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THE TRIUMPH OF TOMPKINS!

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



EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY!

A Magnificent,
New, Long,
Complete School
Story of
Tom Merry
and Co.
at St. Jim's.

THE TRIUMPH OF TOMPKINS!

By
Martin
Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Tompkins on the War-path!

CLARENCE YORK TOMPKINS, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was wrathful.

He came out of his study, No. 4 in the Fourth, with a red face and the gleam of battle in his eyes.

Four juniors were chatting round the doorway of No. 6—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, who shared that celebrated apartment.

They regarded Tompkins of the Fourth in surprise.

"Seen Tom Merry?"

Tompkins jerked that question at them like a bullet from a gun.

"Yaas," answered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have seen Tom Mewwy, deah boy. But what is the mattah? You look wathah excited."

"I'm going to lick Tom Merry!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Where is he?" demanded Tompkins ferociously.

Study No. 6 stared at him blankly without answering.

Tompkins on the war-path was quite a new Tompkins.

Clarence York was nobody in particular. He was generally regarded as a duffer, rather a fumbler at cricket, though he did his best in his way; a rather painstaking duffer in class, a fellow with no vices, but no special virtues—in fact, a nobody.

Fellows sometimes amused themselves in idle moments with pulling Tompkins' leg, and more ill-natured fellows had been known to rag his study, such an amusement being considered safe enough with "that duffer Tompkins."

Tompkins so seldom came out of his shell, so to speak, that he had caused great surprise by punching Racke's nose in the Common-room one day, taking exception to some sarcastic remark of Racke's on the subject of his illustrious front name.

He had still further surprised the Lower School by licking Aubrey Racke in the fight that followed, Racke being a much bigger and older fellow, though perhaps not much blessed with a great amount of pluck.

But, after all, anybody could lick Racke; and Tompkins, generally, was a very inoffensive fellow, who seldom made his voice heard on any subject, and took the large amount of chipping he received with good-tempered patience.

His sudden announcement that he was out to lick Tom Merry, the champion junior athlete of St. Jim's, took Study No. 6's breath away.

They could only stare at the warlike Tompkins.

"Where is he?" repeated Clarence York. "If you've seen him, where is he?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Tompkins, it would be doin' you a good turn not to tell you."

"Better leave Tommy alone!" grinned Blake. "My dear man, you couldn't lick one side of Tommy if he had his hands tied and his eyes shut! Better try some smaller fry."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Where is he?" roared Tompkins.

"I wefuse to tell you where he is, deah boy, for your own sake, if you are goin' to try to lick him."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tompkins—"

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Racke of the Shell, lounging along the passage with Crooke and Scrope.

The three black sheep of the School House seemed interested.

"Pway do not butt in, Wacke—"

"I want to find Tom Merry!" shouted Tompkins.

"He's just gone down to cricket with Manners and Lowther," answered Racke.

"Are you looking for trouble?"

"I'm going to lick him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Clarence York Tompkins started for the staircase at a rapid stride. The juniors stared after him.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "What evah is the mattah with Tompkins? Pewwaps we had bettah go aftah him, deah boys."

"Somebody will be wanted to pick up the pieces after he's done licking Tom Merry," remarked Digby.

"We'll carry him home, poor chap!" said Herries. "Come on!"

"By gad, I'm on this!" grinned Racke.

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. were hurrying after the truculent Tompkins, and Racke and his friends followed them. Mellish and Trimble came out of their study and stopped Racke.

"Where are you off to?" asked Mellish. "I thought we were going into your study for a game?"

"Somethin' better on than that. Tompkins is goin' to lick Tom Merry!" chuckled Crooke.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Baggy Trimble.

And they joined Racke & Co., quite keen to see the encounter between Tompkins of the Fourth and the captain of the Shell.

The news spread as the juniors hurried out of the School House after Clarence York. The news that Tompkins was on the war-path, with Tom Merry selected as the happy victim, caused excitement and merriment on all sides. Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn, Talbot and Gore, Kangaroo and Glyn, and a dozen other fellows, joined the crowd that followed Tompkins down to Little Side.

Tompkins did not heed them, and did not even hear the chortles of the procession in his wake.

He strode on regardless of it all.

There were a good many fellows on the junior cricket-ground. Figgins was batting to Fatty Wynn's bowling, and the Terrible Three of the Shell were looking on at present. Tom Merry evidently had no suspicion that the warlike Tompkins was on his track as he chatted with Manners and Lowther.

He was made suddenly aware of it, however.

Tompkins, breathless with haste and red with wrath, reached him, and

clutched him by the shoulder, swinging him round.

Tom Merry, in great surprise, found himself looking into Tompkins' red and wrathful face.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated.

"Yah!" was Tompkins' reply.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Yah! Rotter!"

Tom Merry blinked at him. That roar of defiance from the usually quiet and inoffensive Tompkins took his breath away. He had no quarrel with Clarence York, so far as he was aware. He did not have much to do with the Fourth-Former, anyway, and regarded him with friendly tolerance.

"Cad!" howled Tompkins, shaking his fist under Tom Merry's nose.

"Eh?"

"Rotter!"

"What on earth are you calling me names for?" demanded Tom Merry, too astonished to be angry. "Are you off your rocker?"

"Put up your hands!"

"Eh?"

"Put up your paws!" roared Tompkins.

"What for?"

"Because I'm going to lick you!"

