully aware of that fearful odour.

"Go and find Master Glyn, Toby, and tell him to come to his study at once!" said the Head.

"Yessir."

And Toby cut off, glad to escape from the neighbourhood of the captain of St. Jim's.

The Head's majestic march to the Shell passage was resumed. The scent had cleared off a little, and the juniors were returning to their quarters. Blake & Co. were outside their study, laughing and talking, but they became properly grave as the Head came along.

"Bai Jove! Cutts is bwingin' the Head on the scene!" murmured D'Arcy.

"On the scent, you mean!" grinned Blake.

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled.

Dr. Holmes arrived in the end study. The smell there was very strong, for the carpet had received a good drenching as well as Cutts. But the Head bore it nobly. He entered the study, and, getting near the open window, looked round.

"I do not see any sign of the trap you mentioned, Cutts," he said.

"I suppose they've removed it, sir."

"I will question Glyn."

Glyn came into the study. His manner was very quiet and respectful and demure.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked. "Toby told me—"

"Yes, Glyn. It appears that you have chemicals in your study—"

"Certainly, sir! I'm in the chemistry class, you know, sir," said Bernard Glyn calmly. "I have Mr. Potts' permission to make experiments in my study, sir."

"Ahem! Quite so! But you have no permission, I presume, to throw chemicals over a senior?" said the Head sternly.

Glyn looked astonished.

"I've never done such a thing, sir," he said.

"You did not throw chemicals over Cutts?"

"I, sir! Did Cutts say I did?"

"You managed it somehow!" said Cutts, between his teeth. "The moment I set foot in your study I was drenched with some horrible compound!"

"If you've been upsetting my chemicals I shall expect you to pay for them, Cutts," said the Liverpool lad. "Dr. Holmes will see justice done, I know. Chemicals are very expensive, and I have to pay for all I use. This study smells as if you'd been upsetting my latest mixture."

"You know you throw it over me, you young hound!" roared Cutts.

"Cutts," said the Head ominously, "that is not language to use in the presence of your headmaster—or, indeed, at all!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir; but Glyn—"

"Was I in the study when you came here?" demanded Glyn. "I can prove, sir, that I was in Study No. 6 at the time. My friends were with me."

"Did you see Glyn here, Cutts?"

"There was nobody in the study, sir."

"Then how do you know—"

"It was a booby-trap of some sort. Glyn had it ready fixed up for me as soon as I entered the study!" said Cutts savagely.

"How could I know you were going to enter my study?" demanded Glyn. "What did you come here for, anyway? Explain that!"

"I came to—to—" Cutts halted.

It dawned upon him that he could not explain why he had come to Glyn's study. That he had received secret information from a sneak in the Lower School was a thing he could not explain. Dr. Holmes would have been very much down on anything of that kind. He did not approve of

encouraging tell-tales, and Cutts's methods would have brought upon him the vials of the Head's wrath if they had become known.

"Well," said Glyn, "what did you want here? How did you know I expected you here, if I did expect you? Why should you suppose I expected you?"

"I—I—I—"

For once Cutts of the Fifth was at a loss, and his usually ready cunning had deserted him.

Bernard Glyn turned calmly to the Head.

"Cutts says that I expected him in my study, and fixed up a booby-trap for him, sir," he said. "If Cutts can prove it, I'm ready to be punished. But Cutts can't give the slightest reason why I should have expected him in my study. He isn't in the habit of paying visits to the junior studies, I suppose. Besides, I wasn't here, and the study was all dark. What did Cutts want to come into my study for, when it was dark and I wasn't here at all?"

"Well, Cutts?" said the Head. "Please give me your reason for supposing that Glyn was expecting your visit here!"

"He must have been, sir!" said Cutts desperately. "He had the booby trap fixed up all ready for me!"

"Had you told Glyn you were coming?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Then I do not see how Glyn could have expected your visit, and prepared for it," said the Head coldly.

"But he had the booby-trap fixed up for somebody, and I got it, anyway!" said Cutts, between his teeth. "He can't deny that!"

"Is that the case, Glyn?"

"I suppose Cutts must have run into my burglar-catcher, sir," said Glyn innocently.

"Your what?" exclaimed the Head.

"My burglar-catcher, sir," said Glyn, with perfect calmness. "You know I make inventions, sir. Mr. Potts thinks I'm rather clever at them."

The Head smiled slightly. He had had some experience of the weird inventions of the Liverpool lad.

"I've got an invention for catching burglars by swamping them with a kind of strong scent, sir," rattled on Glyn.

"I've been experimenting on it, and I suppose Cutts must have got in its way when he came in. The study certainly smells as if the compound had got loose. Of course, if I'd known that Cutts intended to come spying in my study—"

"You must not say that, Glyn! Cutts had undoubtedly a good reason for coming here."

"He hasn't said what it was, sir, then."

"I—I came to speak to Glyn about—about the smells he's been making with his experiments, sir!" stammered Cutts.

"Rats!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Glyn!" said the Head warningly.

"Well, sir, if Cutts came to speak to me, why did he come in when he found I wasn't here, and the study was all in the dark? I suppose he wasn't going to sit down and wait for me to come home?" said Glyn sarcastically.

The Head gave Cutts a sharp glance. Cutts had succeeded very well in ingratiating himself with the Head, but Dr. Holmes's faith wavered a little now. Certainly it looked as if Cutts had come secretly to the study to spy there, and decidedly that was not a proceeding worthy of a captain of St. Jim's.

"Show me this—this invention of yours, Glyn," said the Head, as Cutts found nothing to say.

For once he was at a loss. He realised that he was losing ground with the Head, and it made him inwardly furious; but there was nothing to be said.

"Certainly, sir!" said Glyn cheerfully.

He opened the chest, and produced the squirt with its wire attachment.

"You see, sir, this would be pointed at you, if you happened to be a burglar coming into the room—"

"Glyn!"

"And if you bumped into it, or got entangled in the wire, it would go off—like this!"

Squish!

There was still some of the liquid left in the big squirt, and Glyn ejected it, taking care, however, to miss the Head and send the liquid over Cutts's trousers. Cutts gave a roar of wrath.

Dr. Holmes gasped.

"Good—goodness gracious! What a horrible odour! Glyn, I command you to destroy any of that horrible compound you may have left."

"But, sir—"

"Look at what he's done!" shrieked Cutts.

But the Head was already making for the door. The smell of the burglar-catcher was putting him to flight.

"Cutts, you had better—better go and change your things again." The Head was speaking from the passage now.

"And I may say that I do not approve of surprise visits to the junior studies. It partakes of the nature of spying."

"I—I—"

"I have no doubt you meant well, Cutts; but I do not approve of it, and I direct you to cease from any such methods in the future. This matter will now be dropped. I have heard enough. Glyn, I forbid you to make any such absurd and unpleasant experiments in the future. The matter is now ended."

And the Head walked quickly away, forgetting his usually calm and majestic method of progression in his hurry to escape from that deadly scent.

Cutts clenched his hands hard, and started towards Bernard Glyn. Glyn held up the squirt like a gun.

"There's still some left," he remarked calmly.

And Cutts, grinding his teeth, turned and strode from the study. He did not want any more.

And that evening there was wild rejoicing among the Co. For once they had got the better of their old enemy—Cutts of the Fifth, for once, had been downed—and Tom Merry & Co. gloated accordingly.

CHAPTER 14.

"Comic Cutts."

CUTTS, during the next day or two, understudied the celebrated Brer Fox, and "lay low."

He had been worsted in that last encounter with the Co., and he knew it.

For two whole days the lingering remains of Glyn's terrible mixture hung about him, and made him obnoxious to his Form-fellows.

Gilmour refused to share the study with him for some days, preferring to "dig" with Lefevre along the passage till Cutts was wholesome again.

And in the Fifth Form-room there was noticeable a wide space on either side of Cutts during those two painful days.

Cutts's feelings towards the juniors were almost homicidal; but he "lay low," waiting for his opportunity.

He realised that he had allowed his temper to get the better of him, and acted foolishly in bringing the Head into the matter, and that he had damaged his position by so doing. He had received sharp words of reprimand himself, and the juniors had gone on their way rejoicing. Cutts was saving up his wrath for them; but he did not mean to make a slip next time.

Meanwhile, relations between Cutts and Levison were very strained. Levison's part in the jape had been unintentional; but it had been effective, and he could not prove that he had acted in good faith. Cutts believed that his factotum had turned against him on that occasion, and he made Levison smart for it. Most of Cutts's kindly attentions were reserved for Levison during these few days; and the cad of the Fourth found out what it was like to get canings, and heaps of lines, and he did not like the change at all.

To see Levison getting the sharp edge of Cutts's bitter temper was not at all displeasing to the juniors. But Levison found it very displeasing indeed, and he made desperate efforts to ingratiate himself with the captain of St. Jim's again. But that was not easy. Cutts no longer trusted the information Levison brought to him.

The juniors understood how matters were, and they chuckled exceedingly over it. Now that Cutts was deprived of the services of his spy, he lost touch with what was going on in the Lower School, and punishments were far less frequent.

