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THE WHEEZE THAT WENT WRONG!

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



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A MAGNIFICENT, NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY
OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S.

THE WHEEZE THAT WENT WRONG!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Bumping for Racke.

"YOW!" The Terrible Three, of the Shell at St. Jim's, were strolling through the cloisters, when that sudden and startling yell broke the silence.

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

"Someone getting a licking," suggested Manners.

"Yow! Racke, you heast, leggo!"

"Racke at the bullying game!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Certainly sounds like it," agreed Monty Lowther.

"I think we ought to interfere," said Manners, frowning. "It might be my minor, Racke has a down on him, you know."

"We'll soon see."

"And give the rotter what he deserves, a good licking!"

The Terrible Three hurried to the place where they judged Racke to be. Racke was a bit of a bully; but, like most bullies, he was a coward. Even Skimpole could lick Racke, which he certainly could not have done had Racke stood up to him resolutely.

Racke & Co. had fallen foul of Skimpole, and he had sworn a feud against them, and was fighting them one by one. Skimpole was a weedy specimen, too much given to reading ponderous volumes on recondite subjects in stuffy places, and not sufficiently given to taking exercise.

But Talbot was coaching him in boxing, and it had done him a world of good, though it certainly did not speak well for the fighting powers of Racke & Co. that they should be beaten by him.

And now Racke was bullying a small fat. There were fags whom Racke let alone. They might not be able actually to lick him, but they could hurt him, and he had a rooted objection to being hurt. So when Racke bullied a member of the Third it was usually a small, weak one. So was it in this case.

"Racke, you cad," shouted Tom Merry wrathfully, "let that kid go!"

Aubrey Racke turned on him with a scowl.

"What's it to do with you?" he sneered.

"Ow! Racke, don't! Stop him. Tom Merry, please!" yelled Page of the Third, as Racke gave him arm another vicious twist.

"Let him go, I say," repeated Tom, his eyes blazing, "or I'll smash you, you cad!"

"Shan't!" sneered Racke, with unwonted defiance.

The next moment he regretted his recklessness. Tom hit out, and Racke wipped the blood savagely from his mouth as he got up and scowled at the Shell skipper.

Page bolted, without waiting to be told to go.

"This is the second time I've caught you bullying young Page," said Tom. "And now I think it's time you had a lesson."

"Yes, you cad!" snapped Manners, who was now biter against Racke than either Tom or Lowther, and with reason.

"Bump the cad until he's sorry for himself!" growled Lowther.

And Racke was bumped. It was by no means the first bumping he had received, but it was far and away the worst, and most painful.

"Yow!" he yelled, as he hit the ground. "Ow-yow!"

"Bump!"

He howled and yelled, but all to no avail. He was only bumped harder. The Terrible Three had no love for bullies. A fellow who could let himself be licked by the weedy Skimpole, and yet bully small fry, was not the kind of fellow they felt any inclination to show mercy to.

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Yow! Stop it, you rotters! Oh! Yah! Yoop!"

Racke let out another ear-splitting yell.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, what ever are you doing?" broke in a voice. Racke—Manners allowed his share of Racke—which was the head—to drop to the ground. Then he fixed a withering glare on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth.

"Well," he said sarcastically, "it seems that it ought to be obvious that we're bumping Racke. But then, I don't possess a brain like yours, thank goodness!"

"Twily, deah boy. I haven't a vewy great opinion of youah intellect, deah boy!" Gussy agreed calmly.

Manners glared at him.

Tom Merry chuckled heartlessly.

Racke sat on the unsympathetic ground. He had to sit there. Tom Merry was holding both his arms; Lowther was in possession of his left leg. He yelled and kicked with the free leg.

"No, Gussy; don't you believe Manners," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"We're not really bumping Racke, we're doing this to please him. Racke's enjoying it no end. Can't you hear him yelling for joy? He'd do this on his own, only he must get someone to help him. Mustn't you, Racke?"

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Weally, Lowthah, I believe you are wrong!"

"What a brain!" sighed Manners.

"You ought to be in the War Office, Gussy," said Tom Merry admiringly.

"Yaas, wathah, you know. If I were in the War Office—"

"Can't stop and listen to you now, old chap," said Manners cheerfully, as he gripped Racke's leg again.

"Bump!"

"Weally, deah boys, I was warnarkin' that—"

"Bump!"

"Yarough!"

"That you seem—"

Bump!

"Help! Oh, you cads! Yarough!"

Bump!

"Weally, deah boys, you won't be able to hear me if you keep on bumpin' that wottah—"

"Never mind," said Lowther, with a great effort at cheerfulness.

"But, weally—"

Bump!

"There, I think that's enough!" gasped Manners.

"Yes, and I hope you've enjoyed it," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Yow!"

"Now, what is it?" said Lowther, turning to Arthur Augustus. "Deliver yourself, my little man."

"Weally, Lowthah, I cannot allow myself to be addressed as—"

"Cut all that, and get to the point, ass!"

"But, as I warnarked, I cannot allow you—"

"Cheese it!"

"Bai Jove, Racke's gone, deah boys!"

"Has he?" asked Tom casually. "I should have thought he'd have waited for some more. Racke's a chap not liking being bumped!"

Gussy gazed thoughtfully at the retreating form of Racke, as he limped painfully to the School House.

"As I was warnarkin', deah boys—"

"You needn't repeat that bit, because we know it by heart. Try a little lower down!"

"You uttah ass! I weally considah that—"

"Of course, you chaps, if Gussy is especially looking for a fine assortment of thick ears we don't want to be disoblighing," remarked Manners thoughtfully.

"I should uttally wufuse to take a thick cad! I was goin' to say that I wathah considah you ovahdid the bumpin', that was all."

"Oh, that was all, was it?" said Manners.

"And you've made all this fuss over that?" demanded Tom darkly.

"Oh, come on, Tom!" grunted Manners. "If I stay here I shall kill that ass."

"I should uttally wufuse to be killed! Oh, bai the way, what I weally came to tell you was that there will be a meeting of the Competition Committee on our study at six o'clock, deah boys."

"Well, why didn't you say so before, ass?"

"You wouldn't—"

"Wry, it's six o'clock now!" shouted Manners.

"You mustn't be late, Gussy," said Monty Lowther, winking at his chums.

"We'll run!" said Manners.

"Take an arm each, you two," said Tom, "and I'll help from behind."

And in this style they raced across the quad and into the School House.

CHAPTER 2.

The End of a Perfect Meeting.

"TOM MEWWY, welcome me, you wuffian!" painted Gussy breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you don't. Ow! Loo! Let me alone! Stop that! I shall refuse to."

Here Gussy slipped, and was dragged along the ground.

The Terrible Three answered him not. They had reached the Fourth Form passage now, and they were simply dragging him along.

Then they stopped suddenly. They had gained their objective.

"Come in, ass!" bawled Jack Blake, as Tom thumped on the door.

"Please, we've found this!" said Manners meekly.

Gussy arose painfully, breathing vengeance and dust.

"You wuffians—"

"Sit down, you kids!"

"Weally, Blake, do not interwupt, as I—"

"Sit down! And if Gussy speaks another word, Herries, just chuck the bottle of red ink over that new waistcoat of his!"

"We had to hurry, or we should have been late," said Tom.

"And Gussy wouldn't have been so ill-mannered as to be late," added Lowther.

"Well, all right. Sit down."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat down.

Gussy relaxed into indignant silence as Herries threatened him with the red ink.

Strictly speaking, Herries and Digby should not have been at the meeting, neither should D'Arcy. They were not members of the committee. But as the meeting had been held in their study they were naturally deaf to all hints that they were not wanted.

Lefevre of the Fifth, who acted as chief umpire of the Shell v. Fourth Competition, and Wally D'Arcy and Frank Levison of the Third, who were joined with him as judges, were present with Talbot, Figgins, and Kerr.

"Ahem! Gentlemen of the Fourth and Shell—"

"Shell and Fourth, ass!"

"Rate! I'm speaker, Tom Merry!"

"Who made you speaker, anyway?"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally!—Hew-wies you boundah, mind that ink!"

"Don't be rowdy, Tom Merry," said Wally D'Arcy cheerfully. "This is a meeting. Don't forget to behave."

"Why, you young sweep—"

"A suggestion has been mooted—" began Blake.

"Well, that's a good word, anyway."

"Just a sec," grinned Digby. "Hand me over that 'Nuttall's,' Kerr, please. It's on the second shelf."

"Look here," said Blake suspiciously, "if you—"

"That's the one. Thanks!"

"What do you want with that?" asked Figgins.

"I bet Herries that it ain't a real word," said the cheerful Dig, and I want to make certain."

"You silly fathead!" howled Blake. "Of course it's a real word. I got it from—"

"Ha, ha, ha! He's clobbered it!" grinned Figgins.

"Oh, Blake!" chided Lowther. "Oh, get on with it, do!" said Talbot, laughing. "We haven't got all the time to spare, you know!"

"Yes, I know; but that ass Merry keeps on—"

"That ass Blake won't get to the point!"

"Get on with it!" snapped Lefevre. "I can't waste the whole evening on listening to jawbone solos by you kids."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Tom, with an air of resignation that the patriarch Job might have envied. "Let the kid jaw, by all means!"

Blake resumed, after giving Tom a scowl.

"Ahem! Gentlemen of the Fourth and Shell, I—"

"We know that bit," said Lowther. "This meeting has been called—"

"A set of young asses!" put in Lefevre. "Quite right, too!"

"With the object of fixing a fixed—"

"Why fix it if it's fixed?" asked Manners loudly.

"We want to fix a fixed—" Blake howled to make himself audible.

"Strange!" murmured Lowther. "Why fix it?" persisted Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! I fail to see—"

"Take that glass out of your eye, then!" snapped Digby.

"Red ink to that ass, Herries! This meeting has been called—"

"That's three times," said Lowther, counting on his fingers.

THE BUTTERFLY.

Perhaps you don't know Cheerful Charlie. If that is so, let us say that you ought not to lose any time in making the acquaintance of this sprightly young fellow. He is a fine soldier, a manly lad; but he is also a ventriloquist, and he bubbles over with fun from morning till night.

The drunks he gets up to by making use of his remarkable gift appear every week exclusively in



There are many other features in this bright little journal which will make you laugh and lighten your load of care in these anxious times. You all know the eminent comedian, T. E. Donleville. A page of pictures, showing him in some side-splitting adventure, appears also in the 'Butterfly,' and 'Butterfly Bill' has made his mark as one of the funniest of front-page characters in any comic paper. Then there are many other screamingly funny pictures; and the reading-matter, too, is excellent.

Altogether, if you are in want of a paper which is packed with the best of features in fun and reading-matter, you should place an order with your newsagent to save for you a copy of the 'Butterfly,' published every Tuesday, price 1d.

Blake glared, but resumed.

"Has been called—"

"Four!"

"To fix a fixed—"

"But why—"

"Shut up, Manners!" yelled the Fourth-Formers.

"In order to standardise the points for japes."

"Oh!"

"Good idea, Blake!" said Tom Merry approvingly.

"Of course, it's a Fourth Form idea! After this week no points are to be counted for japes. But all japes perpetrated—"

"I know!" broke in Herries, struck by a brilliant idea. "He's been reading the leader in the 'Mail'!"

"Ahem!" coughed Blake, flushing.

"Yes, we heard you."

"As I said, any japes per-per—"

Digby ran hastily down a page in the dictionary.

"Pertinent, person, pertinacity, perpendicular, perpetrate—"

"That's it! Perpetrated during this

week will count twenty points, if successful—"

"Good!"

"Did you hear that, D'Arcy minor—and you, young Levison?"

"Think we're deaf?" inquired Wally scornfully.

"And no jape is to count after the end of this week, so we had better start the japing bizney at once."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is that what you've called me in for?" asked Lefevre.

"Yes, you see—"

"Well, I must say it's like the Fourth's check to—"

"Why, you silly Shell-fish!" howled Figgins.

"You Fourth Form fathead!" retaliated Manners.

"If you want a thick ear, you Shell-fish—"

"If you can give it to me, I do!"

Fifty and Manners closed in deadly combat. So did others. Lefevre dodged the table, and Wally and Frank grinned with delight.

"Take that, you Fourth Form kid!"

"One for your boko, Manners!"

Lefevre retreated. The din was deafening, and he had no wish to be mixed up in a junior brawl. This was not committee business.

Suddenly the door opened. Fifty and Manners were hard at it just behind the door, and it smote them hard, sending them in different directions.

"Ow!"

"You maniac!"

"What does this atrocious noise mean?"

Mr. Radton looked round sternly as he spoke.

"Boys, you have been fighting in the study!"

The juniors gave one another sickly smiles. That remark seemed to them unnecessary.

"Each boy present will take a hundred lines, and bring them to me directly after prayers."

The juniors looked at one another, and Figgins & Co. mizzled, followed after a few minutes by the Terrible Three and Talbot.

"This is a giddy mess, and no mistake!" groaned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! If you had only taken my advice all along—"

"I've taken your advice! Once bit—"

"Why, you silly fathead, Blake—"

"What is there for tea?" asked Digby.

"Only one rotten biscuit!" growled Herries.

"What?"

"And Towser has refused that twice."