"Lick me?" stuttered Tom.

"Yes, you rotter!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Monty Lowther in wonder. "Does this run in the Tompkins' family, my unfortunate young friend?"

"Must be potty!" said Manners in equal wonder.

Tom Merry backed away a pace as Tompkins flourished a knuckly and somewhat grubby fist under his nose.

"Look here, you potty duffer," exclaimed Tom, "what's the matter? I don't want to slaughter you."

"Yah! Come on!"

"But what's the row? What the dickens— Oh, my hat!" yelled Tom, as Clarence York fairly rushed at him and smote him hip and thigh.

CHAPTER 2.

"Signed, Tom Merry!"

"GWEAT Scott! Dwag that idiot off, deah boys!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry backed away, defending himself. Two or three thumps had taken effect upon him in the surprise of the moment, and he was getting angry. But he only warded off Tompkins' furious drives so far.

The attack was so astounding that Tom really feared that the hot weather had had some effect on Tompkins' brain—not supposed to be very strong. He did not want to hurt him, and poor Clarence York would have been very severely hurt if the athletic Shell fellow had hit out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, always kind-hearted, rushed forward and caught Tompkins by the shoulders, and pulled him back.

"Leggo!" roared Tompkins.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Leggo! I'm going to lick him!" shouted Tompkins. "Come on, Merry! Come on, you rotter!"

"What on earth does this mean, Tom?" asked Talbot of the Shell.

"Blessed if I know! I've done nothing that I know of," said Tom. "It must be sunstroke, I think."

"Rotter!" roared Tompkins, wrenching himself away from Arthur Augustus. "Come on! Yah! You think you can treat me as you like, don't you, because I'm a quiet chap? Well, I'm not afraid of you!"

"But—"

"Come on, you rotter!"

Tompkins rushed to the attack, and Tom Merry's hands went up once more.

The juniors gathered round in an amazed ring, even the cricketers coming off the pitch to see what was on. Cricket practice was not nearly so entertaining as Clarence York Tompkins on the war-path.

"Go it!" shouted Racke. "Go for him, Tompkins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly ass ought to be dwagged off befoah he gets hurt," said D'Arcy anxiously. "Don't hurt him, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry was not hurting him. He was too good a boxer for Tompkins to be able to do him any damage, and his guard was perfect. Tompkins attacked with terrific vim, but he could not get through the defence, and Tom Merry smiled at him over the active hands that stalled him off helplessly. Once or twice he gave the Fourth-Former a tap when he came too close, and that was all. Tom Merry's hands seemed like a stone wall that the enraged Fourth-Former could not pass, and he raged in vain, rapidly losing his breath.

That peculiar encounter elicited yells of laughter from the crowd surrounding them, which made Tompkins more and more furious.

"This is as good as a cinema, or better," observed Monty Lowther. "Go it, Tompkins! You don't know how funny you are!"

"Bai Jove! That chap will get vewy tired if he keeps up those wemarkable gymnastics much longah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clarence York Tompkins dropped his hands at last, fairly exhausted by his vain attack upon an impenetrable defence.

"Oh, you rotter!" he gasped.

"Had enough?" asked Tom, laughing.

"Yah! You rotter! Cad! Why don't you hit out?" roared Tompkins. "Are you afraid to?"

"Well, not exactly," chuckled Tom Merry. "You silly ass, don't you know that you would fold up like a pocket-knife if I hit you?"

Tompkins stood panting.

"Interval!" announced Monty Lowther, amid a general chortle. "Now, you chump, suppose you tell us what you're going for Tommy for?"

"Because he's a rotter!" gasped Tompkins.

"I really think you'd better punch him, Tommy," said Lowther. "One punch will be enough, and then somebody can carry the body in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd rather find out what-see he's got in his bonnet," said the perplexed captain of the Shell. "What have I done, Tompkins, or what do you think I have done?"

"You know I can't lick you, you rotter!" gasped Tompkins, almost weeping with rage. "If I could, you wouldn't dare to rag my study, and stick up insulting messages on the walls!"

"But I haven't done anything of the sort!" gasped Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Liar!"

Tom clenched his hands, and his eyes gleamed. For a moment he came very



Tompkins is Wrathful.

(See Chapter 1.)

near giving Clarence York Tompkins what he had been asking for.

"We'll look into this," he said quietly. "Unless you've gone potty, somebody has been pulling your leg."

"You've signed your name to it!" howled Tompkins.

"I haven't been in your silly study at all, you howling ass!"

"You—you haven't?" muttered Tompkins, taken aback.

"No, you chump!"

"But your name's signed there—"

"I'll go and see it," said Tom. "If somebody's been using my name, there will be trouble for that somebody!"

Tompkins blinked at him in great doubt. Taking no further notice of the egregious Clarence York, Tom Merry walked away to the School House, with a crowd of curious fellows at his heels. Quite an army of the Fourth and the Shell arrived at No. 4 to investigate the cause of Tompkins' amazing ebullition.

Tompkins' study-mate, Mulvaney minor of the Fourth, was standing in the study now, with an expression of surprise and wrath on his face. He had just come in. He stared at the crowd as they arrived.

"Phwat does this mean?" he demanded.

Tom Merry stepped into the study, and looked round.