But the bully of the Fifth was only biding his time; and he had his eye always upon the Terrible Three.

"The noble Cutts seems quite tamed now, don't he?" Monty Lowther remarked, on Wednesday afternoon, when the juniors came out of the School House. Cousin Ethel was visiting St. Jim's that afternoon, and the chums were in high feather, in expectation of her arrival.

"Biding his time!" said Manners sententiously. "He'll be coming down on us heavier than ever soon."

"We haven't had any impots since Saturday," said Tom Merry. "I always thought Glyn's inventions were rather asinine, but I think better of them now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake & Co. came out of the School House. Blake had his hand under his jacket, as if he were holding something concealed there. As a matter of fact, he was.

"Cutts come out yet?" asked Blake.

"Haven't seen him. What do you want Cutts for?"

"I've got something for him," said Blake. He opened his jacket a little, and showed a square of cardboard with two hooks attached.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise. Blake chuckled.

"You'll see when Cutts comes out," he said.

"Heah he comes, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus

D'Arcy, as the athletic form of the captain of St. Jim's appeared in the doorway of the School House.

Cutts scowled at the chums; he seldom saw them without scowling. Tom Merry & Co. solemnly raised their caps to Cutts with exaggerated respect, which brought a gleam into his eyes. Arthur Augustus almost flourished his silk topper in his anxiety to show respect to Cutts.

The Fifth-Former came down the steps, and then Blake suddenly ran down after him. He ran in such a hurry that he bumped into Cutts from behind, and caught hold of his shoulders to steady himself.

Cutts staggered, and turned round with a snarl, giving the junior a cuff that sent him reeling.

"Be more careful, you clumsy young ass!" he exclaimed.

"Ow-ow!" said Blake.

Cutts swung away again, and Blake left off rubbing his ear and grinned. And the group of juniors on the steps of the School House burst into a chuckle. They understood now why Blake had run into Cutts from behind. For upon Cutts's broad back was now attached the sheet of cardboard; and on the cardboard the large letters showed up brightly in the sunshine.

"COMIC CUTTS!"

Blake closed one eye to his comrades.

"Worth a whack on the ear—what?" he murmured.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts turned round sharply as he heard the burst of laughter. He did not know why the juniors should laugh, but he knew they were laughing at him. His dark scowl grew blacker and more threatening.

"What's the matter with you, young sweeps?" he demanded.

"Nothin', deah boy," said Arthur Augustus blandly. "I suppose we are free to laugh if we want to?"

"Sometimes a chap can't help laughing, you know," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "You know, you have such a cheery effect on people, Cutts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Always feel inclined to laugh when I see you, Cutts," said Blake.

"Take fifty lines each!" rapped out Cutts.

"Bai Jove!"

Cutts strode away. The juniors chuckled. They did not mind the fifty lines each very much as the price of seeing Cutts strutting about the quadrangle with that absurd notice on his back.

"Not the least suspicion—what?" grinned Blake.

"Not a suspish!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, I wegard Cutts as a wathah innocent lamb, you know. Not at all up to our form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fellows are spotting it now!" chuckled Tom Merry.

Reilly and Kerruish and Ray of the Fourth were chatting in the quad when Cutts passed them. They burst into a yell of laughter as they read the notice on his back. Again the captain of St. Jim's swung round. He was angry, and a little puzzled; he did not see the slightest reason why his passing should cause juniors to burst into sudden merriment.

"Well, what's the joke?" he demanded fiercely.

"Sure, and it's yerself, Cutts darling!" said Reilly.

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, howly mother ov Moses!"

Cutts walked on. But from all sides, as he passed, came fresh gusts of laughter. It was a sunny half-holiday, and the quadrangle was crowded with juniors. Cutts was going over to the New House to call for Sefton, to go out with him. He had to run the gauntlet of the whole crowd, and the card on his back did not escape a single eye.

"Comic Cutts!" chuckled Kangaroo. "Ha, ha, ha! Cutts is more comic than he knows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts strode on fiercely. He paused under the old elms, and took a pocket-mirror out. Cutts was very much of a dandy, and he always had a pocket-mirror with him. It occurred to him that there might be something unusual about him which had excited the laughter of the hilarious juniors. But he scanned his reflection in the little mirror without detecting anything out of the common. It did not reflect his back, of course.

"The young idiots!" muttered Cutts savagely, and very much puzzled. "What on earth are they cackling at? I suppose it's a rag."

He thrust the mirror back into his pocket, and strode on towards the New House. Figgins & Co. were in the doorway, and they did not smile as Cutts came up. They looked grim. Feeling was very sore between Figgins & Co. and the new captain of St. Jim's. Cutts had been almost as heavy upon them as upon the Terrible Three of the School House.

But as Cutts passed them and went into the New House Figgins & Co. caught sight of the card on his back, and there was the sound of a sudden chuckle.

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Cutts's temper was almost at boiling-point by this time, and he turned savagely upon the three juniors. He did not speak to them, but he caught Figgins and Kerr by their collars and knocked their heads together.

Crack!

"Ow!" roared Figgins.

"Yarooop!" shrieked Kerr.

Figgins & Co. were not the kind of fellows to take that kind of treatment tamely. Cutts might be captain of the school, but they weren't going to allow him to man-handle them just as he chose. As Cutts was bringing their heads together for a second crack, harder than the first, Figgins and Kerr and Fatty Wynn piled on him, and dragged him over, and there was a loud bump as Cutts descended upon the floor.

"There, you rotter!" panted Figgins. "Now keep your beastly paws to yourself."

Cutts sprang up, looking like a demon. Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, hurried along the passage, looking very angry. There was no love lost between Monteith and Cutts. Monteith would have been captain of the school but for Cutts's trickery at the time of the election. And although the New House prefect dealt out cuffs galore himself, he wasn't at all disposed to see a School House senior assuming authority in his House.

"Hands off, Cutts!" he rapped out sharply.

Cutts glared at him, but did not reply, and rushed upon Figgins & Co. Monteith jumped between, and Cutts collided with him. The prefect pushed him back, and Cutts staggered against the wall. It was not exactly the blow, but it staggered Cutts, and he leaned on the wall panting.

Monteith stood facing him, with gleaming eyes and ready hands.

"Now you can tell me what's the matter, if you like," he said. "I don't allow School House fellows to punish juniors of my House, Cutts."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Figgins & Co.

Cutts almost choked with rage.

"I'm captain of the school, you cad!" he shouted.

"Captain of the school or not, you've no authority in this House," said Monteith calmly. "If these fags have done anything, you can report them to me. That's the proper course, and you know it."

"They've laid hands on me——"

"I saw it all," said the prefect, cutting in. "You laid hands on them first. What did you do that for?"

"They cackled at me."

"You can't lick juniors for cackling," said Monteith coolly. "Not in this House; anyway. Why, what—— Ha, ha, ha!"

He burst into a laugh as he caught sight of the card on Cutts's back, as the captain of St. Jim's moved away from the wall. Cutts scowled at him savagely.

"So you're cackling too!" he exclaimed. "I'll——"

"Ha, ha, ha! What have you got that card on your back for?" roared Monteith.

"Card! What card?" stuttered Cutts.

He groped round the back of his jacket, and caught hold

of the card and dragged it off. He looked at it, and his face was a study as he read the words:

"Comic Cutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the New House fellows. "Comic Cutts! Ha, ha, ha!"

"One of those young scoundrels fastened this on me!" screamed Cutts.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or—or somebody did!" stammered Cutts, remembering that the laughter had started before he entered the New House. "I'll find out who-it was! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Words failed Cutts. He rushed out of the House to find out who had fastened that card upon his back, and a yell of laughter followed him from the doorway of the New House. Tom Merry & Co. had disappeared, and the enraged Cutts was forced once more to nurse his wrath for a more favourable opportunity.

CHAPTER 15.

The Appeal to the Housemaster.

Cousin ETHEL came into the School House with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walking by her side.

Arthur Augustus looked as proud as Punch as he escorted his charming cousin across the quadrangle and into the House.

Very few fellows, as D'Arcy sometimes remarked, had such an exceedingly ripping cousin to bring to the school.

Cousin Ethel nodded and smiled to her friends, whose name was legion. Tom Merry & Co. met her in the doorway, with their best smiles on, to say nothing of their cleanest collars and tidiest neckties.

"Tea's ready in the study," said Tom Merry.

"So jolly glad to see you again, Ethel."

Figgins & Co. walked in. It was understood that they were coming to tea. Arthur Augustus looked a little doubtfully at Figgins, but Figgy did not appear to observe it.

"Here we are!" announced Fatty Wynn. "Did you say tea was ready, Tommy?"

"Quite ready," said Tom, laughing.

"Then we may as well get a move on," Fatty Wynn suggested. "I never believe in letting a good feed spoil by waiting."

"No feed's likely to spoil by waiting if you're anywhere near it," agreed Jack Blake.