"Bai Jove, you know! I utterly refuse to eat a beastly biscuit that that beast Towser has refused—"

"Well, who asked you to, ass? I was speaking about Towser."

"Oh, blow Towser!" snapped Blake.

"I'm getting fed up with Towser!"

"Well, there ain't much else to get fed up with!" remarked Digby gloomily.

CHAPTER 3.

Racke's Raid!

"WHAT'S the matter?"

George Gerald Crooke asked the question as Racke limped into Study 7 in the

Shell passage.

"Oh, rats!" growled Racke sullenly.

"Oh, all right, old top! But there's no need to be quite so polite about it!" answered Crooke sarcastically.

Racke flung himself down in an armchair, groaned, arose, rubbing his injured parts, and re-seated himself with greater care.

Crooke grinned maliciously. Although a friend of Racke's, he was not displeased to see that he had had a licking.

"Now falling foul of Manners again?" he asked.

"Yes—the cad!" ground out Racke. "Those rotters bumped me! I'll pay them out, though!"

"I've heard you say that before," grinned Crooke. "What were you doing?"

"Oh, shut up, hang you!" Racke relapsed into silence.

Racke sat and nursed his injuries for a few minutes. Then he suddenly broke the silence.

"Look here," he said, "I've hit on the very dodge!"

"I'm not coming into anything risky!" granted Crooke.

"There's not an atom of risk," returned Racke impatiently. "You know those rotters have got a meeting on?"

"I didn't, but—"

"And while they're all at the meeting we can rag Study No. 10. Smash up every atom of furniture."

"H'm! They'll guess it's us at once," demurred Crooke uneasily.

"Not likely! I can chalk things on the wall that will make them believe it's a Form raid."

Racke grinned triumphantly as he propounded that high-minded scheme.

"It's been done before, you know," remarked Crooke.

"Yes, I know that. I don't claim that it's original, you know. But if we are caught—we'll have to lock the door, of course—you call me Clive, and I'll call you Cardew. They'll think that it's a raid from Study 9. Those rotters aren't at the meeting."

"H'm!"

"Well, are you game?"

"H'm! I suppose I may as well. But how are we to escape if we are caught?"

"Why, by the window, you ass! We have only to step out on to the window-ledge—"

"Only!"

"Yes; and then we can lean over and get on to the ledge of No. 9. Gore and Skimmy are out, and Talbot's at the meeting; and from their ledge it's easy enough to reach a branch and climb down before Tom Merry can get in!"

"Sounds all right," admitted Crooke, though doubtfully.

"It is all right, you ass! Are you coming?"

"Oh, I don't mind! I'll come!"

"Good! We'll smash up the whole dashed study!" grinned Racke.

The two black sheep went along the Shell passage, and peered cautiously into Tom Merry's study. To their relief, it was empty.

Their programme of smashing everything in sight was not started upon at once. Neither had quite the hardihood for that. After all, they might be found out, and then renegeance would follow, sharp and sure. But they did enough.

They rifled the cupboard of all the eatables, and piled up a mass of miscellaneous stuff on the floor. The Terrible Three would have quite a lot of sorting out to do when they returned.

And, after a bit, they warmed to their work, and the smashing began.

"Chuck over that ink, Crooke!" chuckled Racke.

Crooke chuckled at across, and as he did so the stopper came out. The ink came out too, deluging the table and the books upon it. Some of the ink reached the elegant waistcoat of Aubrey Racke.

"You maniac! Look at my waistcoat!" he howled.

Crooke chuckled unfeelingly, and, for him, unfortunately.

"Chuck over that ink, Crooke!" chuckled Racke.

Crooke chuckled at across, and as he did so the stopper came out. The ink came out too, deluging the table and the books upon it. Some of the ink reached the elegant waistcoat of Aubrey Racke.

"You maniac! Look at my waistcoat!" he howled.

Crooke chuckled unfeelingly, and, for him, unfortunately.

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"I suppose you call it funny to chuck ink over a fellow's waistcoat!"

"Well, you were going to chuck it over Lowther's!" argued Crooke.

Racke rushed at him savagely.

"Take that!"

Crooke took it. He had no choice. He went down with a crash on the pile, and dragged Racke after him.

The Terrible Three's better nature went farther than usual—all over the study, in fact. Crooke sat in it. Racke rolled in it. A nicely-bound volume of Scott, borrowed by Manners from Genn, got both butter and marmalade, scarcely to its improvement.

Racke's waistcoat was ruined. Ink, butter, marmalade, and jam diversified its gorgeous tints.

"Yow!" howled Crooke. "Take that!"

"Yoop!" yelled Racke. "I'll pay you, you rotter!"

There came a tap at the door.

"What on earth are you two idiots scrapping for?" demanded a voice outside.

Racke and Crooke ceased to pommel. They sat up in the wreckage, and looked at one another with pale faces.

"Let me in, you chumps!" roared Lowther.

"We're in for it, unless we can escape!" mumbled Racke, looking round him. "We've made rather a mess of the study."

Crooke scowled, and gouged marmalade and butter from his eyes.

"I'm going to look it, if you're not; I don't see the fun of getting a licking."

"Open the door, you chumps!" shouted Lowther.

"Better call me Clive," said Racke. "You're Cardew, don't forget!"

"Hang you! It's all your fault!"

"Oh, rats!"

Monty Lowther was banging at the door now. He was annoyed at being locked out, and puzzled as to how Tom and Manners could have reached the study so soon, when they had gone off in quite another direction. And why were they fighting? They had been on quite good terms only a moment before.

Suddenly it dawned upon him that it might be a Form raid.

And at that moment a voice inside said:

"It's that ass Lowther at the door, Cardew!"

Lowther started.

No reply came from Cardew. Perhaps Cardew did not feel up to a lifelike imitation of the languid drawl of the Fourth-Former. And perhaps he was too busily engaged in making sure that he did nothing so dishonourable as carrying off another fellow's butter, marmalade, and jam—not to mention ink—might be considered.

"You rotter, Clive! What are you doing in there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh?"

"Hallo, Monty! What's biting you?"

Tom Merry and Manners came along the passage, and stared at Monty Lowther in amazement.

"They're in our study!" said Lowther wrathfully.

"Who are?" asked Manners, puzzled.

"Clive and that ass Cardew!" shouted Lowther excitedly.

Tom Merry looked at Manners, and Manners looked at Tom.

"It's come at last!" said Tom.

"I knew it would!" sighed Manners regretfully.

"I don't know what you idiots are burling about, but they're in our study."

"Where do you feel it most?" asked Tom, sympathetically.

It was Lowther's turn to look surprised. "Feel it most?" he inquired, looking at Tom.

"That's a sure sign," said Manners significantly to Tom. "They always imagine that others are mad, too!"

"What do you mean, you ass?" I say that Clive—"

"But we've just met them in the passage," said Manners.

"What?"

"You're dreaming! Why don't you open the door?"

"Open the door?" gasped Lowther. "Do you think I'm doing this for fun?" he howled, his wrath increasing.

"Ahem! Hallo! What's that?"

"Racke, you rotter! You're not going to cut an' leave me here!"

It was Gerald Crooke's voice, and the Terrible Three looked at one another in surprise.

"Sounds as if Racke and Crooke were raiding our study," said Manners grimly.

"Bust the door! Smash the lock!" yelled Lowther excitedly.

Inside the study, Racke had got the window open, and was smothering out. But Crooke looked the climb, and he determined that if he were caught Racke should also be caught.

"Leggo!" yelled Racke.

Manners ran into No. 9, and looked out of the window. Racke was crouching on the window-ledge of No. 10.

"Get in, and open the door," said Manners grimly, "or I'll knock you off, you rotter!"

It was a threat that Manners would never have carried out, since a fall from that height must either have crippled or killed Racke. But Racke was alarmed, repenting his rashness, and he caved in.

He dropped into No. 10 again, evaded a grab the anguished Crooke made at his leg, and desperately threw open the door.

CHAPTER 4.

Tom Merry Has an Idea!

"MY hat!" gasped Tom, as he gazed round in indignation.

"The rotters!" snapped Lowther.

"Yow!" said Crooke.

As a contribution to the conversation it was rather incoherent. But it expressed Crooke's feelings.

"Look at the butter!" howled Manners, coming in at the door.

Racke, sullen and apprehensive, stood and glared at them.

"My word, you shall pay for this!" said Manners. "We'll chop you up in quarters first, then bump you!"

"Bump each bit separately," murmured Lowther. "That will be two each—one in each hand—and two over. I think I'd better call Talbot in to help."

"We'll scrag the cads!"

"Wait a jiff!" interposed Tom Merry.

"I've got an idea! It may not be much; but then, again, it may. Suppose we let off those rotters on condition they think of a wheeze for doing down the Fourth within this week?"

"Putrid!"

"Nothing of the sort! They're cunning rascals; they may think of something to save their skins. If they fail they'll get the licking. That's fair!"

"It's silly rot!" said Manners testily.

"Oh, I don't know!" Lowther said, carrying two to one!" grinned Tom.

"Do you agree, Racke?"

"Rather!" said Racke eagerly, glad to escape.

"Then it's sealed! If you jape the Fourth, good and hard, we'll let you off the licking. Now, shake out this rubbish, and bring in some of your furniture, and butter and marmalade and jam."

"What?" yelled Racke. "Dashed if I do!"

"Do you want Mr. Ralston to hear of this?"

"You'd never dare! It would be dashed sneakin'!" groaned Racke.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"I shouldn't advise you to bank on that," he said.

"Oh, we may as well!" growled the despondent Crooke. "It's all your dashed fault, Crooke!"

"Oh, shut up, you fool!"

"Hurry up, Racke!"

Manners and Lowther grinned cheerfully. Racke had furnished his study regardless of expense, whereas the furniture of Study No. 10 was hardly valuable.

"Or you can pay for the refurbishing of our study if you like," added Tom.

Racke left the study scowling.

Crooke followed him out.

"Not at all a bad idea, Tommy!" chuckled Manners. "I rather think that Racke will think twice before he rags our study again."

"I think so," said Tom quietly.

With many curses and grunts, Racke and Crooke moved some of their furniture into Tom Merry's study. Naturally, so interesting a proceeding drew a crowd, and each new arrival had to be told how it had all happened.

Grundy, the first to arrive, undertook the job of telling everyone. He was also foreman moving-man, with a keen eye to the proper arrangement of the furniture. A place well in the limelight suited the taste of George Alfred Grundy.

"Now, then, Racke, mind that bookcase!" he ordered sharply.

Racke glared. The bookcase was heavy, and he and the perspiring Crooke were not used to hard work. Strange to say, they did not appear to want George Alfred's advice.

But they had it.

"Now, then, Crooke, don't wobble! Here, I'll help you!"

Grundy rushed in to aid. He caught one corner, and raised it high.

Racke gave an excited yell.

"Leggo, you maniac! You idiot!"

Naturally, Grundy didn't like that; but, having put his hand to the plough—or bookcase—he could not turn back. He rushed the case along too fast for Racke. Racke staggered, and let go.

There was a deafening crash, and the big bookcase smashed down with a sound of splintering glass.

"You silly chumps!" roared Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Blake. "Good old Grundy!"

"Try again," counseled Kerruish.

"You—you—you maniac!" howled Racke.

"My bookcase!"

"Oh, no—ours!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Just like you, Racke!" said Grundy wrathfully.

"Clumsy ass, I call you! I absolutely wash my hands of the whole affair!"

And he stalked indignantly off.

The removal was completed without further mishap. After that the crowd dispersed, and Racke and Crooke returned to a rather desolate-looking study.

This is a pretty kettle of fish!" grunted Crooke. "No furniture worth mentioning, except two chairs and a small table; no butter—"

"Go on!" snapped Racke. "No butter, no tea!" Quotation—chandler's notice!"

"Oh, shut up, an' think of a wheeze! We must get one, or it will mean a beastly raggin' for us!"

"Suppose you think of one!" snorted Racke. "But your wheezes are such rot!"

"Well, they couldn't be worse than yours!"

"Oh, shut up!"



Wrecked!
(See Chapter 6.)

Ten minutes passed, and still no word spoken. Fifteen minutes—twenty! Then Racke broke the brooding silence.

"I've got it!" he cried.

Gerald Crooke did not want to quarrel with Racke. It would not pay. He drew out a gorgeous cigarette-case, and thrust it at Racke.

"Have one?"

Racke took one, and lit up.

"Look here! I've got a toppin' wheeze, old son!" he said.

Gerald Crooke grunted.

"Sure it's a good 'un?" he asked suspiciously.

"Well, it ought to be all right! I suppose that dashed rotter Merry will lend a hand, the cad! I'll get even with him one day, see if I don't!"

"Yes; but the wheeze?" said Crooke patiently.

"Oh, it's really a scorcher!"

Just then the door opened, and Leslie Clampe of the New House walked in.

Clampe was one of the Shell nuts, and on friendly terms with Racke and Crooke—as far as friendship went with those beauties.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Racke rudely.

"Nothin' much, old man. Is it right that you've got to think out a wheeze to lick the Fourth?"

"Quite!" grunted Crooke. "But you needn't come here crowing. Buzz off!"

"How very civil we are!" jeered Clampe. "But I've come to help. You see, I'm in the Shell, so that's O.K.!

Of course, a really good scheme ought to be worth a trifle—the loan of a five—only a loan, y'know!"