It was evident that ragers had been at work. Clarence York's desk had been up-ended, and the contents were scattered on the floor. Two or three prize books were in the fender, with soot thrown upon them. On the rug was a heap of broken crockery. And there was an inscription chalked on the wall, and when the juniors saw it, the cause of Tompkins' outbreak was explained at last.

"Tompkins the Duffer! Tompkins the Fathead! Tompkins the Funk! Go back to Colney Hatch!"

"(Signed) TOM MERRY."

CHAPTER 3.

By Whose Hand?

TOM MERRY'S eyes glittered as he read that message on the wall which had not unnaturally roused the inoffensive Tompkins' fighting blood.

Clarence York had followed him, but he was not warlike now. He was beginning to realise that his simple leg had been pulled once more. The inscription on the wall was scrawled in capital letters, and so gave no clue to the handwriting of the perpetrator.

"You silly chump!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "Didn't it occur to you that anybody could have written that rot?"

"Nunno!" stammered Tompkins.

"Sure, it's your name, Tom Merry," said Mulvaney minor.

"I don't think I need tell anybody here that I didn't write up that caddish rubbish," said Tom Merry, looking round.

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"You—you didn't?" stammered Tompkins.

"No, you idiot!"

"Then who did?"

"How should I know, fathead?" snapped Tom Merry. "Somebody who wanted to get you a licking, I should think, if he thought it would make you go for me as you did, you howling ass!"

"Some awf'ly mean wottah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Only a silly ass like Tompkins would have been taken in, howevah."

"Well, Tompkins is a silly ass!" remarked Blake.

"He is—he are!" murmured Lowther. "S-s-somebody did it!" stammered Tompkins.

"Did you work that out in your head?" asked Monty Lowther, with interest.

"Wacke, vewy likely," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "That howlin' THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 546.

ass licked Wacke a week or two ago, you know; and this is just one of Wacke's twicks. He wanted Tom Mewwy to thwash Tompkins."

"Was it you, Racke?" demanded Tom sharply. Aubrey Racke glanced carelessly into the study.

"Was what me?" he asked. "Did you write that rubbish, and rag Tompkins' things?"

"By gad! Looks as if you did!" answered Racke coolly. "There's your name signed to it, anyhow!"

"That's your name, Tom Merry!" chortled Trimble. "He, he, he! Own up!"

Tom took no notice of Trimble. His eyes were fixed grimly on Racke of the Shell.

"Some lying cad used my name!" he said. "You're quite capable of a trick like that, Racke."

Racke shrugged his shoulders. "I hardly think any fellow would write up your name, Tom Merry," he answered. "It seems too thick, to me."

"And to me," added Crooke. "I've already said that I did not write it," said Tom quietly. "If you doubt my word, Racke, say so plainly, and I'll smash you!"

"Thanks! If you say you didn't, there's no proof that you did, I suppose," yawned Racke. "But I don't see why you should connect me with the thing. I certainly know nothing whatever about it!"

And with that the cad of the Shell lounged away with his friends.

"I suppose it would hardly be playin' the game to find Wacke guilty without any evidence?" remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Might have been Crooke, or Scrope, or Mellish, or Trimble," said Manners. "Any one of them is cad enough."

"Yaas, wathah!" Clarence York Tompkins' face was a study. He was not a very bright youth, but he could see now that he had been taken in.

"I—I'm sorry, Tom Merry," he stammered. "I—I thought it was you!"

"Only a silly ass like you would have thought so!" snapped Tom. "You'd better make sure next time, or you may get damaged."

And Tom Merry left the study. Manners and Lowther lingered, giving Clarence York Tompkins expressive looks. They were more exasperated with Tompkins than Tom Merry was.

"Tompkins, my boy, you've made a bloomer," said Lowther.

"I—I know."

"If you hadn't been a howling ass, you'd have guessed that some cad stuck Tommy's name there, to get you a lick-in'."

"I—I—"

"You can't help being a howling ass," continued Lowther considerably. "A howling ass is born, not made."

"Nascitur, non fit," agreed Manners.

"But there are limits," said Lowther, "and I think the limit ought to be impressed on your mind, Tompkins. I think a jolly good bumping is the best way. What do you think?"

"Look here—Oh! Yah!"

Bump, bump! Clarence York smote his study floor with his person, in the grasp of the two indignant Shell fellows.

Manners and Lowther left him sitting there, gasping, and walked out of the study feeling that justice had been done. Clarence York Tompkins felt that it had been rather over-done.

Mulvaney minor, grinning, helped him up.

"Why didn't you lend me a hand, you sniggering chump?" demanded Tompkins ungratefully.

"Sure, and ye asked for it, intirely," answered Mulvaney. "I wonder Tom Merry didn't mop up the ground wid ye!"

"I—I thought—"

"Arrah, ye can't think!" interrupted Mulvaney. "If ye want to think, think out who mucked up our study, ye gossoon!"

"I—I suppose it was Racke—or Crooke—or Scrope—or Mellish—or Trimble—or Clampe of the New House—or Chowle—"

"Faith, ye've got a good list to choose from," said Mulvaney minor sarcastically. "and perhaps it was somebody else all the time!"

"Oh, it was one of those rotters—or all of them," said Tompkins with conviction. "Gore or Reilly or Kerruish might have ragged the place, but not to this extent—this is rotten, and they wouldn't have stuck up that lie on the wall, either. It was some awful cad!"

Mulvaney nodded.

"A regular spalpeen!" he agreed. "And ye ought to find him, and whin ye do, I'll hold your jacket for yez!"