"We're havin' it in Tom Mewwy's studay," Arthur Augustus explained to his fair cousin, as he escorted her up the broad staircase. "It's largah than No 6, you know, and we're havin' wathah a lot of fellahs in. I suppose you don't mind those New House boundahs comin'?"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Not at all," she said brightly.

"It makes wathah a cwowd for a juniah studay," said D'Arcy. "But the fellows seemed to think we'd bettah have Figgy; I weally hardly know why. You are sure you don't mind Figgins bein' in the partay, deah gal?"

"Not the least bit."

"He's a good sort, you know, though wathah an ass in some things," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "It's all wight, then."

And he escorted Cousin Ethel into the apartment of the Terrible Three in the Shell passage.

Great preparations had been made for the tea.

The Co. had pooled funds for the purpose, and the result was really gorgeous, and the sight of the well-spread table made Fatty Wynn smile with satisfaction.

"Jolly good!" he murmured.

Cousin Ethel took her seat at the table. It was rather a crowd, as D'Arcy had remarked, for besides the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co., all four of the chums of Study No. 6 were there, as well as Kangaroo of the Shell and Bernard Glynn. But plenty of room was found for Cousin Ethel. And as there wasn't room enough for chairs for all the others, some of them had to have tea standing up; but they did not mind. The tea was of the very best, and that was the important point, according to Fatty Wynn. And Cousin Ethel was there, and that was the important point, according to Figgins.

The fragrant odour of tea and toast pervaded the study. There was a cheery ripple of talk and laughter. For the time the juniors had forgotten their old enemy Cutts and the unpleasant fact that he was captain of St. Jim's and down on them.

It was Cousin Ethel who brought him to their minds. She wanted to know how they had fared after their return from the Feathers on that eventful afternoon the week before.

"Oh, that was all right!" said Tom Merry. "Only a—ahem!—licking."

"Yaas, wathah, that was all wight! And it's all ovah now, deah gal!"

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"And how do you get on with Cutts?" asked Ethel.

"Better than ever," said Blake. "Cutts is getting quite tame lately. I fancy he's beginning to learn that he bit off more than he could chew in tackling us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And so—Hullo! Who's that?"

The study door was flung open

Cutts of the Fifth strode in

Silence fell upon the study. Cousin Ethel looked grave and troubled, and the Co. looked a little sheepish. After the way they had declared that Cutts of the Fifth was getting tamed, it was a little disconcerting for him to walk into the study evidently bent on war.

Cutts's brows were knitted in a black scowl.

"So you're here!" he said grimly, and without taking notice of the presence of Cousin Ethel.

"Yes, here we are," said Monty Lowther coolly. "How do you do, Cutts? Sorry we can't ask you to tea."

"Silence! I wish to know," said Cutts, breathing hard, "which of you fellows it was that pinned a card on my back this afternoon?"

Blake stared unconsciously at the ceiling. He had pinned the card upon the Fifth-Former's back, but he had not the slightest intention of confessing the fact to Cutts.

There was silence in the study. The juniors were exchanging grim looks. Cutts had come there to spoil the tea-party while they were entertaining Cousin Ethel, and they would have given a great deal to fling him headlong out of the study.

"Are you going to answer me?" said Cutts.

"What answer do you want?" asked Monty Lowther.

"If we give that one up, will you ask us another, Cutts?"

There was a chuckle. Cutts's scowl darkened; he was in such a rage that he could hardly keep it in check. The ridiculous figure he had made strutting across the quadrangle with the card on his back, amid the laughter of the juniors, rankled deeply in his mind. Somebody was going to suffer for it, and Cutts was not very particular as to whom that somebody was.

"I am waiting for an answer!" he said, between his teeth.

"Good!" said Lowther, growing more and more humorous.

"I'll give you an answer with pleasure. Because one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron."

"You young rascals!" shouted Cutts, completely losing his temper now. "If you don't tell me which of you played that trick on me I'll cane you all round, every fellow in the study!"

"Go hon!"

Cutts had brought a cane with him. He swished it in the air now. Tom Merry's eyes met Kangaroo's. The Cornstalk was nearest the door.

The longed-for moment had arrived. Cutts had lost his cunning caution for once, and was playing the tyrant without the shadow of a valid excuse. It was time for the remedy the juniors had yearned to employ—the appeal to the Housemaster. Kangaroo understood Tom Merry's significant look, and he slipped quietly out of the study and raced away down the passage.

"Now," said Cutts, between his set teeth, "I'll give you one more chance to answer. Who stuck that card on my back this afternoon?"

Dead silence.

"Very well! Hold out your hand, Tom Merry!"

"I protest against being punished for doing nothing!" said Tom Merry calmly.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the captain of St. Jim's.

"Very well; under protest."

Tom held out his hand. The cane came down savagely, and Tom winced, though he did not allow a cry to escape his lips. Cousin Ethel drew a quick breath.

"Now you, Lowther!" said Cutts.

Lowther blandly held out his hand. He was quite willing to be caned under the circumstances. Already he could hear footsteps in the passage, and he knew that the Cornstalk was bringing the Housemaster upon the scene.

Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Lowther, at the top of his voice.

"Now you, Manners!"

"I've done nothing!" said Manners.

"Hold out your hand, you young liar!"

"Liar yourself!" retorted Manners. "I'm not lying! And I won't be caned for nothing! I appeal to the Housemaster!"

Mr. Railton's stalwart form had appeared in the open doorway, with Kangaroo behind. It was an unlucky moment for Cutts. He had seized Manners by the collar, and was in the act of bringing the cane down across his shoulders when the Housemaster stepped into the study.

"Stop!" said Mr. Railton quietly, but in tones that seemed to ring through the study.

Cutts started back, and his hand fell to his side. Manners calmly rearranged his collar, disturbed by Cutts's savage grip.

"I appeal to the Housemaster!" he repeated.

"You have every right to do so," Mr. Railton said. "I shall certainly hear your appeal and see justice done. Cutts, I am informed that you have entered this study and are bullying the juniors here. If Noble has misinformed me he will be punished for saying such a thing of the captain of the school; but your present conduct, sir, seems to confirm his statements."

"I am administering punishment, sir, as I am empowered to do," Cutts replied. "One of these young devils—"

"What!" thundered Mr. Railton. "How dare you use such an expression, sir, in my presence, and in the presence of a young lady?"

Cutts bit his lip hard. His savage temper had run away with him again, and he had made a slip it was not easy to recover from. He choked back his fury.

"I beg your pardon, sir—"

"You will also beg Miss Cleveland's pardon."

"I—I beg her pardon too!" muttered Cutts, his face almost livid with the effort he was making to suppress his rage. "I—I should not have said that. I—I meant to say, one of these juniors pinned a ridiculous card to my back this afternoon in the quadrangle, holding their captain up to ridicule. I came here to punish him."

"He has caned me," said Tom Merry.

"And me!" said Lowther.

"And he was caning me," said Manners. "We appeal to you, sir, whether juniors may be caned without having done anything to deserve it?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Railton. "Do you mean to tell me, Cutts, that you were caning these boys simply upon suspicion?"

"I know they did it," choked Cutts—"some of them, that is; I don't know which!"

"That is nonsense! You cannot know without proof of some kind. Merry, Manners, Lowther, answer me. Did you pin this card Cutts speaks of to his back?"

"No, sir!" chorused the Terrible Three.

"They're lying!" hooted Cutts.

"On the contrary, I am sure they are not lying," said Mr. Railton coldly. "I am sure they would tell me the truth."

"Then they know who did it!"

"Possibly! But you have no right to cane them on suspicion that they know who did it. If punishments were inflicted for such frivolous reasons, there would be no end of them. You have exceeded your powers, Cutts!"

"Sir!"

"You have acted wrongly, and in a tyrannical and bullying manner," said the Housemaster sternly. "There has been much discontent and insubordination among the juniors since you have been captain of the school, Cutts, and now I am not surprised at it, if these are your methods, sir."

Cutts had come there to humiliate and punish the juniors, and he was being humiliated himself more bitterly than he had dreamed possible. Hot words rose to his lips, but he had sense enough left to choke them back. To "slang" his Housemaster would be the end of all his power and his position in the School House. He stood with bowed head as the Housemaster's stern voice went on:

"Let there be no more of this, Cutts. You have exceeded your authority, and you have given me very grave reason to presume that you have exceeded it on other occasions. I do not approve of tyrannical methods, and I will never allow anything of the kind to be practised in this House. Kindly leave this study at once. And if there is any recurrence of this, sir, you may depend upon it that I shall make such representations to the Head as will make it impossible for you to remain captain of the school."

Cutts strode from the study, almost gasping.

Mr. Railton followed him.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another as the door closed behind the athletic form of the Housemaster.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah fancy our old friend Cutts has got it in the neck this time!"

There was no doubt about it. Cutts had got it "in the neck" for once, and after that he would have to be very, very careful indeed. That little tea-party in Tom Merry's study was a very merry one after all. Cousin Ethel's face was all smiles, and the juniors were in their cheeriest humour. Gerald Cutts was still captain of St. Jim's, but they were no longer under his thumb.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of St. Jim's next Wednesday, entitled: "DESPERATE MEASURES!" by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of THE GEM in advance.)