Racke glared at Clampe savagely.

"We've had some of that from you!" he snapped.

"Oh, rats!" said Clampe. "I was only joking!"

"I'm in!"

"I'm going to help, free, gratis, and for nothin', if I can!" concluded Clampe.

"You're welcome, if you can!" said Crooke ungraciously. "Anyway, you can't do much harm, I suppose!"

"I can think out decent stunts, and that's more than either of you can do!" Clampe said.

"You're a day late for the fair!" said Racke. "I've already thought of one."

"I'll bet it's a rotten one!"

"Look here, Clampe—"

"Pass those cigarettes, Crooke! Don't be stingy!"

"Rats, you cadger! Buy your own!"

"I did; but, you see—"

"Will you silly beggars listen to me? This is my wheeze—"

"Come on! Chuck 'em over!" pleaded Clampe.

"Rats!"

"Listen to me!" howled Racke.

"When he's given me a cigarette—"

"Give him a beastly fag, hang you, Crooke!"

Crooke sneered, and handed Clampe his case.

"Here you are, you pauper!"

Clampe took one, and sniffed at it suspiciously, lit it, and turned to Racke.

"Go on, old top! What's your wheeze?"

"My idea is to make—"

The door opened, and the crafty head of Percy Mellish of the Fourth peered into the room.

"Hallo, Racke! Better look the door before you start smoking, you know!"

"Get outside!"

"What's up? What's the secret—"

"Get out!"

Mellish walked in, and sat on the table, the two chairs left being occupied.

"Are you thinking of a wheeze for licking the Fourth?"

"Mind your own business, and get out!" shouted Racke.

"Sha'n't!"

"Then you'll soon get thrown out!"

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"If he were thrown out he'd jolly well listen at the keyhole," growled Crooke. "Let the rotter stay, and keep the wheeze for another time."

"Hear, hear!" Who says banker?" asked Clampe.

"Oh, all right," granted Racke, glaring savagely at Mellish.
And to the intellectual game of banker they devoted the next hour or so.

CHAPTER 5.

And So Has Gussy!

"Y AAS, wathah!"
Study 6 were at work at their prep. When Arthur Augustus made that sudden remark.

Jack Blake looked up, scowled, and went on.

"Yaas, wathah!"
How many 'e's in compliment?" asked Herries.

"Three—I won't be sure, though."

"You ass, Blake!" grinned Digby.

"There are only two."

"Bats! I tell you there are three!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There you are—Gussy knows I'm right."

"Oh, he's an ass! There can only be two!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Ch!" asked Blake, in surprise.

Herries and Digby stared blankly at their elegant chum.

"Yaas, wathah, wippin'!"

"What is?" asked Blake, with ominous politeness. "Have you any objection to explaining yourself?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Thump!
Herries gave D'Arcy a friendly pat on the head with a heavy lexicon.

Gussy gave vent to a yell which did not sound as if he felt grateful for that demonstration of friendship.

"Ow! You wotthah, Hewies! You potty mannae!"

"Now explain yourself, ass!" snapped Blake.

"Yow! You wotthahs! I refuse to tell you my ideah—"

"Oh, an ideah, was it?"

"Bai Jove! How on earth did you guess that, Blake?"

"Why, you've just told me, chump!" Gussy sniffed.

"I refuse—no, on second thoughts I will tell you youngsters."

"If it's a rotten ideah, we'll bump him, eh?" said Blake, looking solemnly round.

"Rather!" said Herries.

"And it's sure to be, being Gussy's," added Digby.

"Well, dear boys, as I was remarkin', I have an ideah. It's weally a wippin' ideah. You know that to-morrow we finish classes before the Shell wotthahs—"

"Oh, get on, de! We know all that."

"Weally, Blake," remonstrated Arthur Augustus laughingly, "will you give me time to tell you? While those wotthahs are in their form-woom we can go and wag their studies."

"But their studies aren't flags—or tails. They can't be wagged," grunted the puzzled Herries.

"He means rag them," interpreted Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, we can lock all the doohahs, an' keep all the keys. Every doohah has a diff key."

"What on earth's a diff key?" asked Herries, staring at Gussy.

"Oh, he means a different key," explained Digby.

"Weally, Hewies, I'm wathah surprised at your ewass ignorance."

"Get on, de, chump!"

"Yaas, as I was remarkin', we will wag the studies—"

"We've had all that once."

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"I wish you would let me get on, Blake, you wude wotthah! We will lock all the doohahs, and keep the keys. Then the wotthahs won't be able to get in! Ha, ha, ha!"

"His, ha, ha!" mimicked Herries.

"What a silly ass notion!"

"Well, it's not really a bad ideah, for Gussy. Of course, it had occurred to me before—"

"Of course," said two sarcastic voices, while a third chorused, "Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, you ass, you know it did! You remember, Herries—"

"I jolly well do not!" said Herries candidly.

"Ahem! What are you ass grinning at?" demanded Blake ferociously. "If I didn't actually think of it I should have done—"

"You should," agreed Digby. "You call yourself study leader, so you ought to think of wheezes, not leave it to poor old Gustavus, whose head won't stand much thinking."

"Ass! Well, anyway, I think it's not at all a bad ideah, despite the fact that Gustavus thought of it. And as far as I can see that is the only thing against it."

"Blake, you ewass doh—"

"Silut up, Gussy! We had better call on Figgy, and tell him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How about prep?"

"Blow prep!"

"Well, you know, you'll have old Lathum on your track to-morrow," said Digby.

"Blow Lathum!"

"But—"

"Don't you want to lick the Fourth, Dig?"

"Of course, ass!"

"Well, come and see Figgy, then."

The two juniors strolled out of the study and down the stairs.

"Hallo, Racke! Have you thought of a wheeze for licking the Fourth yet?" chuckled Blake.

Aubrey Racke scowled. He was not at all keen on licking the Fourth. In point of fact, he would rather have seen the Fourth win, having given betting odds against his form. But he was very much afraid of what would happen if he failed to score over the Fourth. Tom Merry's brilliant notion had appealed to the juniors of the School House, and even Pratt of the New House had asked Racke whether he had thought of a wheeze yet.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally don't think you'll think of a wheeze, dear boy! What is required is—"

"Oh, shut up, you tailor's dummy!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in righteous indignation. "Hold my monocle, Blake, dear boy, while I give this wotthah a fearful thwashin'!"

"Oh, come on, ass!" said Blake, catching his elegant chum by the sleeve. "For goodness' sake don't row with that outsider!"

With a disdainful sniff at the grinning Racke, D'Arcy tore his arm from Blake's friendly grasp and followed his chums.

They penetrated the New House without a scuffle.

New House and School House juniors pulled better together in these days, being all rivals of the Shell.

"Come in!" called Figgy's cheerily. Blake & Co. walked in.

"Well," said Figgy, "what do you kids want?"

"They've thought of some wheeze," said Kerr.

"Yes, I have," said Blake. It's rather a decent one, too—"

"Weally, Blake, it was my wheeze!"

"Oh, do dry up, Gussy! As we get out of classes a few minutes before these Shell bouncers, I thought it would be—"

"You mean that I thought—"

"Shut up, ass! I thought it a good ideah," continued Blake with a ferocious glare at his chum, "to go to the Shell passage in both houses, lock all the doors, and bag the keys."

"I'm, not bad!" said Figgy, rather disparagingly. Figgy was still a little inclined to pour cold water on School House schemes at times.

Kerr nodded approval. Approval from Kerr was always welcome.

Fatty Wynn mumbled something inaudible. Fatty was busy making the most of a war-time tea. But Fatty's opinion was of no special value.

"Have some of this, wotthahs, Blake?" asked Figgy cordially. "We can talk it over while we have tea."

Fatty Wynn looked rather reproachfully at his leader.

"Thanks, we will," said Blake. "Come on, Dig, here's a chair. I dare say Fatty will let you have his chair, Herries; he's finished, I see."

Fatty Wynn gasped audibly, and looked daggers at Herries as that grinning youth approached.

"And Gustavus can have the armchair. Figgy won't mind standing."

"Look here—" began Fatty wrathfully.

"Chuck it," said Kerr. "Don't you know what hospitality means, you grampus?"

"Oh, come on, mop it all up!" said Fatty desperately. "I've finished, of course. And you're welcome, of course, but— Oh, blow these wheezes!"

CHAPTER 6.

Racke's Way.

RACKE and the bold, bad blades played banker under difficulties.

Racke and Crooke used the two chairs left. Mellish and Clampe had to make shift with books piled up to a heap high enough to be used as a seat. The Terrible Three had not required them.

They played on until it became too dark to play without lighting the gas.

Racke lit up, and Crooke drew down the blinds.

They were plunging heavily, and big sums of money were changing hands.

Clampe had only started with a pound, Racke and Crooke with five pounds each. Mellish, the impecunious, had started with a florin, but rattled some keys for effect. Luck favoured Mellish, and he had quite a small heap of silver in front of him.

Racke's luck was out, and he scowled heavily. Racke never liked losing.

Crooke looked none too pleased. Only ten shillings or so remained out of his five pounds.

Clampe alone was looking pleased. Clampe had good reason, for he was winning hand over fist.

Soon Mellish's pile melted away, and with a gesture of disgust he gave in.

But the gambling fever was upon him. "I say, Racke, lend me a quid!"

"Oh, get out of the table. All I've got is of the table."

"Clampe, old man, you might lend me a quid!"

"Oh, can I?" sneered Clampe. "I'm not going to, anyway."

"Oh, get out, Mellish!" scowled Crooke.

Percy Mellish stamped savagely to the door. He knew, as the others did, that any money he borrowed would never be repaid. And he had expected a rebuff; but he was annoyed, nevertheless.

Racke watched the door close.

"Now for my ideah," he said.

"Oh, blow the ideah!" snapped Clampe, eager to get on. "You to play, Crooke."

Crooke played.

"This is the wheeze," resumed Racke eagerly. "You know that those rotters still think that I'm getting grub to add to my rations?"

"Well, so you are, aren't you?" grinned Crooke.

"Well," resumed Racke, not heeding Crooke. "I'll be chatting to you, Crooke, when Blake and Figgins can hear, and lead them to fancy that I've got a lot of grub arriving in a box. Twigg?"

"That'll be another half-crown, Racke!"

"Hang you!" snarled Racke. "But instead of the box containin' grub, it will contain—"

"Bricks?"

"Too tame. No; it will contain the glass of fashion an' mould of form, Beau Brummel of the Fourth."

"Can't make out all that dashed rot!" growled Crooke.

"He means that ass D'Arcy," explained Clampe.

"Exactly! Just imagine their faces!"

And when I've japed them I'm going to get my own back on Tom Merry and those rotters. But just fancy Gussy and the other bounders' faces!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Crooke.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Clampe politely. It didn't hurt him to laugh, and he was taking Racke's money.

"Play up, Racke!"

The game went on, and Racke and Crooke continued to lose.

Presently Crooke, whose face had been growing darker with rage, flung down his cards, and swore savagely.

Racke echoed him next moment.

Meaning glances passed between the two.

Clampe, engrossed in his cards, heeded them not.

"Just a sec!"

With an exaggerated air of carelessness Racke got up, walked to the door, and stealthily turned the key.

Then he turned to the table.

Crooke went rather pale. He had less resolution in rashness than Racke. But he was game this time.

Racke suddenly pressed his left hand over Clampe's mouth, and with his right grabbed that startled youth's hands and drew them behind him.

Clampe struggled desperately, but to no avail. With starting eyes he watched Crooke's trembling hands wracke together all the money on the table.

"Quick, you fool!" hissed Racke. "He's struggling like a demon!"

Crooke, his voice shaking, proceeded to abate the cash.

"Two bob of this belong to Mellish, a fever of it's mine, and another is yours, Racke," he said.

Clampe tore himself loose by a frantic effort.

"Give that chink to me!" he shrieked, rushing at Crooke.

"Shut up, you fool!" hissed Racke.

"I won't! Give that to me! You thieves! You rotters!"

"You'll have Kildare here!" muttered Crooke.

Racke grabbed Clampe again. But Clampe struggled like a wild cat.

"Crooke, you beast!" he gasped, almost sobbing with rage. "Hand it over—it's mine!"

"You'll have Kildare here!" growled Racke.

"I don't care!" panted Clampe recklessly.

"Do you want him to know that you were gambler?"

Clampe calmed down.

If Kildare came, the gambling would come to light, and expulsion might well be the end of that.

"You rotters! You cad!" panted Clampe.

Racke smiled evilly. He had the upper hand, and he knew it.

"I don't feel at all inclined to part with as much chink as that," he said. "You may have won it, but you're not going to keep it. I don't approve of plugging!"

Even Crooke was staggered at this amazing statement.

Clampe ground his teeth in helpless wrath. He could not complain to authority, and he knew it.

"There's no need to tell Mellish," muttered Crooke.

"Look here, you're not going to keep my chink, you rotters!" said Clampe thickly.

"Your mistake!" sneered Racke. "We are."

Clampe temporised. Half a loaf is better than no bread.

"Divide it into three shares," he began, when Racke broke in, roughly.

"We've got to furnish our study again," he said, "and we can't afford to lose the money. Another day, perhaps."

Crooke pocketed the cash.

"There's some of my own there!" howled Clampe. "You can't keep that! It's thieving!"