"How can I find him?" said Tompkins hopelessly. "I don't know who it was, only I'm sure it was one of that gang, perhaps the lot of them together. No good punching Racke's nose if it was Clampe, or pulling Clampe's boko if it was Mellish!"

"Go for the lot of them, one after another," suggested Mulvaney minor.

"Lick the whole gang all round!"

"I can't, you wild Irish ass!"

"Oh, ye're a gossoon!" said Mulvaney. "Sure it's up against this study, and somebody ought to be licked for this. If you don't do it, I will. And by the same token, there's Trimble, and I'll begin on him!"

In an unlucky moment for himself the inquisitive Baggy poked his little fat nose into the study.

With his truly Hibernian scheme of thrashing the black sheep of the school all round, one after another, to make sure of getting at the guilty party, Mulvaney minor started on Trimble.

He rushed at that podgy youth with his fists up and the light of battle in his eyes; and Trimble jumped back into the passage in alarm.

"Here, keep off!" he yelled. Oh! Ah!"

Trimble bolted.

"Arrah!" roared Mulvaney minor. "Come back, and be licked intirely!"

He rushed down the passage after Trimble. That fat junior scudded down the big staircase, and on the lower landing ran into Mr. Railton, who was coming up. The Housemaster's grasp closed on Trimble's collar.

"Trimble!"

"Yaroo! Oh, dear!"

"Mulvaney minor," thundered Mr. Railton, "what are you chasing Trimble down the stairs for?"

"Oh, begorra! To—to catch him, sir!" gasped Micky Mulvaney.

"And why do you want to catch Trimble?"

"To—to—to—"

"Keep him off!" gasped Trimble. "I didn't rag his study—I never knew anything about it. Besides, it was only Tompkins' things that were ragged. Tain't his business at all. Oh, dear!"

"Have you any reason to believe that Trimble has done any damage in your study, Mulvaney minor?"

"Nunno, sir! Only—"

"Only what?"

"Somebody has, sir, and—and sure I was goin' to lick all the spalpeens that

might have done it, sir, to get at the right party," said Mulvaney ingeniously.

Mr. Railton frowned portentously.

"Mulvaney minor, if you carry out that ridiculous intention, you may expect to be reported to the Head for a flogging on each occasion that you disturb the peace!" he thundered.

"Oh!" gasped the Irish junior. "Oh, sir!"

"Trimble you may go. Remember my warning, Mulvaney minor!"

"Yis, sorr!" gasped Micky.

He returned discomfited to his study. His scheme, for what it was worth, was knocked on the head; and the insult to Study No. 4 had to remain unavenged. Clarence York Tompkins was tidying up, with a dismayed face, and Micky lent him a hand, growling to himself. But although his drastic measures had to be nipped in the bud, Micky Mulvaney remained firmly convinced that Racke & Co., or one, or some of them, had been responsible for the outrage in Study No. 4, and he informed Clarence York Tompkins that they had been made to sit up for it. Clarence York fully agreed; only he did not quite see how it was to be done.

CHAPTER 4.

Tompkins is Mysterious!

TOM MERRY gave Clarence York Tompkins a cheery nod and a smile when he came across that egregious youth again. The captain of the Shell had quite forgiven Tompkins; he had, indeed, forgotten his existence until he saw him again. Clarence York was not a person of consequence.

Tompkins was looking glum. He stopped Tom Merry to speak to him.

"I'm sorry I went for you yesterday, Merry," he began.

"All serene—no harm done," said Tom with a smile. "Fortunately, you left off before you had slaughtered me."

Tompkins coloured.

"Of course, I know I couldn't lick you," he mumbled.

"Then it was plucky to try," said Tom. "It's all right. I'd jolly nearly forgotten all about it. Make sure next time, you know. It's always a good idea to get hold of the right party before you begin punching noses. It saves misunderstandings!"

Tompkins laughed feebly.

"But—but I don't know the right party," he said. "I'm jolly certain it was Racke and his gang, or some of them. They think I'm a silly ass they can do anything they like with, you know," went on Tompkins dismally. "They wouldn't dare to rag your study!"

"But they did that a few weeks ago," said Tom.

"I'm not such an ass as they think," continued Tompkins. "I've got brains, you know."

"I'm sure you have," assented Tom agreeably, refraining from asking Tompkins why he didn't use them if he had them—a question Monty Lowther would certainly have asked.

"I believe the whole gang of them were in it!" went on Clarence York. "They've been grinning and sniggering together a lot, and they keep on chipping me about it, you know. They like to hold a chap up to ridicule, and fellows always seem ready to laugh at me, for some reason!"

"It's too bad!" said Tom, listening cheerfully to poor Tompkins' grievances. There was no limit to Tom Merry's sunny good-nature.

"I'm not such an ass as they think, though," said Tompkins darkly. "I've been thinking."

"Yes?"

"They make the fellows think I'm an ass, said Tompkins. "But it's better to be an ass than to be a rogue, isn't it?"

"Very much beter," agreed Tom. "You have the advantage of them there!"

"Oh! So you think I'm an ass, too?"

"Nunno! I—I didn't mean exactly that!"

"Well, some fellows who think that a fellow is an ass are going to have their eyes opened," said Tompkins. "I've been thinking, and when I have a good think I can tell you I have some jolly good ideas. I'm jolly well going to show Racke & Co. up to all the school."