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "DESPERATE MEASURES!" Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. Order Early.

HOW TO GET ON IN CANADA!

BY A SUCCESSFUL EMIGRANT.



'OFF TO CANADA'

THIS WEEK:
**Preparations
 for Departure.**
**The Voyage to
 Canada.**
**The Arrival at
 Quebec.**
**Passing Through
 the Canadian
 Customs.**



A HOMESTEAD IN ALBERTA

Is there in the whole of our Isles a single British-born youth who has not at one time or another been fired with the desire to cross the seas to other lands? I doubt it. No, deeply engrained in the very nature of we Britishers is a love of adventure and consequently of travel—for the two go hand-in-hand.

In bygone days it was the East—the East Indies—that allured the British lad with her wealth; to-day he turns his eyes towards the West—Western Canada—and, watching the setting sun, sees reflected therein the Golden Dollar of his dreams.

It is safe to say that, given the opportunity, many of the readers of *THE GEM* would willingly join the ever-swelling tide of emigration to Canada, and there will be some who are actually arranging to go this spring.

These articles are not written to persuade any readers to emigrate, nor to dissuade any from doing so, but to present the truth as regards the work, wages, sport, and climate, and general living conditions in the Dominion. The main object of them will be attained if the information given helps to smooth the path for some chums who intend to try their luck "across the pond."

I accepted your Editor's invitation to tell you about the Dominion with confidence, for during the years I have spent in Canada I have seen many phases of life—being, among other things, a post-office clerk, rancher, sawmill-hand, cartoonist, labourer, seaman, advertising agent, steward, foreman-machinist, show-card writer, ice-cutter, house-painter, carpenter, and journalist.

Now I first wish to make clear the qualities that are needed in the lad who is going to make a success out here in the West. Grit, perseverance, a cheery outlook, and a willingness to fall into the Canadian ways of working, are absolutely essential, as is also a fair amount of bodily strength.

Much of Western Canada is still in its pioneer days, and the rough conditions can only be mastered by the youth who will fight with his teeth set. The lad who intends to come West to try what things are like, and to return to the old home in England if they do not suit him, had far better not come at all. The wild nature of certain portions of Western Canada, especially British Columbia, imposes on the settler more hardships than any country I know—and I have lived in a few parts of the world. Therefore, if you decide to come out here, come with the strong clear determination that you will conquer all natural obstacles and be a success—then you'll win through.

A question that is often asked me by lads when I am visiting in England is: "Can a fellow get out to Canada by working his passage on one of the boats that call there?" And no doubt some of my readers have queried in a like manner. Now, to secure a position on a vessel plying between the United Kingdom and Canada is extremely difficult for a lad who has had no previous sea-training, and I think I am perfectly safe in saying that there is absolutely no chance at all for him to do a single trip, even without wages.

The lowest steerage fare to Quebec is £6 5s., to Winnipeg the through fare is £9 15s., whilst the journey right across the Canadian continent to Vancouver, British Columbia, the Western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, will cost you something over £14.

The passenger rates on the Canadian railways vary at times, and the fare does not, of course, include meals on the trains.

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FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, ½d.

You must have £5 or £6 on you when you land in Canada, and the total amount that one should have in hand before leaving the Homeland is roughly £20. This sum should be quite sufficient to keep any fellow until he strikes a job, and if he lands in the West in May—which is probably the best month of all—he should have no difficulty in getting work very quickly.

A great impression held by most English people who are about to emigrate is that they should take as much in the way of clothes as possible. Of course, this idea arises from their belief that clothes are expensive in the Dominion. Generally speaking, this is correct, but there is a very strong reason why they should not bring a lot. The reason is this: The Canucks have a strong dislike for English fashions in dress, and it is greatly to the advantage of the new-comer to adopt Canadian clothes as soon as possible after arrival in this country. He will find his path much smoother in seeking a position. English dress brands one too plainly, "New to Canada," and this impression is to be avoided. Besides, overalls are largely worn in the Dominion, especially on outside work, and these cost but very little.

With these preliminary hints, we will imagine that we have booked our passage and have boarded the great liner that is to take us to the new land where lies our future hopes. Soon England has faded away in the haze astern, and for a few days we are rolling on the broad bosom of the Atlantic. At last we sight Quebec. And some of us are not altogether sorry, either.

Quebec is a quaint, imposing old town, but our eyes turn involuntarily towards the Heights of Abraham, for we remember the stirring deeds of Wolfe and his gallant men who, in the dead of night, stormed them and secured for Britain a glorious victory.

But the boat has tied up, and our thoughts are soon fully occupied by our preparations for landing. This accomplished, we are brought face to face with that bugbear of all travellers—the Customs. And now, my chums, having got you safely ashore at Quebec, I am going to give you another word of advice.

It is but just to say that most Customs' officials are very decent fellows, but there are exceptions. You will find, though, if you want your baggage passed quickly, that the best way is to approach an official in an open manner with the keys of your trunks in your hand. Then, even if he is inclined to throw all your private goods and chattels around the shed—well, keep smiling. Don't be like one English lad I knew. When this youngster saw his goods being ruthlessly slung out of his trunk, red anger blazed in his heart and caustic words passed his lips. Then the official found some new linen and promptly demanded duty. For some moments there was a violent argument, till suddenly the lad swung his fist to the point of the Customs' man's jaw, knocking him clean off his feet. Then, catching up his linen, he ran to the side of the dock and threw it into the sea. He saved having to pay duty on his belongings, but his actions landed him into serious trouble with the authorities. A nice way to start life in a new country, eh?

However, we are not trying any such tricks, so we get our belongings O.K.'d, and are free to leave the sheds. But we will delay our departure on the train until next week, when we will journey together through the prairies and mountains of the Golden West.

(Another of these interesting articles next week.)

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL.

PLAYING THE GAME!



A Splendid Tale of School, Sport, and Adventure.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

INTRODUCTION.

After an exciting election at Grovehouse College, Geoffrey Foster is chosen to fill the vacant position in the college cricket eleven when they play Headlingham—one of the most important matches of the year. The fact that Geoffrey is elected earns him the enmity of Jeffcock, who tried means fair and foul to secure the coveted position for his friend and crony, Sidney Weames. Later, Geoffrey makes his way to the nets, where Jeffcock, William Hewitt—captain of the school and Foster's firm friend—and a lad named Adams are practising.

Geoffrey succeeds in bowling Jeffcock three times in four balls, and the latter loses his temper, and, with a cowardly blow, knocks Geoffrey down. This results in a fight, which takes place in an old gravel-pit—the scene of many a fight. Jeffcock informs his toadies that he is going to give Foster such a hiding that he will be unable to play in the Headlingham match. But Geoffrey proves the better man, and it is Jeffcock who has to stand down from the match. He sits down in the stand, just behind Dr. Morgan, the Head of Grovehouse.

(Now go on with the story.)

The School do None Too Well—Headlingham in Winning Vein—Foster Deserves his Place—The School Beaten, and Weames to Blame.

Jeffcock's place in the team had been filled by Weames, so that both Weames and Foster were to play for their side after all—a contingency for which Jeffcock could not have been prepared, or he would not have so resolutely opposed young Foster in that famous meeting in the great hall.

"Poor Jeffcock!" said Mrs. Morgan, casting a sympathetic glance in the direction of the sullen and sulky schoolboy. "He seems to be taking his inability to play for the school very much to heart."

"I've no doubt he is," said Dr. Morgan grimly. "And I don't wonder at it."

"And a boy of his age to go birds'-nesting, and then to fall from the top of a tree!" sighed Mrs. Morgan. "It seems too bad!"

"I wonder," said Dr. Morgan, with a grim smile. "I've had many a fall birds'-nesting when I was a boy, my dear, but I never found a fall bruise my body and black my eye as it has done Jeffcock's."

"It wasn't birds'-nesting," cried Bertha Morgan, the pretty, sixteen-year-old daughter of the doctor, as sweet a girl as could be found for miles round. "I heard all about it. He abused Geoffrey Foster very cruelly, and the two fought it out in the gravel-pit. Foster, who is a lighter and

a smaller boy, thrashed him. Serves him right! Mr. Foster is able to play, you see."

"A fight, my dear!" cried the Head's wife, raising her eyebrows. "I thought you threatened to expel the next boys who were found fighting in the gravel-pit?"

"H'm! One has to use one's discretion in these affairs!" cried the Head. "Hewitt, our captain, was aware of all that passed, and favoured the fight. He declared to me it was the only possible outcome of an impossible situation, and diplomatically I accepted the birds'-nesting version of the story as correct. There has been a bad set made against young Foster, and perhaps it as well he has fought his way into his own. They will not be likely to interfere with him now. However, Bertha, my dear, you must not go about saying these two have been fighting. It would never do."

"I won't, father," answered the pretty girl. "Only I hate deception, as you know."

The doctor did not reply, for at that moment a rousing cheer announced the advent of the Headlingham side upon the playing-field, and a minute later William Hewitt, the Grovehouse captain and Geoffrey Foster went to the wickets to bat.