"Give him a quid, Crooke, and Mellish's two bob. We don't want that."

Crooke juggled the money out of his pocket. Clampe made a frankie rush at him.

But Racke was ready for him, and caught him round the middle.

"Let me go!" shrieked Clampe, claving at Racke's face.

"Open the door!" grasped Racke.

Hastily putting the money on the table, Crooke rushed to the door and flung it open.

"Here, help me throw him out!" panted Racke breathlessly.

With a howl Clampe landed in the passage on his hands and knees.

"Chuck his money after him!"

A shower of silver was flung in the passage, and rolled in all directions.

All along the passage doors were flung open.

"I'll pay you out, Racke, you bound!" shrieked Clampe, as he rose painfully to his feet.

"What's up, Clampe?"

"Hullo! What's all this?"

Clampe limped off, after collecting all the money, without stopping to reply to the great Grundy.

But George Alfred was not lightly to be put aside.

"Come on, Grundy!" said Wilkins, catching his leader by the sleeve.

"You shut up!" Grundy tore his arm loose. "This wants seeing into!"

"But it isn't your bizney, old man!"

"Look here, George Wilkins," roared Grundy, "do you think I don't know when to mind my own business?"

"Oh, well, of course, if it comes to that—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Racke bolted into his study, and promptly locked the door.

Grundy seethed with righteous indignation.

"He's locked me out!" he bellowed.

"Me, you know!"

"In his study!" said Gunn mildly.

"What if it is his study, Gunn? You're an ass, you know!"

"But—"

"Oh, shut up! Racke, open this door! I'm going to jolly well thrash you!"

"What an inducement!" murmured Wilkins in Gunn's ear.

"Open it, you rotter! I'll lick you into smithereens!"

A faint chuckle came through the door.

Apparently Racke wasn't taking advantage of that generous offer.

thump, thump, thump!

Doors along the passage opened again, and angry faces appeared.

"Stop that!" yelled Kangaroo from No. 11.

"Stop that thumping, Grundy!"

hooed other voices.

Grundy said no heed.

Thump, thump, thump!

"If you don't stop it, I'll come and slaughter you!" howled Tom Merry.

"How on earth am I to get on with my prep?"

"Blow your blessed prep!"

Thump, thump!

"Ow! Yowp! Leggo my ear, Tom Merry! Manners, you rotter—Ow! My ear! Lowther, you idiot!"

Grundy was dragged along the passage and flung into his study.

The Terrible Three returned to their study chucking.

In a second a furious face was thrust out of Study 3.

It was the face of George Alfred Grundy. But his claws pulled him in again.

Presently, when he deemed it safe, Racke strolled along to Tom Merry's study and walked in, without going through the usual ceremony of knocking first.

Monty Lowther looked up.

"Hullo!" he said. "Don't they knock at the door before entering in the stum you were brought up in?"

"Oh, rats! I say, Merry, I've got a wheeze!"

Tom looked up from the depths of Racke's armchair.

"Oh, good! Let's have it."

Racke explained his idea.

"Quite fair for you," said Tom thoughtfully.

"H'm!" was Manners' non-committal remark.

"Not so bad," murmured Lowther.

"Well, we'll help you if you need it," said Tom. "Good-bye-ee!"

"Eh?"

"Good-bye-ee! Close the door after you!"

Racke stamped out of Study No. 10.

Monty Lowther's chuckle came to him distinctly as he slammed the door and stalked away.

CHAPTER 7.

Captured!

"READY in two minutes, Figgis!"

The Fourth Form had been dismissed early that afternoon.

For Mr. Latham, the master of the Fourth, had a journey to make to see a soldier brother.

The Fourth were elated. Now was the chance for them to score over the Shell!

"Rather!" answered Figgins. "We haven't any time to spare, you know. Can't count on more than a quarter of an hour. Where's Gussy?"

"Gone to change his jacket," replied Blake wearily. "He's afraid it'll get soiled. Herries and Dig have gone with him, and I've told them to slay the young ass if he doesn't hurry."

"Here he is!" said Figgins, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus was certainly coming. He had to choose about it. Digby had grabbed one of his arms, and Herries the other.

"Weleaze me, Hewwies, deah boy! Hewwies, you wotiah! Digbay, you boundah! I command you both to weleaze me at once!"

Herries rushed on without stopping. Digby did the same. As they both had a firm grip on the person of Arthur Augustus, that elegant youth also ran along without stopping.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Blake.

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"Bai Jove—ow!" Hewwies, welase me! Digby—ow!"

They had reached the grinning Blake, and at Gussy's own request they released him. They did so with such suddenness that Arthur Augustus went staggering forward. To save himself, he flung his arm wildly round Blake's neck.

The cheerful youth abruptly ceased laughing, and gave a yell of wrath.

"Here, leggo, you maniac!"

"Oh, bai Jove! I am all in a fluttah! Sowwy if I've wumpled youah collah. deah boy, but these asses—"

"Br-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Figgins & Co., highly delighted.

"What are you New House asses laughing at?" demanded Jack Blake warmly.

"You!" retorted Figgins.

"Look here, you New House waster, I—"

"Why, you School House chump—"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't let's start a House row!" sighed Kerr up.

"Oh, all right," grunted Blake.

"Come on, kids!"

Blake had arranged to settle the School House Shell studies, and Figgins was to look after those of the New House.

Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Pratt, Redfern & Co., and French strolled across the quad to the New House Shell studies. There were few New House fellows in the Shell, and those few were for the most part of little account.

"Come on," said Clive, as he came along the passage with Cardew and Levison.

"The other chaps are waiting for you in the Shell passage. Hurry up, or we shall be too late to do in the lot."

The seven juniors ran lightly along the passage, and up the stairs to the Shell passage.

Several more of the Fourth met them in the Shell passage, and they set to work. There was nothing wantonly destructive in their methods. They smashed nothing, but they did mix things up pretty thoroughly.

Blake grinned cheerfully into No. 10. He caught hold of one end of the table and lifted it from the ground. A bottle of ink, an impot of Lowther's, and a book about photography belonging to Manners, slid off.

The table—Racke's property—went with a crash to the ground.

Blake and Herries grinned joyfully. But Digby did not grin. He gave an unearthly howl.

"Ow, ow! You, chump, Blake, that was my foot—ow!"

"Shouldn't get your silly foot in the way!" answered Blake. And he proceeded to give his attention to the bookcase.

"Help me lift this, Dig!" he gasped, as he struggled with it.

"Right-ho!"

The bookcase gave a lurch. Blake staggered. Digby grunted in dismay.

"Look out!" shrieked Herries.

"Oh, don't cackle! Help us, you idiot, can't you?" panted Blake. "Oh, look out, Dig!"

Crash!

The big bookcase toppled over. It burst open, and the books tumbled out pell-mell.

Herries, standing in front, received more than his share. He was swamped, but ungrateful.

"You—ow!" he shrieked, as a big Latin dictionary smote him on the head.

"Oh, you Hun, Blake!"

But Blake was even worse off, for he received the greater part of the bookcase on him; and it was uncomfortable, to say the least of it.

Roylance looked in at the door, and gasped in surprise.

"Oh, my hat!" he said at last. "Here, Reilly, look at those asses! This is the way they rag a study. Why, they're in

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a worse state than the study. Ha, ha, ha!"

An eye-blink gleamed in at the door. It was followed by the noble form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped, in surprise. "What in the world are you playing at, Hewwies?"

"Br-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And look at Blake!"

"Can't you help a fellow up, instead of standing there laughing like a hyena, you—your tailor's dummy?"

"Bai Jove! Do your mean to weler to me as a tailor's dummy?"

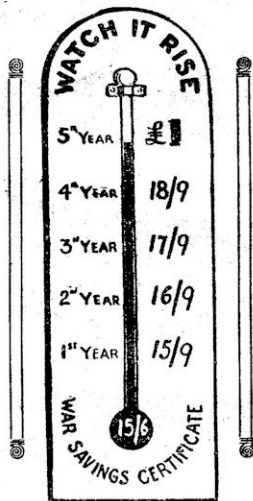
"Yes, fathead! Help me up!"

"Hold my monocle, please," said Gussy frigidly, handing his eweglass to Digby. "Get up, Blake, so that I can thrash you!"

"How can I get up?" shrieked Blake.

"I'm pinned down, you utter idiot!"

"Wats!" sniffed D'Arcy. "You're wottin'!"



Digby stepped forward, and helped his chum up from under the bookcase.

By this time there was quite a crowd of the Fourth in the study. All engaged in the ragging task had come along.

They were listening to Blake. Blake was talking eloquently to Gussy.

No one heard Tom Merry. He had left one of his text-books in his study, and had been granted permission to go and get it. Of course, he didn't expect visitors in the Shell passage. He could hear talking, and wondered what could be the matter. He knew that all the Shell fellows were in the Shell Form-room: Mr. Linton was detaining them, for reasons, so they would be there for at least another fifteen minutes.

Tom was puzzled, but it was not for long.

"Bai Jove! Blake, you wottah. I refuse to regard you as a friend! We came heah to wag the Shell studies."

"Did you?" murmured Tom grimly.

Then he grinned.

A brilliant idea struck him. He crept quietly up to the door, and peeped in.

Nine juniors were within. It was quite a good bag, even if it did not include all the marauders. But, as it chanced, all were there.

With a thoughtful look on his sunny face, Tom searched his pockets for something with which to fasten the door. String would have done, but he had none.

He peeped through the keyhole warily.

"Go it, Gus!" murmured Tom. "This is where the Shell score, I think!"

He ran across to the opposite study, and tried the door. It was locked.

"So that's the game, is it?" he murmured, in surprise. "Looking us all out!"

He would have to hurry. The marauders might come out at any minute. Impatiently he looked about for something that would serve. Then his eye fell on the window at the end of the passage.

Swiftly running up to it, he whipped out his pocket-knife, cut the blind-cord, and hurried back to the study door.

He pulled it to softly. The one adjoining it was locked, and the key had been taken. With skilful fingers he knotted the cord round the knob of Study No. 8, and then round the knob of his own.

Unless the cord broke, it was impossible to open either door from the inside.

He chuckled, and waited a second. From inside sounded Jack Blake's voice.

"Look here, you chaps, we can't stay here any longer, or they'll catch us!"

Tom glanced at his watch, and whistled. He would get into hot water for being absent so long.

Somebody inside was trying to open the door. A babel of wrath came in the dulcet tones of George Herries.

"Somebody's got us!" yelled Herries. "The door's locked!"

All wheeled round and looked at the door.

"It can't be locked. The key's on the inside, ass!"

"Well, it's caught, anyway!" grunted Herries.

Tom Merry walked silently away.

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, allow me to twy! Pewwaps it has stuck an' is a twifle too stiff for you. You know you are not vewy strong, weally—"

Herries sniffed disdainfully.

"Perhaps you think you could open it, duffer?" he suggested scornfully.

"Yass, wottah! You see—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snorted Herries.

"Why, even I couldn't open it!"

"Well, let the silly chump try!" said Blake. "We shall get no peace until he does. Let him make an ass of himself."

"Can't be did!" said Digby, shaking his head.

Arthur Augustus gripped the handle firmly.

"This is the wight way to open a dooah, deah boys!"

"Well, get on with it!"

Eight juniors watched the flushed and perspiring swell of St. Jim's with expressions of amusement mingled with anxiety.

"Have you finished?" asked Blake politely. "Because if you have we might try to get the door open."

"Oh, bai Jove, you are welcome to twy, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

Blake gripped the handle.

"What you want is a man on the job," he said. "Now, the way to open a—"

"Let's have an ocular demonstration," suggested Levison, smiling. "Cut the cackle."

"Well, give me a chance," said Blake, tugging at the door.

"Is it open?" asked Clive, after a few minutes.

"Nummo! You see, it's stuck. Jolly hard, too, bang it!"

"Here, let me have a shot!" grunted Digby.

"I hadn't got a proper grip—"

Blake stopped abruptly, and gasped with dismay.

"Where's my key?" boomed Grundy's voice in the passage.

"Who's locked my door?" came indignant shouts.

Jack Blake gave a sickly smile.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped. "It looks as if we're caught!"

"All through havin' a rotten leader!" said Cardew.

"How could I help it, you potty ass?"

CHAPTER 8.

"The Best Laid Schemes"

THE juniors in Study No. 10 in the Shell passage looked at one another apprehensively.

It would only be a matter of minutes before the Terrible Three arrived, and it was exceedingly probable that the Terrible Three would not be exactly pleased.

"My only hat!" gasped Herries. "All your fault, Blake!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, it was Gussy, really!" said Digby. "If he hadn't stood here arguing we should have been well out of it by this time."

"Hear, hear!" grunted Herries.

"When we're out of this I vote we bump—" began Clive.

A chuckle broke in on his speech. It came from outside.

"Untie the cord, Monty," said Tom Merry.

Blake jumped.

"Oh, the boulder! He tied us in!"

The door was flung open, and a crowd of Shell fellows showed.

To Blake's mind they brought back the memory of a picture he had once seen of a Paris revolutionary mob round the guillotine.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Digby. "I rather fancy that we're in for it."

And he was right.

The Shell fellows swarmed into the study.

"Where's my key."

"Hand over my key!"