"Are you really?"

"Yes, rather! They make out that I'm an ass, and I ain't really—not such an ass as they think, anyway. I'm going to make out that they're a set of rogues, and show them up in their true colours," said Tompkins. "I think that's fair, don't you?"

"Showing them up in their true colours is fair enough, certainly," said Tom Merry, wondering what on earth Clarence York was driving at. "I think the school knows them pretty well already, as a matter of fact."

"The school's going to know them better," said Tompkins. He tapped his forehead. "I've got it here, you know."

"Eh? Got what?"

"Brains!" said Tompkins impressively.

"Intellect."

"I'm glad to hear it. I'm sure," said the amazed captain of the Shell, again exercising self-restraint, and forbearing to observe that he wouldn't have thought it.

"Yes, you can grin!"

"I wasn't grinning, old chap!"

"You can grin," repeated Tompkins, unheeding, perhaps guessing that Tom was grinning inwardly, so to speak. "But I've got the brains, and I'm going to show them up! All St. Jim's is going to see that gang in their true colours. I've thought it out. I know how to dish them. You leave it to me."

"Certainly," said Tom.

"Mulvaney minor is jawing me like thunder," continued Tompkins. "He says it's up against our study; and so it is, you know. He says I'm an ass, and if I wasn't such an ass fellows wouldn't rag Study No. 4, and call it No. 4, Colney Hatch, and things like that. What do you think I said to Mulvaney?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"I said 'You wait and see'!" said Tompkins impressively.

"Oh!"

"That's what I said—wait and see," said Tompkins. "I know what to do. I'm going to show them up, and make 'em wish the blessed ground would open and let 'em drop through out of sight."

"I wish you luck, old chap," said Tom Merry. "Hallo, there's Manners! Tata!"

And Tom Merry went on to cricket with his chums, wondering what on earth was working in the mighty brain of Clarence York Tompkins—until he forgot Tompkins' existence again, which he did in a few minutes.

Tompkins, with an expression of deep and gloomy thought on his chubby face, paced the quad under the elms, his hands driven deep into his pockets. He was so deep in thought that he did not see Mulvaney minor approaching, till the Irish junior clapped him on the back. Then Tompkins yelled.

"Ow! You fathead!"

"Well, wake up, thin!" said Micky warmly. "Phwat for are ye going to sleep standing up, like a horse?"

"I was thinking, you ass!"

"Oh, don't be funny, ye gosssoon! You can't think. If you could think you would niver be such a howlin' ass, and the fellows—"

"Bother the fellows! The fellows will see that I'm not such an ass before long," said Tompkins.

"And phwat are ye going to do to convince them at all, at all?" asked Mulvaney minor sarcastically.

"Wait and see!"

"Sure, I'll wait, but I don't think I shall see!" grinned Micky. "But never mind that. What about yer new bike?"

"Never mind that."

"Hasn't yer uncle sint the money, after all?" asked Micky sympathetically.

"I've got it in my pocket now," answered Tompkins.

"Well, thin, didn't ye ask me to come wid ye to select the new bike, intirely?"

"I've changed my mind about that. I've got other things to think of now," said Tompkins mysteriously.

Perhaps he expected his study-mate to display great curiosity regarding the "other things," but Micky didn't. He only yawned. Even in his own study poor Tompkins was looked upon as an ass to be tolerated as good-humouredly as possible.

"Oh, all serene, thin! I'll get along to cricket," said Mulvaney. And he got.

Clarence York Tompkins remained pacing the quadrangle for some time, and finally he headed for the School House, with an expression on his face which indicated that his mind was made up.

There had apparently been some outcome to his deep thinking, though what it was remained a secret, locked up in the breast of Tompkins.

A chortle greeted Tompkins as he came up the staircase in the School House.

Racke & Co. were lounging by the big window on the landing. Racke, and Crooke and Mellish and Trimble and Scrope of the School House, and Clampe and Chowle of the New House, were all there, and they had been discussing the important topic of gee-gees when Tompkins came in sight. But they dropped that subject, important as it was, as soon as they saw Tompkins, and there was a general chortle at the sight of him.

"Hallo, duffer!" said Racke.

"Hallo, fathead!"

"Have you licked Tom Merry yet?"

"When are you going back to Colney Hatch?"

"He, he, he!"

"Haven't your keepers got after you yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clarence York Tompkins walked on with a crimson face. Racke & Co. found great entertainment in persecuting poor Clarence York. They felt that it was a safe amusement.

A howl of mocking laughter followed Tompkins, and he turned on the upper stairs and looked back darkly at the grinning group on the landing.

"You wait a bit!" he said.

"Hallo, what are we to wait for?" asked Crooke.

"Wait and see!"

With that reply, evidently borrowed from a great statesman, Clarence York Tompkins went on his way.

"Blessed if that chap isn't getting pottier every day," yawned Racke.

Tompkins went into his study. Half an hour later Micky Mulvaney came in, and found him busy at the table. Tompkins jumped up, and thrust hastily into his pocket the paper he had been scribbling.

Probably if any other fellow had done that Micky would have asked him what he was up to. But Tompkins' study-mate was never surprised at anything Tompkins did, and did not consider any of his actions was worthy of inquiry. He only said:

"Time for tay, me boy!"

"I'm going out before tea," said Tompkins.

"Oh, all right!" said Mulvaney indifferently, not even asking Tompkins where he was going.