The honour paid to Foster by the Grovehouse captain in permitting him to go in with him, first man, occasioned no small amount of astonishment amongst the schoolboys. Foster, in the matches in which he had played, had shown considerable resource in both batting and bowling, but inclined to disparage his abilities as they all were owing to the enmity of Jeffcock, one of those supposed to know, such a proceeding on William Hewitt's part was the last thing they had looked for.

Foster was palpably nervous, as nervous as he had been before fighting Jeffcock in the gravel-pit. But Hewitt, smiling, patted him on the shoulder.

"I'll have first smack, Foster," he said, "just to show you how easy it is, and when you get the chance, treat the bowling just the same as you would that of any ordinary team. I don't think we shall find anything special about Headlingham."

The schoolboys waited in breathless anticipation. The first ball Hewitt received he played nicely to the off, and they ran. But it was not the two he had expected. A Headlingham fieldsman, Thomas by name, snapped up the ball, and Foster had barely time to get to his crease ere a well-aimed shot laid his stumps low. It was a little disconcerting for the lad, playing his first big match as he was, and he took his centre very nervously.

He shaped indifferently, and was nearly clean bowled by the second ball from Pritchard of Headlingham. The third he stopped, and the fourth he got clean to the leg-boundary,

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amidst cheers. It was a good, well-timed hit, and Hewitt smiled encouragement at him from the other end. Caught in two minds over the last ball of the over, Foster eventually placed it midway along the wicket, and calling "Yes!" the pair ran it, and Foster found himself again in front of the bowling.

It was Hayhoe, the Headlingham crack fast bowler, he had to play now, and he did not feel at all sure of himself. However, from the third ball he managed a two with a long drive, and seemed more confident. The fifth he drove for a single; and his captain failing to score once more, he stood up to it, and, being determined to play himself in, a dull maiden over followed.

Hayhoe was doing well with the ball, and Captain Hewitt felt well pleased with the boundary hit he made off the next over from the Headlingham crack. Once more Foster failed to score, and then his captain, running a single, put him in front of Hayhoe for the second time.

The move was disastrous, for from the crack's first ball Foster was bowled off his pads, and Jeffcock's partisans sent up a yell of delight. Foster was out for a beggarly seven.

"Serve! Hewitt right for putting him in first!" growled Talbot, who was flourishing a bat viciously in the pavilion.

Jellotson now joined his captain at the wickets. The big aristocrat looked very confident, and promptly hit two boundaries off Hayhoe just to show the others how easy it was. The score began to rise.

But a couple of overs later another disaster befell the school. Hewitt, mistiming a fast, low ball from the Headlingham crack, was clean bowled middle stump for twenty-four.

Secretary Adams was next man in, and some merry hitting followed until, facing Watson, who had gone on vice Pritchard, retired, Adams was bowled by the off stump, and left, having added 13 to the total.

The school were not doing well, and Dr. Morgan began to speculate as to whether the century would be reached or not.

Bob Haines, serene and collected as usual, now went out to show what he was made of, and, batting with that skill and resource which made him an indispensable member of the side, he helped the score on at a good pace until Jellotson, falling a victim to the wiles of the deceptive Hayhoe, was bowled for 19, and the luncheon interval was taken.

When the food had been despatched Hughes went in to bat. He played briskly until he had reached 11, when Watson removed the bails with a fast-rising ball short of the crease.

Parker, next man in for the school, batted steadily with Haines, but the partnership did not last long, Haines retiring for an invaluable 28, bowled by Thomas, whose fielding had been brilliant for the college.

Weames, Jeffcock's toady, was next in. He resented the fact that he should have been kept out so long. He resented the fact that Foster should have received the signal honour of batting first. He had been talking with Jeffcock, and his mood was a sullen one when he faced Chittenden, of Headlingham, who had gone on to bowl in place of Hayhoe, that bowler taking a well-earned rest. Nevertheless, he showed that he meant business by hitting a loose ball from the bowler to the off-boundary.

"A fluke," thought Captain Hewitt. But he was not shaping well, and from a mishit ball he was nearly caught in the same over. However, they ran it for two, and Weames, flushed of face and irritable, once more stood up to the ball.

"He'll not stay long!" said Jellotson, with a contemptuous curl of the lips. "From the look of the beggar, I don't believe he wants to!"

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth than crack! Weames got his bat to a short-pitched ball, and up it went into the air.

Hayhoe could be seen racing for it. He stopped and steadied himself, judging well the falling ball, and lo and behold!—"How's that?"—up into the air went the ball again for a fair catch, and Weames retired, having done little to enhance his own reputation or that of the school. He had scored 6.

It was the beginning of the end. The school seemed to be afraid of the college. Parker, who had been none too safe, was next bowled by Chittenden for 19; then Talbot, who like Weames did not seem to care, was bowled by Hythe, and Moore, the school's wicket-keeper, and Godward, the last pair, scraped nervously about, seeming to have caught the infection that had demoralised the school. Moore made a lucky 10, and Godward carried his bat for 2. Extras were 16, and the whole school side was out for 155.

This, considering their supposed great batting strength, was poor indeed, and did not suggest that the match was likely to last the whole two days.

That the score was not good enough was plainly shown when Headlingham went in to bat.

Page and Thomas opened the college innings.

Hewitt deputed Haines and Parker to bowl, and the tug-of-war was resumed.

Page, the Headlingham captain, who, with Durrant, was reckoned to be the best bat on the visiting side, was master of his art, and could hit freely all round the wicket. The confidence which the college had displayed from the very first characterised them now, and they began to hit with a will, and it was not until the score had reached 33, out of which total Page himself had scored 25, that a good "slow" from Haines removed the bails, and the Headlingham captain retired. Durrant came to the wickets in his place, and but 7 had been added to the total, out of which the newcomer hit a boundary, when Thomas was cleverly caught and bowled by Parker. The hopes of the school began to revive.

Nor had they much cause to grumble when Watson came in. He hit well, but his stay was not of long duration, for after adding 12 to the total, whilst Durrant, who was playing himself steadily in, added 10, and byes added 4 more, he failed to accurately judge a late cut, and was finely caught by Foster standing in the slips.

Ulyat, the next man in, was clean bowled by Parker next ball, and the school cheered again.

But their shouts of triumph did not last long, for Youle, next man in, at once got set, and a partnership continued right on to the tea interval, when Durrant was not out 56, and Youle not out 40.

The college score was rising rapidly.

To make matters worse, neither Hewitt nor Jellotson could rid themselves of the suspicion that Weames, who had two good catches played to him in the longfield, had purposely let off the Headlingham cracks.

Such butter-fingered attempts as those which he had made had never been seen before in a big match at Grovehouse.

The Grovehouse captain shifted him to the boundary behind the batting wicket when the game was resumed.

Then the tea seemed to have got on Youle's nerves, for, relaxing in his efforts, he was bowled by Hewitt, who had gone on for the first time to bowl, for a capital 56, scored at a fast pace, and the school breathed again.

"Foster," cried the Grovehouse captain, tossing the lad



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the ball, "you go on now in the place of Haines, and see what you can do! I think you ought to have a try."

"What about Weames?" asked Geoffrey, with a quiet smile.

"Weames shall only bowl as a last resource!" growled Hewitt. "I believe he and Talbot are trying to sell the match."

That Foster could bowl was soon apparent, for he held up Chittenden beautifully, and with the last ball of his over got him caught by Moore, standing at the wicket, for a duck.

Then Durrant faced Hewitt, and began his boundary hitting again, what time Hayhoe, the next man in, looked on.

Geoffrey was on his mettle. He knew that the eyes of the school were upon him, and he wished to atone for his batting failure. He succeeded, for another duck was made, this time Hayhoe retiring with the round 0 to his credit, clean bowled by a yorker.

Pritchard now came in, and the college wicket-keeper soon showed that he was a dangerous, if not a stylish, bat by hitting the bowling all over the place, Durrant now playing the part of spectator, and it was not until this lightning hitter had scored 45—luckily, it must be confessed—that Foster succeeded in hitting his stumps.

The college total was now well over 200, and the fieldsmen were tired. They felt they would not be able to stand much more of it, and, as a matter of fact, they hadn't to, for Geoffrey, getting an irresistible twist on the ball, quickly dismissed Lyle for 3 and Jewell for 0, and, with Durrant carrying his bat for 89, the innings came to an end, and stumps were drawn for the day.

Byes, etc., numbered 22, some of them given away by Weames, and the college total was 263.

The feeling of the school the next morning, when they went in to bat on a wicket which had been partly spoiled by rain, can better be imagined than described. They were 108 runs to the bad, a handicap they felt was too heavy for them to overcome.

There had been much bitter feeling shown by the Jeffcock faction against Foster. He had ruined the match, they said, by keeping Jeffcock out of it. He couldn't bat, and his bowling was fluky. But, seeing that he had captured five wickets in the latter half of the college innings, it is difficult to see how his detractors made out their case.