"How's mither av' Moses!" Grundy darlint, let me be, I have to be after seeing Korrush. Make way, you thafe o' the wor-rid!" pleaded Reilly, grabbed by Grundy.

"Make them give up my key!" yelled Crokee.

Then he caught sight of the bookcase.

"Look at that bookcase!" he roared.

"Blake, you cad, you'll have to pay for that!"

But Blake was too busy to pay attention to Crokee. He had all he could do to look after himself. The indignant George Alfred was walking into him.

Study No. 10 was the biggest study in the Shell passage, but it was not built to hold twenty fighting juniors.

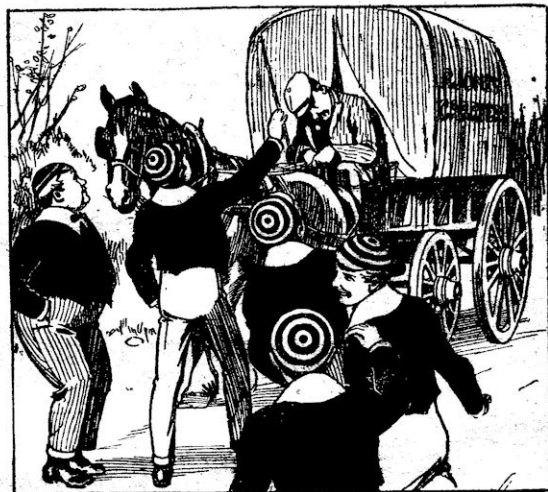
"Here, Kangy, you idiot, mind that cupboard!" roared Manners, in alarm.

Herries lay yelping on the ground. Digby and Arthur Augustus were poking one another, each under the delusion that he had to do with one of the Shell. Gussy's jacket was torn, and his aristocratic features were getting badly marked.

Everyone in the room was punching someone else.

Grundy punched at Royleance, and got Dace, and Dace went for Grundy with a roar of wrath. And elsewhere Shell pommelled Shell, and Fourth pommelled Fourth. The crowd was too dense for anyone to see whom he was hitting.

In the passage a crowd of Fourth-Formers had collected. Blake yelled to them for rescue. But they did not respond to the appeal. Blake wondered



"Stand and Deliver!"

(See Chapter 11.)

why, for a moment. Then he saw, and gasped.

Mr. Ratcliff stood in the doorway.

"Boys!"

Everyone jumped to attention. The fray was at an end.

"How dare you fight in this unseemly manner! Why, even the Head could hear you from his study! You are a disgrace to the House! Who are the ringleaders?"

"I'm afraid I'm one of them, sir," said Blake apologetically.

"Ah! And what are you Fourth Form boys doing here?"

"Ahem! You see, sir—"

"Yaas, wathah, Mr. Wailton. We

"The fact is, sir," burst out Levison, "we came here, ragged all the studies, and kept all the keys. Some rot—somebody locked us in, and these fellows—"

"Fell upon us in their righteous wrath, an' smote us hip an' thigh," concluded Cardew blandly.

"Indeed! Then you Fourth Form boys will have the goodness to follow me to my study. As for the Shell, you will take two hundred lines each. And let there be no more of this, or there will be trouble!"

Mr. Ratcliff and the culprits marched off, and the crowd left behind melted away.

The Fourth Form plan had scarcely panned out according to programme.

For Figgins' band in the New House had no better luck!

When they left Blake they trotted across the quad to the New House, and up to the Shell passage. Once there they quickly started work.

In a few seconds they had dealt with nearly all the Shell studies.

Figgins came out of Thompson's study with a grin of satisfaction on his face. He heard a step behind him, and turned round.

There stood Mr. Ratcliff, like a live thunderstorm.

Figgins almost yelped.

Fatty Wynn came hurriedly out of the study. He did not see Mr. Ratcliff.

Grimming, he said:

"Well, I think we've done our job pretty thoroughly, Figgie, don't you?"

"Shush!" hissed Figgins.

"Look out, though, or dear old Ratty will be on to it."

"Wynn, how dare you! You abominable impudent boy!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fatty. "That's done it!"

"Wynn, you will take two hundred lines for impertinence! What are you Fourth Form boys doing in the Shell passage?" He looked at his watch.

"You ought all to be in your Form-rooms!"

"But, sir—" began Figgins.

"I will brook no argument, Figgins!"

"But, sir, Mr. Lathom dismissed us early, and—"

"But he intended you to work," said Mr. Ratcliff, in a grinding voice.

"No, sir!"

"Tell me what you were doing in this passage, Figgins."

"Well, sir—"

"Now, the truth, Figgins!"

Figgins flushed crimson with indignation at this insult. But it would do no good to resent it, he knew.

"We came here to rag the Shell studies," said Figgins frankly. "We locked the doors, and we've got all the keys."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ratcliff, in an icy voice. "Then you had better spend the time from now to tea in clearing up the studies, you have—er—ragged, as you call it."

"Oh!"

"And then you can proceed to write five hundred lines each!"

And Mr. Ratcliff whisked off angrily.

Figgins & Co. looked at one another blankly.

"That's properly done it!" gasped Figgie.

"We'd better hurry up with our job."

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though," said Kerr angrily. "We don't want to be caught by those Shell-bounders."

"Pooh! We could lick them easily enough," said Figgins.

"I know that," answered Kerr. "But we should have Ratty on our track."

"Oh, hang that rotter!" growled Figgins.

"I think we'd better hurry up," said Figgins uneasily.

"Oh, all right!"

They started the cleaning up. They were not quite so well satisfied as they had been that they had made such a thorough job of it.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Fatty, struggling with a large, greenish book. "I wish I had left this rotten thing alone, you chaps!"

"Oh, get on with it!" grunted Figgys, as he strove with two chairs that creaked together, believing that the hands of another would have to make them.

They worked hard, and had finished just before the Shell fellows tramped in from classes.

"What a blessed wash-out!" grunted Figgins dismally.

"A bit of a first," admitted Kerr.

"Well, I dare say old Blake has knocked the School House studies about," grunted Fatty, seeking comfort.

"I hope so," grunted Rodgers.

Over in the School House Blake was twirling his face, and blessing his luck.

Quite an assortment of them could be seen in the bath-rooms as the Fourth-Formers went about their repairs.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Herries. "This is rotten!"

"Ow! By dose!" groaned Blake. "I only hope that old Figgys has done better than we have."

"Well, they've got a leader!" grunted Digby. And D'Arcy chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Blake sulphurously, stopping in the middle of towelling his face.

"What I jolly well said!" grunted Digby. "They've got a real leader."

But this answer didn't satisfy Blake, and it was some minutes before order was restored.

"Well, I'm going over to see old Figgys," said Blake. "I should think he's done better than we have."

"He couldn't have done worse!" grunted Digby.

Jack Blake gave him a dark look, and made his way out of the School House.

Racke and Crooke were sauntering round the quad, but Blake didn't notice them.

In the New House Figgins, of the Fourth, said to his chums, Kerr and Digby:

"I think I'll go over and see Blake about his little affair. So-long!"

And he trotted down the steps. At the bottom he nearly fell over the leader of the School House Fourth.

"Hallo!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Bait Taken.

JACK BLAKE staggered back with a yell, and sat down violently.

Figgins stumbled over on top of him.

They both sat on the cold and unsympathetic ground, and glared at one another.

"Yow! You maniac, Blake!"

"Ow! You utter idiot, Figgys!"

"Why didn't you look where you were going?" shouted Blake.

"Be-r-r!"

They arose, and dusted themselves.

"You are an ass, Blake!" grunted Figgins.

"Oh, rats!" said Blake, his good humour returning. "We were both wrong!"

Figgins smiled amiably. He never lost his temper for long.

"Well," he said, "I was just coming to see you, as it happens."

"That's strange," returned Blake, "because I was just coming to see you."

"Rather a lucky meeting, then," said Figgins.

"Yes," grimaced Blake, tenderly holding his elbow, "if it didn't hurt so much, I've got something to say to you, though, so we may as well stroll under the elm."

"Right-ho!" agreed Figgins.

It was a glaring hot day, and the shadow of the elm was quite refreshing. Figgins and Blake did not see Crooke and Racke, who were in hiding close behind.

The two Fourth Form fellows strolled suspiciously under the elm.

"You see," began Blake, when Figgins interrupted.

"By the way, how did you get on this afternoon, Blake?"

"How did you?" asked Blake, avoiding the direct question.

"I asked you a question, Blake."

"And I asked you one."

"Look here, Blake, you ought to answer me! You needn't be rude, though you are a School House chap, without manners or—"

"Oh, don't start ragging now, Figgys, for goodness' sake! I may as well answer your silly question. What was it?"

"I asked you how you got on this afternoon," said Figgins.

"Oh, this afternoon!" said Blake, to gain time.

"Yes, yes; this afternoon."

"Lemme see. This afternoon."

"You silly ass!" hooted Figgins.

"Don't try to be funny. You know what I mean. How did you get on with the ragging of the Shell studies?"

"Not so badly, considering everything," answered Blake evasively.

"You didn't mess it up?" said Figgins suspiciously.

"Well, you see—"

"Did you come a bloomer, or didn't you come a bloomer?" demanded Figgins impatiently.

"As a matter of fact there was a—er—a slight accident. You see, that duffer Gussy kept on jawing in the study so long that Tom Merry came and tied us in."

"What?"

"So we couldn't get out. And when the Shell fellows came there was a bit of a bust up."

Figgins grinned broadly.

"So I should fancy," he said.

"And to top it all Ralston came along and canned the whole crowd of us!"

Figgins whistled.

"My hat!" he gasped. "What a giddy wash-out! I knew you couldn't be trusted to put a thing like that through. I suppose it was partly my fault, for trusting you School House kids."

At this arrogant speech Blake fairly gasped.

"And how did you get on?" he snapped.

Fanny letting yourselves be trapped by such an old wheeze as that! Well, I'm jiggered! The least thing you could have done was to have seen that you weren't—"

"How did you get on?" bawled Blake, his suspicions aroused.

"Well, I must be going now," said Figgins innocently. "Ta-ta, Blake!"

"Oh, no, you don't!" said Blake, grip-

ping Figgys by the sleeve. "You'll answer my question first, old son!"

"Look here, Blake, Fatty's waiting for his tea!"

"Let him wait!" said Blake carelessly. "I dare say he can have it without you, come to that."

"Is that Kerr calling?" asked Figgins, trying to get away.

"You may as well own up that you came a worse bloomer than I did," grinned Blake.

"We didn't, then!" retorted Figgins.

"How could I help old Ratty coming on the scene, ass?"

"So Ratty appeared on the scene, did he?" said Blake interestedly.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Oh, get it out!"

"Well, the fact of the matter is we'd ragged all the studies, when Ratty suddenly popped along, and made us tidy up all we'd done, the beast! And on top of that gave us five hundred lines!"

Blake grinned.

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Figgins.

"You! You see, you said we were silly asses, and—"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Figgins crossly.

"And now it turns out that you—"

"Shut up, and come on!" hooted Figgins.

"The worst of you School House bounders is that you're always jawing!"

Jack Blake smiled a knowing smile and followed Figgins.

Aubrey Racke poked his head out from a tree hard by and hissed a warning to Crooke.

"Look out, Crooke! Here they come!"

As soon as Blake and Figgins came within earshot Racke said in casual tones:

"Yaas, deah boy, the grub's comin' to-morrow!"

Figgins clutched Blake's arm excitedly.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered.

Jack Blake nodded.

Neither of them suspected it was a trap, and they fairly walked into it.

"Hide!" hissed Figgins.

Figgins was no eavesdropper, but he had no compunction about listening to Racke's conversation on such a subject as this.

"Will it be a very big box?" asked Crooke.

"Yaas, old top! Lots of stuff in tins, an' so on, y'know. At least three months' supply, I should think," answered Racke.

"Oh, good! When did you say it was comin'?"

"Oh, on Saturday afternoon, soon after dinner."

"By carrier?"

"Yes, of course, chump! You don't think I'm goin' to haul it, do you? It's far too heavy for one fellow to carry. It will be labelled books. All the fellows and they'll merely think I've been replenishing my stock."

Figgins gave Blake an expressive look.

"And for goodness' sake don't let that fat toad Trimble get on to it! He would blab, and then it would be all U.P. I don't want my binzy wangled out of it into their rotten Form Competition again, y'know."

Racke and Crooke went off, still talking.

"My hat!" gasped Blake.

"Oh, snakes!" said Figgins.

"This is where we're going to score!" Blake chortled.

"Yes, rather!" agreed Figgins. "And the dear Racke will find he's backed the wrong horse this time!"

"Don't let on to those Shell-fish, whatever you do!" said Blake.

"No fear!" said Figgins emphatically. "I shall tell Kerr and Fatty, though."

"Oh, rather! And I suppose I shall have to tell the chaps in my study."

And both went off to tell the news. Blake flung open the door of Study B and gave a yell.

"I say, you chaps, Figgys and I have got on to something really great!"

Arthur Augustus was polishing his monocle for the thirteenth or fourteenth time since tea, and Blake's remark was so sudden that he dropped it.

"He gave a wall of anguish."

"Ow! Blake, you wotah! You have caused me to break my monocle, and you—"

"Oh, blow your silly monocle!" booted Blake. "Look you here—"

"Look at my impot!" howled Herries wrathfully, waving a scrawled sheet of ink-covered paper before Blake's eyes.