Tompkins went unquestioned, and returned unquestioned; and though he looked very mysterious when he came back, Micky Mulvaney never even noticed it. And when Tompkins dropped hints that, later on, the fellows would see what they would see, Mulvaney minor only thought that he was being "quare," as he generally was, and still exhibited a plentiful lack of interest. Poor Clarence York was so completely a nobody that he could be as darkly mysterious as he liked without anybody even observing that he was darkly mysterious.

CHAPTER 5.

The Gratitude of John Brown!

"WELL, I'm blowed!" Tom Merry uttered that exclamation forcibly in his study, in tones of the greatest astonishment.

It was several days since the affair of Tompkins, an affair that had passed out of recollection of nearly everybody in the Lower School.

Tom Merry had come in after boating practice, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, called out to him that there was a letter for him in the rack.

Tom Merry took the letter down carelessly enough. The address on it was typewritten, and he supposed that it was some advertisement, probably from a local firm supplying cricket requisites.

But when he opened it his eyes grew round with astonishment as he read, and then he uttered that forcible exclamation.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Nunno! But—"

"Bills?" asked Monty Lowther, with sympathy. "That's the worst of shopping—the bills come in! Send 'em back, and tell 'em to apply again after the war."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry blankly.

"Not your call-up notice?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Ha, ha! No. This beats the band," said Tom Merry, in great wonder. "I should think it was a hoax. Anyway, it's a matter that concerns the 'Weekly,' so all the staff had better read it."

"Somebody inquiring why it's called the 'Weekly,' when it generally comes out monthly?" asked Lowther.

"No, ass! It's a notice to be put in the 'Weekly.' Pass the word round for the staff to come to the study," said Tom. "All the blessed editors had better see this."

Tom Merry went up to his study with the letter in his hand. His remarks had caused general surprise and interest, and it was not long before the whole staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were gathered in No. 10 of the Shell.

"Tom Merry's Weekly" had a numerous staff of editors and sub-editors. The Terrible Three, naturally, were members of it, and Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy regarded themselves as members, and Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn of the New House served in sub-editorial capacities. Unlike most papers in war-time, "Tom Merry's Weekly" did not suffer from depletion of staff. The paper itself had suffered, the terrific price of paper and printing having reduced its size to a double-sheet of small dimensions, with a limited number of copies. With so large a staff and so small a paper it really was surprising that "Tom Merry's Weekly" did not appear regularly, but somehow it didn't.

When a number appeared, it was generally owing to a great and combined effort on the part of the staff, after which they rested on their laurels, so to speak, for a few weeks. A number had now long been over-due, and was nearly ready for the press, and then it would be printed as soon as somebody could be induced to hike down to Mr. Tiper's in Rylcombe with the copy.

Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. arrived in the study in a very curious mood. Communications for the "Weekly" from outside St. Jim's were naturally rare, and they were curious to know what it was about. It was tea-time, but the staff agreed that the matter was more important than tea—Fatty Wynn, perhaps, having some doubts on that point.

"Well, here we are!" said Blake. "All the staff present—in fact, more than all. These New House bounders—"

"What are those kids doing here?" inquired Figgins, with a glance towards Blake & Co.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Sit down, gentlemen."

"Bai Jove! Pewraps you would kindly point out what we are to sit on, Tom Mewwy."

The editor-in-chief did not heed. Only a few of the gentlemen present were able to accept his invitation to sit down—the floor not looking inviting, and the number of chairs and boxes being limited.

"Gentlemen," said the chief editor, "I have received a most remarkable communication—"

"Is this going to be a speech?" asked Kerr.

"Order!"

"New House kids shouldn't interrupt!" remarked Manners.

"Bow-wow!"

"I don't think there ought to be a speech," observed Fatty Wynn. "It's tea-time, and—"

"Silence for the chair!"

"Order!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys!" "A most remarkable communication," said the chief editor calmly. "I will read it out to the staff. Silence, please!"

There was silence as the chief editor read the letter out.

It undoubtedly was, as Tom Merry had stated, a most remarkable communication.

It ran:

"Sir,—Will you have the kindness to insert the following notice in your paper, which I understand circulates among the junior boys of your school?"

"Mr. John Brown desires to express his heartfelt gratitude to the junior schoolboy of St. Jim's who, at great risk to himself, so gallantly saved his little daughter from injury last week. Not knowing the name of the brave and generous youth, Mr. Brown takes this method of thanking him. As a slight token of his gratitude, and a souvenir of the occasion, Mr. Brown is sending a handsome new bicycle to the school, to be handed to the youth in question."

"I shall be greatly obliged, Master Merry, if you will insert this notice in your paper. I am sure the brave lad will be very pleased to hear that my little daughter is now quite well, and I sincerely hope that he has recovered from the injury to his hand. The bicycle will reach St. Jim's to-morrow. I suggest that the staff of your paper form a committee to award it to the gallant lad, with all honour. I should be happy to be present, but having just received my call-up

notice, I shall be with the colours to-morrow, and it is therefore impossible.

"Very sincerely yours,

"JOHN BROWN.

"The Elms, Sussex."

The editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" listened in silence and with the keenest interest. Certainly it was a remarkable letter, and rather an agreeable one. A St. Jim's fellow who had run serious risk to save a little girl from injury was a fellow whom Tom Merry & Co. would have delighted to honour.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That's a wathah nice lettah, deah boys. Mr. Brown appears to be a vewy decent old boy."