Once again Hewitt selected young Foster to go in and open the innings with him, although Geoffrey pleaded hard that Jellotson, the steady and brilliant Jellotson, might take his place.

"No," said Hewitt. "You are either worth your place in the team, my lad, or you are not. You come in with me."

The innings commenced with two maiden overs, and then Captain Hewitt put Hayhoe to leg for 4, and drove him hard to the longfield for 4.

Rendered, perhaps, too confident by this success, he tried hard for a third boundary, his wish being to break the back of the bowling, and, crack! away flew middle stump and both balls, and the worst misfortune had befallen the school—their captain was out for 8.

Jellotson came in, and promptly glanced Hayhoe's next ball for a single, but the very first ball he received from Pritchard at the other end dismissed him, the two best bats on the school side being out for 9.

Secretary Adams followed, and he glanced imploringly at Foster. Geoffrey understood, and as Adams put one up along the wicket he ran.

He now faced Pritchard, and, getting the next ball clean on his bat, hit it right over the pavilion—a 6! Foster this time did not mean to let his side down. He realised that a desperate effort must be made to save the game, and he intended to make it.

Adams was careful. He scored 2 from a ball from Hayhoe, and stopped the rest. Then Foster faced Pritchard again. He made no mistake, and a pull to leg and a cut to the off-boundary, crisp and clean, added 8 to the total.

The cricket was of a first-class order, the bowling being good and the fielding smart. Adams was taking no risks, and Foster was hitting like a hero. But when he had scored 10 Adams was bowled by Pritchard, and Haines came in.

Haines was in a merry mood, and he and Foster batted steadily while the score rose by ones and twos and fours to a respectable total.

When Geoffrey had scored 42 he had the misfortune to lose Haines, who had been lashing out, and was eventually bowled by Thomas for 20.

It was a thousand pities, for on the partnership of the two Hewitt reckoned rested whatever chance the school had of winning.

Hughes, next man in, was bowled by Hayhoe when he had been at the wickets only a couple of minutes for 0.

Parker, next in, fell to a catch by the Headlingham captain, Page, from a ball by Watson, for 1. And then Weames, who was as sulky and as sullen as yesterday, and determined to give Foster no assistance, was clean bowled next ball by Watson for a duck, and Talbot came in.

The hopes of the school had now almost vanished; but, to their surprise, Talbot had some sting in him. He played steady, if not good, cricket, and hit now and then, but when Foster raised his total to 53, and just when the school were beginning to think he might carry his bat, Pritchard put in a swift, artful ball. It broke back in a most extraordinary manner, and, in stepping back to protect his wicket, Geoffrey, to his horror, struck the stumps, and the balls fell. He was out, hit wicket, and a roar of dismay went up. With Foster out, what chance had the school? And echo dismally answered none.

To a tremendous storm of cheering, in which, however, neither Jeffcock nor any of his cronies joined, Foster hurried to the pavilion, and here Hewitt gripped his hand.

"Hard lines, youngster!" he cried. "I never wish to see more perfect cricket. You are a credit to the school, and," he added, "to those who selected you."

Wicket-keeper Moore now went in, and Talbot, as if seized by a sudden frenzy, hit out at everything. Some of the balls were stopped, others partially so, but he made runs. But he lost Moore when that sturdy champion had hit one boundary.

Godward, next man in, was bowled first ball he received, but Talbot had, meanwhile, hit a boundary, and, with a not-out score of 19, proudly left the field.

The school score was 137 only, and the match was as good as lost.

In the hope of achieving something in the college's second innings, Captain Hewitt went on to bowl with Foster. But Headlingham, certain of winning, began to hit out.

Foster got Page's wicket when he had scored 5, and Jewell's when that worthy had hit a single boundary—4; but Ulyat not out 19, and Chittenden not out 0, with byes reading 4, the 32 runs necessary to win were hit off, and Headlingham College scored a memorable victory by the wide margin of eight wickets.

The full scores were as follows:

GROVEHOUSE SCHOOL.

First Innings.	Second Innings.
Hewitt, b Hayhoe	24 b Hayhoe
Foster, b Hayhoe	7 hit wicket
Jellotson, b Hayhoe	19 b Pritchard
Adams, b Watson	13 b Pritchard
Haines, b Thomas	28 b Thomas
Hughes, b Watson	11 b Hayhoe
Parker, b Chittenden	19 c Page, b Watson
Weames, c Hayhoe, b Chit'den	6 b Watson
Talbot, b Hythe	0 not out
Moore, c Youle b Thomas	10 b Hayhoe
Godward, not out	2 b Thomas
Byes, etc.	16 Byes, etc.
155	137

HEADLINGHAM COLLEGE.

First Innings.	Second Innings.
Page, b Haines	25 b Foster
Thomas, c and b Parker	11
Watson, c Foster b Haines	12
Ulyat, b Parker	0 not out
Youle, c and b Hewitt	56
Chittenden, b Foster	0 not out
Durrant, not out	89
Hayhoe, b Foster	0
Lyle, b Foster	3
Jewell, b Foster	0 b Foster
Pritchard, b Foster	45
Byes, etc.	22 Byes, etc.
263	32

A Letter from Home—Bad News—The Scene in the Great Hall—Foster Faces his Enemy—Trouble Looms Black Ahead.

On the Monday following the big match school affairs at Grovehouse assumed their normal aspect. The Jeffcock faction had tried their best to throw the blame of the defeat upon Foster. But it was so plainly apparent to all that Jeffcock had brought his defeat in the fight upon himself that he found few ready sympathisers. Then, too, there could be no denying that Foster had striven heroically to save the game, whereas what a poor show Weames, the much-vaunted candidate against Foster prior to the match, had

made? He was not above suspicion of having thrown away the game, and there was a distinct coolness in the school towards him.

Captain Hewitt was for ever deploring the fact that he had batted so miserably. He had been too worried about Jeffcock and the affairs of the team to do himself justice, he admitted—far from wishing to make excuses for himself, however—and he wished with all his heart that the match might be played again. But as the big event only came off once every year, the match being played alternately at Grovehouse and at Headlingham, there was no chance of that.

"And I'm going down this term," Hewitt said to Jellotson. "So are you, old man, and so is Jeffcock. It seems to me there will be a pretty sorry lot left. And if Grovehouse don't choose Foster for their captain, after the lead we have given them, I shall say the school has lost its senses."

But much was to happen to Geoffrey Foster before the term ended, and it was destined that he should never rule over the fortunes of Grovehouse, as we shall see.

When Geoffrey Foster left the rooms which he shared with Adams, after putting his books away on conclusion of the morning's school, he hurried out of the house, intending to have a bit of practice in the playing-fields before lunch. But he never got as far.

He saw Hasker, the odd man, coming towards him with a letter held between a grimy thumb and forefinger.

"For me, Hasker?" asked the boy in surprise, for he did not expect any letter from home, although both his father and mother had disappointed him by not coming to Grovehouse for the match.

"Yes, sir," said the odd man, touching his forehead. "It's from home, I think, Mister Foster. And I do hope it's no bad news—for I distrusts them express letters."

But Geoffrey did not hear or heed him. He tore open the envelope, and found that the two sheets of notepaper the envelope contained were covered with closely-written lines, and that there was also a cutting from a newspaper inside.

One glance at the contents, and he realised that his mother was much worried about affairs at home; and abandoning all thought of practising his games, he withdrew to his study, and, falling into a big armchair, began to read the letter with very close attention:

"My dear Son"—it began,—“For the last month or so I have been much troubled about your father. He is ill, and I am sure business is not well with him. You know how invariably kind he has always been? Well, of late he has been neglectful of me—neglectful of you.

"I have noticed this strangeness of manner with him ever since he and Mr. Jeffcock dissolved their interests in the London and County Building Society and the Suburban Mutual Assurance. My dear, dear boy, I don't know what to think, but I cannot rid myself of the feeling that a crash is coming—a crash which will overwhelm us all with ruin. Much as I love your father, you know very well, Geoffrey, that I dare not question him. He would not like it. And knowing and respecting him as I do, as all that is loyal, lovable, honourable, and noble, how can I do anything but leave his affairs in his own hands?

"Your father is ill. There is no doubt about that. Last night he did not come to bed, but I could hear him pacing up and down his study all night, and when I went down, after never having closed my sleepless and tear-bedimmed eyes, I found him writing letters. There was a pile on his desk ready for the post, and he looked at me with such touching affection that I threw myself into his arms, and cried and cried as if my heart would break.

"He softened towards me then, Geoffrey, and he opened his heart in part to me. He told me that he was on the verge of ruin. He told me that perhaps he would shortly have to go away, and if such a thing did happen, I was never to let a soul, not even you, know whither he had gone.

"At breakfast he was calmer, and he departed for the City with the old loving smile upon his face. After he had gone I picked a crumpled newspaper from the floor. I noticed that he seemed strangely agitated whilst reading it, and, opening out the sheet, I came upon the enclosed paragraph, which I have cut out and sent to you, because, my dear son, I know how dearly you love your father, and how cruel it would be for me to blind your eyes to truths as they are.