"All right! I can see it," grunted Blake.

"Look at the blot!" shrieked Herries. "No more than usual," said Blake, unabashed at the sight of the ink sheet.

"Look at my trousers!" booted Digby. "You've made me spill my ginger-beer, you maniac!"

"Blow your silly trousers!" howled Blake.

"My monocle—"

"Look at this impot!"

"My trousers!"

"Blow your blessed monocle, hang your silly impot, and your silly trousers, too! What I want to tell you—"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Oh, do shut up, Herries, and let a fellow speak! Figgys and I have found out that Racke has a great box of grub coming!"

Digby forgot his trousers; Herries' impot lay unheeded on the floor; Gussy's monocle lay smashed under Blake's foot, and Gussy forgot it. All were listening intently to Blake.

"We heard Racke and Crooke yarning together under the elms, and Racke said that he was expecting a big box of grub by the carrier on Saturday!"

"My hat!"

"The rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah that Wacke is a wank outsidah, an'—"

"Shut up, Gussy! So we're going to lift the little board—"

"Good!"

"Only, for goodness' sake, don't let on to those Shell-fish!"

Two voices said in unison: "Rather not!"

A third chimed in: "Yaas, wathah! I—I mean no, wathah not!"

CHAPTER 10.

Plotting the Plot.

"WELL," said George Figgins, when he had told his chums what he and Blake had discovered, "what do you think about it?"

"I think we stand a good chance of scoring over the Shell this round," said Kerr thoughtfully.

"It's ripping!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Of course, we can keep the box when we capture it," he added, with an anxious side-glance at Figgins.

Figgins glared.

"No, you jolly well can't!" he snorted.

"Blessed if I can think what's come over you lately, Fatty!"

"Well, you see—"

"I see a food-hogging porpoise!" snapped Figgins. "You're not going to let the study down by food-hogging!"

"But, Figgys," implored Fatty, "it

isn't hoarding. We're stopping Racke from hoarding—"

"And if we eat the grub we're as bad as Racke, aren't we?" demanded Kerr.

"Well, we needn't eat all the grub. Half would do me nicely."

Figgins snorted.

"Look here, Fatty, you're not laying hands on that box of tuck! Not if I know it!"

"But—"

"I'm not going to have you disgracing the New House like that!"

"But, Figgys, I wasn't really—"

"Oh, shut up, do! You've got grub on the brain, Fatty!" snapped Kerr.

"I may have. There ain't much where I should like to put some," answered Fatty plaintively.

"Oh, stop growling about grub!" grunted Kerr.

"Look here, you Scotch brawler—"

"Why, you Welsh idiot—"

"Oh, don't row! You're both asses!" said Figgins impartially.

But the settlement of the argument didn't suit either Kerr or Wynn, and several minutes elapsed before peace was restored.

"About this food-board of Racke's," resumed Figgins. "Of course, it's understood that we're going to lift the blessed thing. But the question is, how?"

"Oh, take a party of Fourth Form fellows down to meet the carrier on Saturday," said Kerr. "We can go out singly, and the Shell-fish won't be any the wiser."

"Well, yes, we could do that. We'd have to square the carrier, though."

"Well, there wouldn't be any great difficulty about that," grinned Kerr. "A bob or so will do it. Besides, he might think we had come from Racke."

"And Racke couldn't say anything about it," chuckled Figgins.

"I'll look after the hamper—"

begged Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, no, you won't!" snapped Figgins. "You'll be in the party, though."

"So I should think!" said Fatty indignantly.

"I've thought for a long time that Racke hadn't finished food-hogging," said Kerr, "though it beats me how he can get the grub."

"Yes, rather," agreed Figgins. "But three of us get it somehow."

"What a score over Tom Merry and the other Shell-fish!" grinned Fatty, forgetting about the grub.

"Not—half!" chuckled Figgins.

"Won't they be mad! Of course, there's no need to let them know that we found it all out by accident, is there?"

"No jolly fear!"

"They'll think we found it out by detective ability."

"Yes, rather!"

"As a matter of fact, I dare say I should have found it out, anyway."

"Ahem!"

"What are you ahemming about, Wynn?" demanded Figgins warmly.

"Well—"

"I'm a jolly clever detective, aren't I, Kerr?"

"Yes, you're not so bad!" said Kerr, in his cautious way.

"Not so bad! You chump, why, I—"

"Well, rather good, then!"

"Look here, Kerr—"

"Oh, don't start rowing! See here, you chaps, not a word outside this study except to a few of the elite!"

"Roylance, Reddy, Clive & Co., I suppose," said Figgins. "Blake and his lot know already, and they'll be in it. Say a dozen all told. That enough, Kerr?"

"Quite enough!" answered Kerr.

"Have to be a pretty big box to whack out to a dozen chaps," said Fatty Wynn.

"We're not going to eat it, you fat hog!"

"Well, I think we might have a snack each, Figgys. A sort of commission, you know!"

"Blow you and your commission!" shouted Figgins. "I'll keep my eye on you and see that you don't start wolfing any!"

"Just one tart!" said Fatty pathetically.

"Not even the jam from one tart!" snapped Figgins.

And Fatty had to give it up as a bad job.

"I'll go over and see Blake about it."

And for the second time that evening he went across to see Blake.

But this time Blake had not come across to see Figgins, and there was no collision.

Figgins tapped at the door of Study No. 6.

"Come in, fathead!" called Blake politely.

"Yaas, wathah! Hello, Figgys!"

"Hallo, Figgys! I've got the very chap I want to see. What are we to do about Saturday?"

"Well, if we take a party of about a dozen fellows and meet the carrier we could easily lift the hamper."

"Yes; just what I thought!" said Blake. "Just tip the carrier—"

"You mean it was what I thought, dear boy! If you wotamabak!"

"Tests!" grinned Blake. "That's just what I thought, Figgys! Let me see!"

There'll be four, you three, Clive and the other two, Roylance, and Reilly."

"Or Redfern," suggested Figgins.

"We can have them both. That'll only be thirteen."

"Bai Jove, dear boy! That's unlucky! I cannot consent to have thirteen in the party."

"You won't be asked!" grinned Blake.

"Besides, thirteen is jolly lucky, I can tell you!" answered Figgins.

Figgins wore a "thirteen" lucky charm. He had bought it cheap—for half-a-guinea. The man who sold it said it was worth a pound; but, as he was on the rocks, he didn't mind selling it cheap.

When Figgys told this to Kouni Rao, a good judge of jewellery, Kouni Rao had merely smiled; he wasn't surprised that the man didn't mind selling it for ten-and-six. But, nevertheless, Figgins was proud of the charm.

And he was indignant when Gussy suggested that thirteen was unlucky.

"Why, you ass," he said, "it's jolly lucky!"

"Wats, dear boy! An uncle of mine knows a man who swears—"

"He ought to know better!" put in Digby. "Swearing's very wrong, Gus."

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Blake.

"Thirteen's jolly lucky!" snorted Figgins. "Why, look how it's saved me!"

Jack Blake grinned. And so did the others.

"Why, don't you remember the time when I fell down the stairs and put my elbow out?"

"That was jolly lucky, wasn't it?" chuckled Blake.

And Arthur Augustus cackled:

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

"You silly asses! Why, if it hadn't been for the charm I should probably have broken my neck!"

"Perhaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fatheads! And the time when I was knocked down by a motor—"

"Another piece of first-class luck!" chuckled Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha! I weally think—"

"If it hadn't been for the lucky 'thirteen' I should have been killed. And the time——"

"Oh, dear!" laughed Blake, wiping his eyes. "That's quite enough for one evening. Come over during the week, old chap, and amuse us again!"

"You silly ass! I tell you, it's jolly lucky!"

"Bosh!"

"I can get you one——"

"No, thanks!" said Blake hastily. "I don't want to fall down steps or get knocked over by motors."

"Br-r-r!" growled Figgins crossly. "Joking apart——" began Blake.

"Well, I wasn't joking, you idiot!"

"I was, was, anyway! Shall we tell Clive, Corlew, Leeson, Roylance, Redfern, and Reilly?"

"Yes; any old thing!" grunted Figgins.

"Good! Then it's a go!"

"Right-ho!"

"Don't forget!" sang out Blake, as Figgins vanished down the passage.

"Not likely!" floated back the reply.

"Wathah! not, dear boys! You see, we can count this as a jape against the Shell."

"Well," mused Blake thoughtfully, "I don't know about that! It's hardly a jape, is it? But we can't tell the Shell, or they might lift it first."

"Besides," broke in Digby, "we arranged points the other time when Racke was caught hoarding, and the same points ought to do."

"Yes; I suppose so."

"Yaas, wathah! I say, Dig, do you think this wed tie with the blue spots goes well with these socks?"

CHAPTER 11. Gussy to the Rescue.

SATURDAY morning dawned bright and sunny, and it was observed that Racke and Crooke looked very well pleased with themselves.

They thought of the jape against the Fourth and smiled.

So far as they could see, there could be no possible hitch in the working out of the jape.

But they had reckoned without Leslie Clampe.

As a general rule Clampe was a rather feeble sort of black sheep; but Racke and Crooke had got his back up, and Leslie Clampe was out for revenge.

It was not often that Clampe won at gambling with the other blades, and he was naturally very wild at having been robbed of his winnings when, for once in a way, he had won.

He wanted to spoil Racke's scheme, then the other fellows would deal with Racke. Which would be eminently satisfactory to the vengeful feeling of Clampe.

Outwardly, he was very chummy with Racke. He wanted to know all the arrangements. His plans were made; and if Racke and Crooke had known them they would not have felt nearly so joyful.

But they didn't know them, and they were joyful.

Several other wheezes had been tried for japing the Fourth, and several for japing the Shell, but they had all failed.

At last classes were dismissed, and the Shell trooped out.

"Don't forget, Figgys!" whispered Blake, in the Fourth passage. "Tell Kerr and Fatty to go down the lane to gether and hide behind a hedge. I'll tell the others."

"Right-ho! We'll be there. Cheerio, old thing!"

And Figgins raced off to the New House.

Blake met Digby, Herries, and D'Arcy in the passage.

"Hallo, kids!" he called, "You might warn some of the chaps about the arrangements. I'll tell No. 9. You can tell Roylance, Herries; you, Reilly, Dig, Gussy——"

"I'm vewy sowwy, Blake, dear boy, but I wealdy must change my jacket——"

"Oh, all right! I'll go!" snapped Blake.

"Vewy well, dear boys! Cheerio!"

Arthur Augustus strolled along to his study in the Fourth Form passage. Blake, Herries, and Dig went upon their several errands.

No sooner had Gussy entered Study No. 6 than Toby, the School House page, popped his bullet head in at the door.

"Letter for Master D'Arcy!" he said.

"Bai Jove! A beasty letter for me!"

"Yes, sir. Here it is."

"K. say, Toby, this did not come through the post!"

"No, sir. A kid brought it here. Master Racke met him at the gate, and brought it up. So Master Racke said."

"Thank you, Tobay."

Arthur Augustus looked round in a leisurely manner for something with which to open the letter.

The stood and looked about him. After a few seconds he glanced in the direction of the door.

"Good gwacious!" he murmured in surprise. "You are still here, Tobay?"

"Yes, sir. Which it's 'ot comin' up all these stairs on a 'ot day like this 'ere."

"Yaas, I suppose it must be. You can sit down if you feel tired, Tobay."

Toby grunted.

"You are far too lazy, Tobay," said Gussy, with kindly concern. "You do not take nearly enough exercise. If you did, you would be as strong as I——"

Toby coughed discreetly.

"Bai Jove! Have you a cold? I'm terribly sowwy. As I was wemarkin' Tobay, you do not take nearly enough exercise. You take my tip——"

"Which I'd like to, sir!"

"Eh?"

"I'd like you to tip me, sir."

That was plain enough, even for Gussy, and he kindly handed out a shilling to the radiant Toby, who took it with a smile, and thanks.

Arthur Augustus watched him leave the study. A surprised look was on his face, and he murmured, "Bai Jove!" softly to himself.

Then he opened the letter. He tore it open with his thumb, which was not his usual way.

What he read made him gape with surprise. For the letter ran:

"Dear Master D'Arcy.—You, of course, wonder who is the writer of this letter. But I don't think you would know me even if you saw me. But I have always admired you. You had such a distinguished look about you that I fell in love with you at first sight; but from the start I realised that it was hopeless for me to think ever of your returning my passion."

"Now, I am threatened by a terrible peril. I am horribly frightened, but could I should feel much happier. You, with your strength and bravery, could easily help me."

"Meet me in the wood, by the old stile, at 1.30. Do not disappoint me, or my heart will break."

"Yours affectionately,
"MOLLY MASON."

"Bai Jove!"

That was all Gussy could say for the minute. He was so thunderstruck.

Then he smiled. He beamed.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured again.

"She fell in love with me at first sight!"

She loves me! Good gwacious! And now she is in pewil!

"Good gwacious! Half-past one! I must dwell quickly. I can't tell those asses. They'd only laugh, the ally bounchies. They'll be able to get on all wight without me."

Had Jack Blake been there he might have said "Better."

And Arthur Augustus hurriedly put on his waistcoat and jacket.

Just as he was going out of the room Blake, Herries, and Digby came in.