"Let's have a look at the fist," said Kerr.

"The letter's type-written," answered Tom Merry.

"Oh! Signature and all?"

"No; the name's signed."

"Let's look at that, then."

Kerr took the letter and scanned the signature with a keen eye. Kerr did not seem so much impressed by the letter as the other fellows.

"John Brown" was written in a heavy hand, with a thick-nibbed pen.

"The Elms, Sussex," said Kerr thoughtfully. "That's rather a vague address."

"What have you got in your noddle, Kerr?" demanded Figgins.

"Well, it crossed my mind that it might be a hoax," said Kerr.

"That occurred to me," said Tom Merry. "But—"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus warmly. "Why should Mr. Brown write anythin' of the sort if it wasn't true?"

"Yes, answer that, Kerr!" said Herries.

Kerr grinned.

"Fathead! If it's a hoax there's no Mr. Brown at all. I don't see why he should type-write the letter."

"Lots of people type their letters," said Blake. "It saves time. My pater generally does."

"Yes. But—"

"It's signed all right," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Easy enough to practise a signature, but jolly hard to keep up a spoof hand all through a long letter," observed Kerr.

"Oh, wats!"

"Well, it's a remarkable letter," said Tom. "and it might be a hoax. Racke and his set would like to take a rise out of the 'Weekly'."

"Yaas, that's so," admitted D'Arcy. "It might be a twick of Wacke to make us look a lot of asses."

The editorial staff looked thoughtful.

"You see, if this man Brown is called up, and joining the colours at once, he couldn't reply to a letter, even if that address would find him," said Kerr sagely. "It may be so, or it may be some practical joker who wants to make us stick a silly notice in the 'Weekly', and get us grinned at. We should look duffers if we printed that notice, and then Racke or Crooke or somebody let it out that he had sent it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Phew! We should, and no mistake!" said Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

That thought was in his mind, too.

Practical jokes had been played on the staff of the "Weekly" before, and they did not intend to be victimised.

"Blessed if I quite know what to do, then!" said Tom, wrinkling his brows. "If it's genuine, the notice ought to go in the 'Weekly'. But—"

"Pewraps the chap is present," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Eh? What chap?"

"The chap who wescued Mr. Bwown's little daughtah fwom injahy."

"My hat!"

That was a new thought. Tom Merry looked round at the numerous staff inquiringly.

But there was a general shaking of heads.

"Not guilty, my lord!" said Monty Lowther.

"'Twasn't me," said Fatty Wynn.

"Must have been a New House chap," said Figgins thoughtfully. "Was it you, Kerr? Just like you to do it and say nothing about it."

Kerr laughed.

"Not guilty!" he answered.

"Not you, Fatty?"

"No!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

"Might have been Redfern," said Figgins. "Reddy's just the chap."

"Might have been lots of fellows," said Tom Merry. "Lots of chaps at St. Jim's would do a thing like that. Old Kildare—or Darrel—"

"Mr. Bwown says it was a juniah, deah boy."

"Yes; I forgot that. Very likely it was Talbot."

"Yaas, wathah! Just like old Talbot. And he wouldn't say anythin' about it, eithah!"

"Talbot to a T," said Monty Lowther.

"Trimble, perhaps," grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Tom Merry. "It would be beastly to refuse to put the notice in, if it's genuine, but we don't want to risk being hoaxed. We can't apply to Mr. Brown if he's joined the colours now. But—"

"There's the bike," said Blake.

"Eh? The bike?"

"Yes. If the bike's delivered to-morrow, as the letter says, that will settle it, I suppose?"

"My hat! Of course!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry's face cleared at once. Blake's sage suggestion solved the knotty problem.

"Right as rain!" said Tom. "If a man sends a new bike here, to be given to the chap, that will settle it. People don't send about new bikes for nothing, and bikes are more expensive than they used to be, too. I'd like a new bike, only it won't run to it. Awful pity I can't remember saving the blessed little girl—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, a new jigger's worth having," said Figgins, "and the man puts it so tactfully a fellow needn't have any hesitation about accepting it."

"Not at all."

"Well, that's settled," said Tom. "If a new bike arrives here that notice goes into the 'Weekly', and if it doesn't the notice goes into the fire. We'll wait till the bike comes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And until then not a word about this letter," said Tom. "If it's a hoax, the merry joker can be left with nothing to chortle over."

Which was assented to at once.

Naturally, the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" looked forward to the following day with keen anticipation.

They were not disappointed.

In the afternoon Taggles came up to the School House to see Tom Merry.

The bike had arrived.

The whole staff of the "Weekly" rushed down to the lodge to inspect the handsome new bike, packed in a crate, delivered there for Master Tom Merry, with Tom's name on the label, and the addition "From J. Brown."

It was a handsome bike—undoubtedly, and certainly could not have cost less than sixteen pounds. The juniors surveyed it

with great admiration, and certainly envied a little the lucky fellow whose courage had been thus rewarded. It only remained to find the lucky fellow. And that day Mr. Brown's notice was inserted in the copy of "Tom Merry's Weekly," which was duly taken down to Rykcombe to the printer's.

CHAPTER 6.

Who's the Man?

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" had never been in such great demand.

The new bike had attracted some attention. Fellows had wondered why the captain of the Shell, having received a new bike, should leave it still packed in the bike-shed.