"My heart is too full for me to write more now, my dear boy, but I was glad to hear from Mr. William Hewitt, your captain, who took the trouble to write to me, of your splendid batting for the school side on Saturday, and for your brave effort to try and win the game for Grovehouse. God bless you, my dear boy, and guard you from all ill.

"Your loving and devoted mother,

"ELEANOR FOSTER."

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial story next Wednesday.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 320.

FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, 1st.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY 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."

M. Thomas, 450, 13th Street, N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in Great Britain or the Colonies interested in stamp collecting.

A. Spark, 81, Langridge Street, Collingwood, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers outside Australia.

Geo. Hore, 198, High Street, Northcote, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

John P. O. Callaghan, 18, Thornbury Street, Spring Hill, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with Catholic readers in the United Kingdom.

Egerton Wood, P.O. Box 18, Barberton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 17-18.

James A. Gracey, P.O. Box 369, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England, age 16.

W. Lonergan, 31, Argyle Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in Ireland, age 16-17.

Miss E. Malcahy, 14, Forest Road, Hobart, Tasmania, wishes to correspond with boy readers, age 15-18.

Roy N. Blanchard, Post Office, Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in any of the British Colonies, age 17.

F. Lawson, care of T. Garland, 8, Airlie Avenue, Armadale, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in the British Isles or India, age 18-19.

Miss Edna Cadden, 29, Oswald Street, Victoria Park, Perth, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader living in Canada or Africa, age 17-19.

Miss Dorothy E. Boardman, Kiosk, Hyde Park City, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers.

Henry R. Glance, 78, Piesse Street, Boulder, W. Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Empire interested in postcards.

B. J. Patterson, Box Hill, Police Station, via Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles, Canada, Asia, or Africa interested in postcards.

Miss Kathleen Caldwell, 202, Karangahape, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers living in any part of the Globe.

F. E. B. Malone, 5, Byron Place, Adelaide, S. Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 14-15.

M. Mulcahy, 14, Forest Road, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers, age 20-23.

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.



BAD PASSING.

At a certain football match an Englishman and a Scotsman chanced to meet, and, contrary to tradition, the Englishman had a bottle of whisky, while the Scotsman had none. A few minutes after the game had started a good run was made by one of the visiting forwards.

"Good run!" said the Scotsman.

"Fine!" said the Englishman, and applied his lips to the bottle, ignoring Mac's thirsty glances.

Later on a goal was scored.

"Fine goal!" said Mac.

"Good!" said the Englishman, taking another draught, but still offering none to his neighbour.

"I presume ye're a bit of a footballer yerself?" said Mac.

"I am," was the prompt reply.

"I thought so," said Mac. "Ye're a fine dribbler, but no good at passing!"—Sent in by Frank Veater, Chester.

POOR KID!

Visitor (consolingly to Tommy, who has upset a bottle of ink on the new carpet): "But, my boy, there's no use crying over spilt milk."

Tommy: "Course not! Any duffer knows that! All you've got to do is to call the cat, and she'll lick it up; but this don't happen to be milk, and mother'll do the licking!"—Sent in by Miss Edith Sinton, Scotland.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

"Please, your dog has killed three of father's prize fowls," said the small boy.

"I am quite sure that my dear dog Fido would not do such a thing!" answered the old lady thus addressed.

"Well, mum, father saw him with one of the chickens in his mouth," continued the boy.

"Purely circumstantial evidence!" sniffed the old lady, as the boy departed puzzled.

Presently he returned.

"Please, mum, father sent me to say that perhaps circumstantial evidence might lead you to think he'd shot your dog; but he reckons you'll find he died of hobnailed liver!"—Sent in by Charles Green, Cardiff.

VERY TOUGH.

People had flocked from all parts of the Metropolis to see the play entitled "Julius Cæsar." No expense had been spared in its production, but the effect of the assassination scene was spoiled when the trick-dagger refused to work. As Brutus frantically jabbed the unfortunate Cæsar with the obdurate weapon, a voice from the gallery remarked, in a calm tone:

"Lumme, but ain't he tough!"—Sent in by J. J. Holleror, Cheshire.

STARTED WELL.

Officer (to recruit, who has missed every shot): "Good heavens, man, where are your shots going?"

Recruit (nervously): "I don't know, sir. They left here all right!"—Sent in by Maurice Brisk, Manchester.

QUITE RIGHT, BUT—

He ran his fingers through his hair, and pondered for a long time over his examination paper. The subject was: "How Are We Governed?" and he was at a loss how to answer the following question:

"If the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Home Secretary would die, who would officiate?"

Banging his pen into the ink, he tried in vain to recall who came next in succession. At last a happy inspiration came to him, and he wrote, in rather a shaky handwriting: "The Undertaker."—Sent in by J. Frack, Transvaal.

WHAT CHEEK!

Manager (to office-boy): "I say, boy, we've been and forgotten to get those insurance stamps, and now the office is closed."

Office-Boy: "By Jove, guv'nor, so we have! Ain't we a couple of fat-heads!"—Sent in by Miss R. E. Physick, Kensington.

SAVED HIS LIFE.

Irishman (meeting another): "What has become of your old pal Patrick Murphy?"

O'Reilly: "Sure, dear honey, poor Pat was condemned to be hung, but he saved his life by dying in prison!"—Sent in by F. G. Jackson, Lanes.

VERY SHARP.

Sharpe: "How many young ladies will it take to fill up the road between London and Brighton?"

Blunt: "About a couple of million."

Sharpe: "No; fifty-two. Because it is fifty-two miles from London to Brighton, and a miss (Miss) is as good as a mile."—Sent in by A. Andrews, Bournemouth.

A GOOD JOB.

Kind Lady (to tramp): "Is there anything I can do for you in the way of sewing?"

Tramp: "Well, mum, I have here two coat-buttons, a trousers-button, and four waistcoat-buttons. You might oblige by sewing a suit on to them."—Sent in by M. Bloom, Clerkenwell.

WHAT THEY MISSED.

The guard of the London and Squasham train was greatly surprised by the violent tugging at the communication-cord by one of the passengers. Looking out of the guard's van, he was much alarmed to see a lady-passenger leaning out of a carriage window frantically waving her umbrella. It was evident something serious had happened, so he immediately brought the train to a standstill, and, running along to the carriage, inquired why she had stopped the train.

"Why didn't you stop before?" she asked indignantly. "We have just passed two of the finest mushrooms I've seen for many a long year!"—Sent in by H. Philpott, Sheppey.

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 other-wise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"DESPERATE MEASURES!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 320.
Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of
the Chums of St. Jim's. Order Early.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"DESPERATE MEASURES!"
By Martin Clifford.

In our next splendid long, complete school story, entitled as above, Tom Merry & Co. once again come into open conflict with Cutts, the captain of St. Jim's. Cutts, reckless, determined, and cool as ice, is determined to retain the captaincy of St. Jim's at all costs; and when, just as he feels that he is establishing himself in his exalted position, the news comes that Kildare is returning to take up the reins of office again, the black sheep of St. Jim's takes a desperate resolve. Kildare must be prevented at all costs from returning! Cutts lays his dastardly plans well, but he reckons without Tom Merry & Co., who are equally determined to bring Kildare back to St. Jim's safe and sound. It is only after some startling adventures that the resolute and plucky juniors are able to bring to nought the rascally Cutts's.

"DESPERATE MEASURES!"

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

G. D. Campbell, 5, Linden Grove, Dockpark, Dumfries, N.B., intends to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be glad to hear from fellow-readers wishing to join.

F. Wade, 23, Blackwood Street, Walworth, S.E., contemplates forming a "Gem" club for boys, and hopes to hear from fellow-readers living in the neighbourhood.

The Three Leaders' League, which has now moved back into its old premises at 26, Princes' Square, E., is extending the scope of its operations still further. A Sports' Club, a Free Lending Library, and a Stamp Circle, have now been organised. By way of celebrating the first anniversary of the foundation of the League, the members have planned a ramble in Epping Forest. I am glad to be able to give such an excellent report of the doings of this enterprising organisation.

A GRAND HALFPENNYWORTH.

This week's issue of our New Halfpenny Companion Paper, "Chuckles," represents really grand value for money—the best ever offered. The amusing pictures printed in bright colours are guaranteed to chase away the "blues" from the most melancholy—Breezy Ben and Dismal Dutchy, the special "Chuckles" favourites, making an extra comic "hit."

The fiction, as usual, is of the most interesting and wholesome type.

"The Secret of Ridge House" is a powerful story of the amazing adventures of Ferrers Locke, Detective.

"Fighter and Footballer," is a grand tale of the Boxing Ring and the Football Field, by popular Arthur S. Hardy.

"Condemned On Suspicion," is a splendid school story dealing with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, and the girls of Cliff House, by Frank Richards; the popular £10 Prize Competition, "Mr. Chuckles' " Cheery Chat, and the famous "Chuckles" Cinema are among the other features which help to make the issue of

"CHUCKLES,"

now on Sale,

THE BEST HALFPENNYWORTH IN THE WORLD!

THE NAVY AS A PROFESSION FOR BOYS.