"Going to dinner?" said Digby.

"No, dear boy, I'm not!"

And he walked into the passage.

"Where's that young ass off to?" snapped Blake.

"Sowwy, dear boy, but I can't stop!"

"Lug hold of his hair, Herries."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus sped swiftly down the passage.

His astonished chums stared after him with looks of blank amazement on their faces.

"What the——" began Herries.

"It's come at last!" sighed Blake sadly.

"I'm afraid so," said Herries.

"It's the sun," explained Digby. "Poor old Gussy! Such a nice little ass, too!"

"Joking apart," said Blake, "where has the young ass gone?"

"In the head," suggested Digby humorously.

"Give it up," answered Herries.

"He was all dressed up, too," mused Blake.

"Oh, well, we shan't miss him this afternoon, that's one thing."

"But he'll miss his dinner," grinned Herries.

Gussy did miss his dinner. But he hardly gave that a thought as he walked down the lane to the wood. He was not the only one to miss his dinner; Racke, Crooke, and the Terrible Three missed theirs. Racke had enlisted their aid, and they were now waiting in the wood.

Gussy reached the wood at last.

He looked round for the damsel. She was conspicuous by her absence.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I must be wathah early."

That in itself was a surprising enough thing, and he looked at his watch again. It was nearly five-and-twenty minutes to two.

Racke made a sign, and from behind a tree sprang five shadowy figures.

D'Arcy had his back turned, and did not see them. They fell upon him, and Racke flung a cloth over his astonished head.

"Yow!" he gurgled helplessly.

"Got him!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

So astonished was Gussy that he landed struggling to all, and Tom Merry had a comparatively easy job in bringing his feet together and fastening them.

Manners tied his elbows back, and he was secured.

When he did try to struggle it was too late.

Racke pulled a large packing-case out from behind a bush, and Gussy was thrust into it. The case was labelled "Aubrey Racke, Esq., School House, St. James' School, Ryecombe, Sussex. Books, with care."

"Books, with care" was on a separate label, and in big letters.

"Will he be able to breathe?" asked Tom anxiously.

"There are plenty of holes," grunted Racke. "An' the gag won't hinder the clump. What's it matter, anyhow?"

The case was fastened up, then carried to the road, where a boy was waiting with a handcart. He was to take it to the carrier's stables.

This done, the five juniors marched home—two, at least, hoping for success.

CHAPTER 12.

Clampe's Little Joke.

LESLIE CLAMPE watched Racke and Crooke leave the school with a cynical smile on his thin lips. "There's a little surprise waitin' for you, dear boys," he said grimly. "And it's not a pleasant one, either!" Then, with hammer concealed under his jacket, he made his way down the steps and out of the school.

Arthur Augustus passed him in the lane, but failed to notice him.

Clampe waited for a bit, then followed at a distance.

Very cautiously he entered the wood, and looked round. A little later he was a witness of the struggle and the kidnapping.

Taking to the road, he passed the waiting boy with the handcart, and strode on to the Green Man.

He had no intention of visiting that clay resort. He sat down on the green opposite, and waited.

He had to wait some time for the person he wanted to see—the carrier.

Clampe had found out that the Head was expecting a large consignment of books by the Saturday carrier, and had thought it would be rather a joke if he changed labels on Racke's and the Head's boxes.

Which explains why Leslie Clampe waited for the carrier by the Green Man. The carrier always had an errand at the Green Man on his way. Everybody who knew him knew that. Clampe thought that was the time when it would be easiest to carry out his little scheme.

The carrier arrived, and, having tied his horse to a tree, went inside.

Clampe got up, stretched himself, and took a cautious look round.

But no one was near. It was dinner-time, and nearly everyone was indoors.

Clampe hoisted himself up on the tail-board and clambered inside.

It did not take much searching to find Racke's packing-case. And another search revealed the Head's box. Luckily, both labels were nailed on.

Fearful speed to Clampe, and in little more time than it takes to tell he had changed the labels.

Chuckling maliciously, he departed. Farther down the road Blake and the other Fourth-Formers were waiting impatiently.

"How long's the lazy boulder going to be?" grumbled Digby.

"He's in the Green Man having a drink," grunted Herries.

"No he isn't," said Clive.

"Eh?"

"He isn't in the Green Man," returned Clive.

"I bet he is!"

"Wrong again!" grinned Clive. "If you look you can see him coming along the road."

Clive was right. The carrier was coming leisurely along the road.

"Buck up!" grunted Herries impatiently.

At last the carrier arrived. Figgins sprang out into the road.

"Stand and deliver!" he yelled.

Dead silence greeted this challenge.

Figgins was astonished to see the load of it.

"Shush!" murmured Cardew. "He's asleep!"

The juniors grinned. They were rather glad that the carrier was asleep, and they had no desire at all to wake him up.

"Now," said Blake, "up in the cart, Figgins, and you, Herries, and haul her down."

Figgins and Herries climbed noiselessly into the cart.

"Here you are!" whispered Figgins. "This is the one."

And he grabbed one corner of the box that Clampe had relabelled.

Herries gripped the other corner, and between them they dragged it to the back of the cart.

"We shall have to take it to the school as proof," said Figgins.

"Of course. Four of us can easily carry it."

"That'll mean three shifts," said Digby.

"Yes, that's it."

The chums of Study No. 6 and Roylance were the first shift.

Levison woke the horse, and started it. He did not wake the carrier. Then they made their way back to the school.

Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Julian took the box into the School House, while Jack Blake and the rest went to gather together as many as possible of the Shell for the pleasant surprise.

"Where were those boulders are?" said Blake, as they strolled down to the gates.

"Master Blake!"

Taggles, the school porter, called Jack Blake, and Blake looked round.

"Hallo, Taggy!" he said cheerfully.

"What's the matter? Want me to lend you half-a-crown?"

Taggles sniffed scornfully.

"Yew might 'elp me with this 'ere up to the 'ead," he said politely.

"Eh?"

"I'm only a poor, 'ard-workin' man, and I can't carry it by myself."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Blake.

"Come on, Herries! You, too, Clive! We may as well do Taggy a good turn, though he never does us one."

So the three juniors helped Taggles carry the box up to the Head.

They were all perspiring profusely long before they reached the Head's small apartment.

"My word!" gasped Blake, as they dumped it down outside the Head's door.

"That's some weighty box!"

"Which 'e said to me," 'e said.

"Taggles," 'e sez, 'ther'll be some books for us, and I want you ter bring 'em up."

"That's all right!" panted Blake.

"Come on, chaps!"

And they left Taggles with the box.

He tapped at the door of the Head's study, and pushed the box in.

"Goodness gracious, Taggles! What does this mean?"

"Which 'e's the books, sir, wot you asked me ter bring. And it's o—"

"Bless my soul! I never expected a package of this size!" said the Head, in surprise.

"Pray fetch a chisel, and open the case at once, Taggles, please!"

"Yea, sir—"

"Hurry up, my good man!"

Taggles came back with a chisel.

"The Head turned to his table while Taggles prised off the lid. A layer of straw was revealed, and Taggles threw it off with great disregard for the state of the Head's carpet.

Then he staggered back in amazement.

"Wow!" he yelled. "It's a body!"

"Taggles!"

"Look, sir! A—a—body!"

Writing down brown the Head gazed into the box. Then he also gave a cry of amazement.

"Bless my soul! It actually is! Take it out at once!"

Taggles reluctantly obeyed.

"Why, it's Master D'Arcy!" he gasped. "E ain't dead, nor nothink like it, not 'at! They've been an' gorn an' gaged the poor innocent lad!"

The Head gasped, and frowned harder.

"Untie him at once!" he commanded sternly. "I suppose this is a joke on me!"

D'Arcy was untied, and the gag removed.

"Ow!" was his first remark, and "Oh, dear!" his second.

"D'Arcy," thundered the Head, "what does this masquerade mean?"

"Ow! Weally, sir, I am all of a fustah! You surely do not imagine that I did this myself foah pleasure?"

The Head, on reflection, appeared to consider that unlikely.

"Who were the perpetrators of this improper joke?" he asked.

"Weally, sir, I do not know!"

"I'm! This must be inquired into!"

"Yaaa, sir! May I go?"

"And where are my books?" demanded the Head sternly.

"I assure you, sir, that I do not know. I have been the victim of a joke. Bsi Jone, I am all of a fustah! If you please, sir, may I go?"

Just then there came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called the Head.

The door opened, and revealed Figgins, Blake, and the rest of the raiding Fourth-Formers.

When they saw Arthur Augustus D'Arcy they gave a simultaneous cry of mingled amazement and consternation.

"Guasy!"

"Yaaa, wathah! Pwasy don't bothah! Dr. Holmes and I are wathah busyay just now."

The Head smiled. He could not help it.

"Please, sir, we received this box of books by mistake!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Bless my soul! Do you boys know anything about this other box?"

"Which one, sir?"

"The one D'Arcy came tied up in."

"No, sir!" came a chorus.

They were unaware up to that moment that D'Arcy had arrived tied up in a box. And all the while surprised.

"Do you all give me your word of honour?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well! But to whom is that box addressed?"

"To Racke, sir," answered Figgins.

"Then it is evidently a joke upon Racke," said the Head. "I will not inquire further. But if the practical joker is discovered I certainly think he should not go—er—without some punishment!"

"Rather not!" answered Figgins and Blake together.

"No, sir!" chorused eleven voices.

And one chimed in:

"No, wathah not, deah boy—I-I mean, deah sir!"

"I think we can guess the paper," said Blake, when they were in the passage.

"Racke!" said Kerr.

Blake nodded.

Racke got the licking that Blake & Co. promised he should get, but it certainly did not run out as arranged. It being a matter of doubt, the Terrible Three let him off the licking they owed.

He had to settle up for the damage done in Study No. 10, however, before he was allowed to have his furniture back.

Racke never found out who had altered the labels and Clampe did not enlighten him. They were soon upon their old terms again; but Clampe, on the rare future occasions when his luck favoured him, did not leave the money on the table, but had the prudence to pocket it.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—

—"THE PEUNGER!" by Martin Clifford.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 543.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 14.—Ernest Levison.

THERE is no possible doubt that Ernest Levison—Levison major—is among the most interesting of all the characters in Mr. Martin Clifford's big and varied gallery. That is partly because he is so queer a mixture of good and evil. These complex natures are more interesting to most than the plain, simple, straightforward fellow, whose conduct in him, given circumstances may be counted upon. Levison, Vernon-Smith, Hazeldene, Cardew—all these are examples of what I mean.

The best part of Levison is uppermost now; but even when he was at his worst there were gleams of better things in him.

He differs from Skinner of Greyfriars in this. Skinner is very thick-skinned about most things. When he wants to revenge himself upon others for the contempt they have shown for him, it is not because they have made him feel dissatisfied with himself. He does, not really want to change. There is a real charm for him in dingy blackguardism.

But Levison, far less thick-skinned than Skinner, was never able to be so self-satisfied. The contempt hurt him. Deep down in his heart he wanted to be even as such fellows as Tom Merry and Jack Blake and Harry Noble, liked and respected by everyone who counted. But his wayward, unprincipled, reckless nature set him apart from these and such as these. His good impulses seemed mere flashes in the pan; after them his old sulkiness and suspicion would come back in bigger measure. As with the man in the parable, sweeping out and garbishing meant for him only, in the long run, the entry of seven devils worse than the first.

Skinner has brains, but Levison has far more. Skinner can now and then show a certain boldness in his plots, though there is a good deal of the funk about him when he is in danger of getting hurt; but he has never had the cool audacity that Levison possesses. Vernon-Smith is more like Levison in that respect. One found it hard not to have some measure of reluctant liking for them, even at their worst, because of the qualities in them which might have been put to so much finer use.

Most of you know that Levison was at Greyfriars before he came to St. Jim's, and that he was expelled from the Kentish school. He came there rather under a cloud. We have never been told about what his earliest school experiences were; but one cannot help fancying that they could not have been pleasant. For he was a young Ishmael when he landed at Greyfriars—resentful, suspicious, sullen, unwilling to make friends, seeming almost incapable of realising what friendship meant.

And this could not have been due to his home surroundings. One gathers that the Levisons are not at all wealthy people, but that they are happy enough. Frank and Doris came from the same home, and there is no such cloud upon them.

Levison did no good at Greyfriars. But he did not do all the wrong deeds that he was suspected and accused of. There was one thing that happened which it seemed could only have happened through the work of a clever conjurer. Levison was that—he had great skill, and at the time was no end keen on conjuring—and Levison was looked upon as a very likely fellow to be guilty. But he was innocent, and the suggestion that he should conjure naturally did not enter his mind. There might be trouble with Mr. Quelch if no one owned up; but the Levison of those days would not have been too ready to confess even if he had been guilty; and of course, there was no reason why he should do so when he was not. He was very bitter with Harry Wharton, and they fought. Levison was licked; no other reason could have been pleaded. But when the truth came out Wharton felt very sorry for his mistake. He told Frank Nugent that he was sure there was good stuff in Levison, and that he meant to try and make friends of him and to bring it out. Perhaps that

sounds a trifle priggish, but it was not really so. Harry Wharton remembered his own early days at Greyfriars, and what a passionate, undisciplined cub he had been, and what patience and real friendship Frank Nugent had shown him. He wanted to do for another what had been done for him; and there was no priggishness in that.