By Admiral the Hon. Sir E. Fremantle.

First, there is the entry of "boys" through the training-ships, which are gradually disappearing, being replaced by the establishment on shore at Shotley, near Harwich.

Secondly, there is the entry of "youths," lads who go straight to sea in special instruction vessels, and who enter at a later age. Thirdly, there are the "special service" seamen, who join as men for short service under the pennant, and who are then discharged to the Royal Fleet Reserve. The last are somewhat in the experimental stage, but as in the case of military short service, the object aimed at is to increase the Reserve.

I now give the ages for the three classes to which I have referred:

Class (a) boys, age between 15½ and 16½.

Class (b) youths, age between 16½ and 18.

Class (c) men, age between 18 and 25.

Thus it will be seen that a lad wishing to join the Navy can do so, if in all respects eligible at any age between 15½ and 25. In all classes the service is for twelve years from entry, or for "boys" and "youths" for twelve years from the age of 18, but in the case of class (c) the maximum period afloat is five years, after which they join the Reserve. They are, however, eligible to be taken over to the "continuous service," that is the twelve years under the pennant, with its contingent advantages, if highly recommended.

It would be tedious to give details of the physical standard required, which is subject to variation in accordance with the demand. Frequently of late the standard has been so raised as to be practically prohibitive, and a higher educational standard has been required recently for all entries.

(Another Special Article on this interesting subject next Wednesday.)

The Editor

What a Headmaster Writes About The Two Famous Companion Papers.

New College,
Clacton-on-Sea.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express to you my appreciation of the School Stories which appear week by week in the "Gem" and "Magnet" Library. I never have any hesitation in purchasing both papers for the boys of this school, and hope you may long continue your excellent stories. The stories are never without a sound moral, and there is a splendid healthy tone running throughout each tale.

I am,
Yours very truly,
(Signed) G. R. S. TOWNSHEND,
Headmaster.

An Entirely Unsolicited Testimonial!

SECRET SERVICE!

By "AGENT No. 55."

(THE CLOSING CHAPTER OF THIS GREAT ADVENTURE STORY.)

Germany Climbs Down.

As the great motor hummed along Unter den Linden on its way to the Royal Palace Jerry suddenly started, a man on the sidewalk catching his attention.

"Sir"—and to General Ranger he quickly indicated the man—"that's the person—he in the light overcoat yonder—to whom we owe our errand to-day."

"So. And who is he?"

"Muller. The man in whose office I worked, never dreaming that he was a German spy."

And the car sped on, the man on the pavement never imagining that his former clerk had passed. A disagreeable awakening awaited Herr Muller, alias Krug, and a dozen other names besides.

Lord Riversdale had finished speaking, and silence reigned in the room. Beside the table, erect as he had leaped from his chair, eyes blazing, controlling his anger with difficulty, stood the Kaiser, Wilhelm the Second. Behind him was lumped the massive figure of the German War Minister, Herr von Marcken, staring steadily at the table.

"England demands—demands the release of Mr. Max Elton," repeated the Kaiser, his English very distinct.

"Now a prisoner, treacherously captured, and lying in one of your Highness's prisons," replied Lord Riversdale in a low voice. "Such are my instructions."

"Those who issued them are—are forgetting how international affairs are conducted," returned the Emperor.

"I am following my instructions, your Highness."

"Which are an insult to the nation which Providence has called upon me to rule, whose destinies I guide. There must be a mistake!" And Wilhelm the Second, lips working behind his pointed moustache, body stiff, fingers clenched, and eyes wrathful, glared at the three Englishmen. "A mistake, or a jest. And"—he spoke slowly—"jests of such ill-taste the German nation does not appreciate, and replies to as they deserve."

"Your Highness," said General Ranger bluntly, unmoved by the underlying threat in the Emperor's tone, "no mistake is made, no jest intended. I am acquainted with our Ambassador's instructions, and I say they represent the decision of the British Government."

"The British Government believes it can afford to make demands!" cried the Kaiser, turning swiftly. He laughed. "It is possible that the British Government labours under a delusion of its power."

"It is possible that your Highness is unacquainted with the facts upon which the British Government bases its demands!" retorted the general. "Mr. Elton has been made a prisoner in circumstances which are an outrage upon all international understanding."

The Kaiser turned to his Minister.

"Herr von Marcken, you are acquainted with these circumstances?" he asked abruptly.

"Sire, the man was captured, together with another Englishman, who has since escaped, in the act of outraging the German flag by an armed assault upon a peaceful vessel, a passenger steamer. In that outrage a British warship assisted."

"You hear, sir?" And the Kaiser faced Lord Riversdale. "It seems to me that the positions are misplaced. It is my country that should be making demands."

Jerry Osborne, who had been listening intently, leaped to his feet.

"The charge is incorrect!" he cried. "Mr. Elton was carried a prisoner from England by a German named Muller, against whom there are many warrants out for attempted murder, arson, and espionage. Mr. Elton was taken up and kept a prisoner by the captain of the German steamer."

Frowning heavily, the Emperor turned to Von Marcken.

"What do you say to that?" he asked.

"A tissue of lies!" growled the War Minister. "This Elton is a well-known spy."

"On whose behalf, sir, do you present demands?" said the Emperor derisively, facing the Englishmen. "It is I am the injured party, not England. Still, I do not press this. Having heard that statement, on behalf of your country, you will now withdraw?"

Lord Riversdale was silent. He glanced at General Ranger.

"Your Highness, we withdraw nothing," said the latter steadily. "We are satisfied with the information given us by Mr. Osborne, and once more I emphasise what our Ambassador has said."

Von Marcken glanced at the speaker, who was as passionless as the Emperor was excited.

"Your demand, sir, is in the nature of a threat!" the latter cried harshly. "The German nation does not easily answer to ultimatums, and will refuse this."

"In which case, sir, it is my duty to present to your Highness the remainder of the instructions I have received." And Lord Riversdale referred to the remainder of the despatch he held.

"Let us hear it!" And, smiling ironically, the Kaiser sat down.

But he did not keep his seat long. As he listened a violent change came across his lined, pale face, fire flashed from his eyes, and again he sprang erect.

"Your Government threatens the immediate destruction of the German magazines, camp, and flotilla in and about the Zuyder Zee!" he cried, his voice quivering with passion. "Sir, your Government is an assemblage of madmen!" And he began pacing swiftly to and fro.

There was a pause. The voice of the unmoved chief of the British land forces broke it.

"Your Highness denies the existence of such magazines, camp, and flotilla?" he asked.

There was no reply from the furious War Lord of Europe, and, having waited, General Ranger repeated the question. At length came the answer.

"You are speaking of a chimera, of something that exists only in your perfervid and German-hating imagination!" cried the Kaiser.

"Mr. Osborne knows better. He has seen that of which I speak." And the C.-I.-C. made a sign to Jerry.

"I have seen it all," declared Jerry quietly. "The waiting vessels of transport, the camp where the soldiers are living, the sheds and magazines, the park of airships and flying-machines. I have a list which I will read if desired."

While he had been speaking the Emperor's face had become livid, the blood left his lips, and something of consternation came into his eyes as he slowly realised that Germany's great secret was not a secret from the enemy against whom these gigantic preparations had been made. All the strength of the iron will of the man needed to be put forth to preserve him from a breakdown. Horror and astonishment subdued him. Dumbly he listened to General Ranger's continuation of Jerry Osborne's tale.

"And if by midday to-day my Government is not informed of the unconditional release of Mr. Max Elton," said the hard, even voice, "the precautions taken by the British Government for the complete destruction of the war material and the army now concealed within the Zuyder Zee will take effect. A fleet of bomb-firing warplanes is in waiting—"

He was interrupted. With upraised, quivering hand, the Kaiser stepped in front of him.

"The audience is terminated!" he cried in a strangled voice. "I will communicate with you within half an hour."

And he walked out from the room, leaving Von Marcken still staring at the table.

And so did Jerry Osborne help to humble, for the time being, the heavenly-inspired ruler of the German Empire.

Within twenty minutes an equerry entered the room and silently handed a folded paper to Lord Riversdale. The latter glanced at it, passed it on to General Ranger, who read and gave it to Jerry Osborne.

It was an order, signed by the Emperor, authorising the release from the arsenal at Wesel of Max Elton.

"Max is free. I had hardly expected it," said Jerry to the C.-I.-C., as they went towards the waiting car.

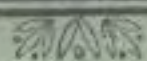
"He soon will be—thanks to you, Mr. Osborne." And the speaker added grimly: "And war between England and Germany is a greater certainty than ever it has been. Nothing now can prevent it."

"You regret what has been done?" cried Jerry quickly.

"Not at all." And the soldier shrugged his shoulders. "War is inevitable, anyway. There is a train you can catch to Wesel at 1.55. I looked it up before we started."

THE END.

NOW ON SALE!



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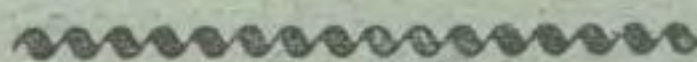
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