Wharton was as near to being a friend to Levison as anyone at Greyfriars, which is not saying great things. If he had stayed on Wharton might have done much for him. The plucky rescue effected by the skipper of the *Remove* when Levison was lost on Black



Pile aroused real gratitude in the wayward and rebellious nature, as was proved when Levison cleared Wharton of the charge of breaking bounds to go pub-haunting, though to clear Wharton he had to give himself away. He was sacked, and he left Greyfriars with out much regret on the part of anyone there for his going. But that going was not wholly without saving grace. At St. Jim's Levison was for a long time even worse than he had been at Greyfriars. He made himself as heartily disliked as he might not have done it for another fellow.

At St. Jim's Levison was for a long time even worse than he had been at Greyfriars. He made himself as heartily disliked as he might not have done it for another fellow. Tom Merry was one of his special aver-

sions. Tom was all that he felt he could never be, and that made the Ishmael of the Fourth had him. He hated others—Jack Blake, and Gussy, and Lowther, and Manvers, and Figgins & Co., and, very specially, Dick Brooke. Some of his schemes against Brooke were about as black as well could be. He made the boy-boy, the father-drunk, and brought him to the school—a bitter blow for Dick, of course. He forged an insult to Mr. Latton in Brooke's handwriting. This gift of Levison's is a fine one. One of his abilities to imitate the writing of others so that the difference cannot be detected by anyone but an expert, I mean—though to the Levison of today the peril is worked off at so much per hundred lines in the scrawl of the fellows who had been given them, and the most wide-awake master could not tell that they had been done by another hand. Levison needed the money; he has never had much pocket-money, and his tastes used to be very expensive; and the deceit practised was small, morally, compared with many of the things he did. But he will not write lines for cash now.

Many were the things completely off the rails that Levison did in those days. From the first Tower, Herries, and the disliking him, and he hated Tower, and tried to poison him. That was bad enough; but there were other things in which animals were concerned that were worse still. There seemed in them a callous cruelty that repelled the decent fellows utterly. Not quite so bad, though bad enough, were the tricks played with "Tom Merry's Weekly," when the black, crack, and surprising audacity, got into Mr. Tiper's printing-office and mixed things up terribly. Then there was the theft of the chart to the hidden treasure from Tom Merry; and there was the theft of the plans of Glyn's bombing machine; and there was the smashing up of the knife-machine in order to get the boot-boy, who was pluckily studying for a scholarship, for which Levison had also entered a disclaimer.

So far it is so that the Shell and Fourth made up their minds that they could stand Levison no longer. They took him to the station, and saw that he went. Not one fellow in a hundred would have had the hardihood to come back after that. The thought of the scores of bitterly hostile faces might have daunted the boldest of the crowd. But Levison, in his sullen defiance, came back, however; and the Head, even when he knew of what he had been guilty, would not expel him. The boys had taken matters into their own hands, Dr. Holmes said. It was impossible that he should deal with the culprit as he might otherwise have done.

There came a time when Levison left. His father had met with financial trouble, and father had met with financial trouble, and father had met with financial trouble. He would not go home. In a disguise, of which a red wig formed an important item, he got the job of foot-boy at the School House, and proceeded to make matters unpleasant for the fellows he hated. But, of course, he was found out in the long run; and, his father's position having improved in the meantime, he returned to his place in the Fourth, though no one wanted him there.

He had no chum. Crooke and Mellish and Gore—as Gore then was—were his "pals," when they were not his enemies, and they pined. But fellows of their sort are no one's chums. Harry Wharton was the best friend Levison had known till he met Reginald Latbot; and Levison had no faith in Harry. When he knew that Wharton was coming to St. Jim's for a match he felt certain that his secret would be given away. No one there knew then that he had been expelled from Greyfriars. Levison might have trusted Wharton to keep it dark; Wharton had done his best to show himself really friendly. But he could not trust him, and through that he gave away.

It was Latbot who first awakened in Levison real friendship and real faith. The benefits were not all on one side. Latbot saved Levison

from disaster, it is true; but Levison also stood by him as a very critical time, and saved him. There it might have ended had it been left to Levison. Talbot was the friend of the fellows he regarded as enemies. Talbot was utterly different from himself. It was impossible, he held, that Talbot could have any real feeling for him; and he did not want gratitude or patronage or pity. But that was not the way in which Talbot looked at it. Like Wharton, he had caught a glimpse of the better things in Levison's strange nature, and he was willing to be patient with his sulky resentment, his foolish recklessness, to make excuse where excuse was possible, to stand up for the fellow whom others were ready to condemn. And by degrees he won from Levison a kind of grudging affection that was seldom expressed, and a faith that counted for more than affection. If Ernest Levison believed in no one else, he believed in Talbot; and that was a beginning. There is little hope for anyone who has lost hold of all faith. It was only a beginning. Talbot alone could never have worked the miracle—it was hardly less—which made of Levison as decent and straight a fellow as any at St. John's.

Levison's minor young Frank told that. It was not enough that there should be someone in whom Levison had faith; there must also be someone who had faith in him. Frank went to St. John's with no less opinion that his brother was one of the black sheep of the school; he would not believe it when he was

told; and when conviction was forced upon him his love never wavered. There will be more to say about that when, in a few weeks, I deal with Levison minor. Suffice it that, through Frank, with some help from golden-hearted Arthur, Augustus, and Talbot, and a little later, from two or three others, the miracle was wrought.

Even then there might have been a relapse. Rakee and Co. did their best to bring about one. They had stood in the way of Levison's attempts at reformation for as long as they could, and when it became evident that he was in deadly earnest, Rakee, with Crooke aiding and abetting, tried every low dodge he could devise to get revenge. Those who have read "After Lights Out," as most of you have, will recall the savage fight between the two, and how Rakee's false witness came near to ruining Levison.

Sidney Clive helped to avert any likelihood of a relapse. Clive had not known Levison at his worst, but he knew enough about him to make his readiness to share a study with him a real help to the fellow who was having a relapse. For Levison was not a bad person, the juniors before he had spoofed Mr. Raiton and the Head; and at first his reform looked to most of them like one of his old deep games. But even Tom Merry and most of the rest came to believe before he could win his House-master. But Clive was won first; and it mattered no end to Levison that a thoroughly

decent fellow like Clive—on the best of footings in the Lower School, with no single black mark against his name—should be willing to chum up with him. When Rakee came to make a third—wayward, whimsical, with many bad instincts at war in him with what was good; and in helping to keep him straight—standing by him—the one-time black sheep fairly fought in his feet. Cardew's weakness helped him almost as much as Clive's strength. It was a new thing for him to labour at keeping another in the straight way—a new thing, and a very good thing.

So we see him now. He has won a place among the leaders of the juniors. He is among the best in the playing-fields. The keen brain that makes him quite a capable detective is respected. He is liked by most—not loved, as Tom Merry and Gussey and some others are, for his nature is more reserved and less sunny and open than theirs. I should not say that even now he was a specially sympathetic person when people he cared little for are concerned. But for the few he does care for greatly at St. Jim's—Frank first, and after him Clive and Cardew and Talbot, and perhaps Tom Merry and one or two more—would he do anything that might, after all, be a good deal more than one's real friends, not the world at large.

I do not think the day will ever come when we shall see Ernest Levison as a black sheep again.

CADET NOTES.

GENERAL SIR ROBERT SCALLON, K.C.B., who is superintending the Cadet Department at the War Office on behalf of Lord Scarborough, the Director-General, visited Hull a few weeks ago, and took part in a conference on the subject of the Cadet Movement, and also inspected the Secondary School Cadets in the city. The conference and public meeting were attended by large and influential gatherings of the public. The conference especially was of great utility, as there were representatives of all the existing boys' organisations in the city present, and the place and value of the various movements discussed, and many valuable suggestions were made. The general, at the inspection of the Grammar School Cadets, paid a very high compliment to the lads, who certainly looked very smart on parade.

On Whit-Monday the Trowbridge Volunteer Cadets held their first field-day. Assembling at the headquarters, the Cadets were inspected by General Palmer. They subsequently marched to Monkton Farleigh, where lunch, which had been carried in the boys' haversacks, was partaken. After this interval the company was put through a series of manoeuvres in the Manor House, where they were inspected by the Right Hon. Sir Charles Hobhouse, who was accompanied by Lady Hobhouse and a number of friends. The company then through a series of movements, and one party gave a display of Swedish drill. After the operations the company was addressed by Sir Charles, who gave them a hearty welcome to Monkton Farleigh, and expressed his appreciation of the creditable manner in which the various movements had been carried out.

On May 25th the 10th Battalion of the London Regiment Cadet Corps, accompanied by the 3rd Essex Cadets, marched to the Mansion House, where the Lipton Cup was presented to the 10th Battalion, as the winners of the Home Counties Cadet Battalion Football Association Competition for the season 1917-18. Silver medals were presented to the winning team, and bronze medals to the runners-up. The Essex Battalion received the gift of Sir Charles Wankfield. The 10th Battalion of the London Regiment is one of the most successful of the London Corps, and now numbers close on 600 members.

In presenting the cup and medals referred to in the preceding paragraph, General Sir Robert Scallon, who undertook this duty in the absence of the Lord Mayor, briefly

addressed the lads of the two battalions. He told them that the time is not far distant when every fit boy between the ages of 14 and 17 will have to join some Cadet Force or other. This prophecy will, no doubt, be fulfilled when the Education Act is in force, and when while the present generation of boys, who have a free choice in the matter, should exercise it in favour of joining the movement and doing the best to make the best of it. The boys' services are required later on. We may remind our readers that any of them wishing to join a Cadet Corps can obtain full particulars of headquarters of the corps, etc., on application to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C.2.

Under the auspices of the C.A.V.R., Mr. F. G. Cooke, the well-known lecturer, has just concluded a week's tour through some of the villages of Cornwall, speaking at meetings in support of the movement, and strengthening the local Cadet Corps. Despite the fact that the villages were in out-of-the-way places, and away from the larger towns, the meetings were well attended, and considerable interest was shown in the subject. The Internships of the Central Association, illustrating the life of a Cadet in camp, were displayed, and were found of great assistance. It is evident to see such a good start being made in Cornwall, where hitherto there has been little, if any, development of Boy Scout troops or other similar organisations.

In connection with the 8th Southwark Cadet Battalion, R.R.K.C., an inter-company drill competition took place at St. Mark's Hall, Surbiton, recently. Each company first carried out musketry drill and various minor exercises, and then the companies, under their respective commanding officers. The judge was Captain and Adjutant R. W. King, 2nd and 3rd Battalion Surrey Volunteer Regiment. There were also present Major and Adjutant commanding the battalion, and Major J. W. C. Goodfellow. The result of the competition was that St. Paul's, Kingston Hill Company, came out winners with a total of 94. The scores were made in the following order: 84; St. Mark's, Surbiton, 82; New Malden, 63; and Christ Church, Surbiton Hill, 57.

A large gathering of boys at the Parish Hall, St. Denis, became enthusiastic over the Cadet Movement when its principles were explained to them a few weeks ago by the Vicar of St. Denis' Church (the Rev. L. S. Etheridge), Colonel Lees, and Captain Benson (2nd Battalion Volunteer Regiment). They were clearly told

how beneficial Cadet training would be to them, mentally as well as physically, and how it would fit them to become good citizens, and, if need be, good soldiers. After the meeting a number of the boys offered themselves for enlistment.

The Sherborne Cadet Company, King's Royal Rifle Corps, attended a review at Winchester on Bank Holiday, in charge of Cadet-adjutant, and after a short stay at Winchester about 11.45, they marched to the K.R.R. barrack-square, and later the boys, being formed into two battalions, marched to the cathedral for service. After dinner the company took its place in a battalion, and was reviewed, with others by Lord Grenfell. During the ceremony Lord Grenfell presented the D.S.O. and the Military Medal to the officer and man of the K.R.R. After the review the company had tea in the Guildhall, and returned to Sherborne in the evening.

An item of interest to lads residing in North London is the formation of a new company of the 7th Battalion of the London Regiment Cadet Corps, which has just taken place. It is hoped to recruit at least 300 or 400 lads from the districts of Finsbury Park, Tottenham, Harringay, etc. The headquarters of the new company will be fixed at Finsbury Park, which is a good centre for the districts mentioned, and easily accessible by various means of transport. For further information, with address for inquiries, will be sent on application to the C.A.V.R.

The boxing championships of the 8th Middlesex Cadet Battalion (L.D.C.R.) were decided by a judge of the A.B.A. before a large company. The boxers included lads from St. Michael's, Highgate; St. Peter's, Hornsey; St. Michael-at-Bowes; St. Paul's, Harringay; All Saints', Whiston; and St. Paul's, New Southgate. And the finals resulted as follows:

Feather-weight—F. Gentle beat E. Wren (both of New Southgate).

Light-weight—A. Wilkinson (New Southgate) beat Wright (Highgate), a plucky little fighter.

Middle-weight—V. Gordon beat R. Benson (both of Harringay). Richardson was "knocked out" (seemed to come over faint) before the first round was over.

Heavy-weight—S. Dawson (Harringay) beat Crouch (New Southgate) after a very lively display.

Peacock and Patmore were chief seconds, and Captain and Major of the Rev. J. Holmes were among the officials.