Nothing was said by the staff, however. Mr. Brown's notice in the junior school paper was the first hint of what the bike was for.

The paper shortage had caused the number printed of the "Weekly" to be strictly limited; but that had seldom been felt as a great hardship, to tell the truth. Now, for once, it was severely felt.

As soon as the news got out, fellows claimed copies of the "Weekly" at once, to read the message from Mr. Brown, and dozens had to be turned away unsatisfied.

The whole edition was disposed of in a very few minutes, and then fellows had to borrow copies, or read over one another's shoulders.

Groups of juniors could be seen in the quadrangle and the passages eagerly perusing that notice from the grateful Mr. Brown.

In both Houses of St. Jim's it was not long before every fellow knew Mr. John Brown's message almost by heart.

There was so much keen excitement on the subject that even the Sixth Form took note of it, and some of them asked to see the paper. Kildare, the captain of the school, whistled when he read the inspiring words:

"Mr. John Brown desires to express his heartfelt gratitude to the junior schoolboy of St. Jim's who, at great risk to himself, so gallantly saved his little daughter from injury last week. Not knowing the name of the brave and generous youth, Mr. Brown takes this method of thanking him. As a slight token of his gratitude, and a souvenir of the occasion, Mr. Brown is sending a handsome new bicycle to the school, to be handed to the youth in question."

Kildare read that in Tom Merry's own special copy of the paper, respectfully handed to him by the skipper of the Shell. Naturally, he stared.

"Is this a little editorial joke?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Tom. "It's straight goods. We thought it might be a hoax at first; but the bike's come."

"Oh, the bike's here?"

"Yes. Like to see it?"

"I would," said the astonished Kildare.

Tom Merry led the way to the bike-shed. A crowd of juniors were already there surveying the bicycle.

Kildare had apparently had some lingering doubt; but all doubts had to vanish at the sight of the bike.

It was as handsome a machine as was to be found within the walls of the school, brand-new, and of a good make. Any fellow who received that bike would have reason to be pleased with it.

"Well, my hat!" said Kildare. "It beats me!"

"Here's Brown's letter," said Tom.

Kildare read the letter.

"He suggests that you form a com-

mittee to hand the bike to the chap entitled to it," said Kildare. "Know the chap?"

"Not yet. He'll come forward, I expect, now the notice is out," said Tom. "That's why it's put in the 'Weekly,' of course."

"Well, well, this Mr. Brown seems a decent sort," said Kildare. "Quite a nice, graceful way of acknowledging a service. I hope it will turn out to be a School House kid."

"Oh, sure to!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare walked away, evidently puzzled. But juniors did not see much to be puzzled about. The matter was straightforward enough. Mr. Brown wanted to acknowledge a great service rendered, and he had taken the simplest way of doing it—not having time to attend to it personally, as he was called up. That was all there was about it.

The staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" willingly constituted themselves into a committee to award the bike to the

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 pranks 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. Dunville. 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.

proper claimant. It was arranged for the ceremony to take place in the Hobby Club-room—an apartment which afforded space for a large gathering. The following day—Saturday—was fixed for the presentation, that giving the hero ample time to hear about the matter and come forward.

And Kerr sagely suggested there would probably be some work for the committee to do, for there were some fellows who might claim the bike without being entitled to it. That was not an agreeable thought, but undoubtedly it was the case. There are black sheep in every flock, and, naturally, St. Jim's was not free of them. Fellows like Trimble and Mellich and Chowle, for instance, were capable of such a false claim if they thought they could make it with security. It dawned upon the awarding committee that they might have to sift several claims to Mr. Brown's bike.

That certainly detracted from the honour and glory of the proceedings; but they were prepared to do the sifting thoroughly, and to visit drastic punishment upon any fellow who made a false claim.

After the notice in "Tom Merry's Weekly" had been read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, there was keen curiosity to see Mr. Brown's letter itself. So many fellows asked Tom Merry for a look at the letter, that at last Tom pinned it up outside his study door, for all St. Jim's to read if they liked. And it was read, and read again, by every fellow in the Lower School.

That day there was only one topic in the Lower School at St. Jim's—Mr. Brown's notice in the "Weekly"; and speculation as to the name of the fellow who was entitled to the bike was rife on all sides.

It was odd that nothing had been heard of the fellow so far, or the incident, especially as Mr. Brown mentioned in his letter that the gallant rescuer of the little girl had hurt his hand while performing his noble act.

It was remembered that Talbot of the Shell had his "fin" hurt, and fifty fellows at least asked Talbot if he was the man.

Talbot smilingly denied the soft impeachment.

He had hurt his hand with a cricket ball—or, rather, Grundy had hurt it for him in bowling to him. Then it was recalled that Mulvaney minor had been seen squeezing his hand ruefully that morning, but it was discovered that that was simply due to an application of Herr Schneider's pointer. Durrance of the Fourth had a bad finger, which he was called upon to explain—but he explained that he had only snapped a penknife on it.

Who was the lucky man?

All these false scents having been followed in vain, the juniors were left to wonder who the fellow was.

By evening it was certain that the lucky man knew all about the notice in "Tom Merry's Weekly." He couldn't fail to know all about it, unless he was both blind and deaf.

Why hadn't he come forward?

The committee were ready to receive his name; but he hadn't come up. And the suspicion gained ground that Mr. Brown must have been mistaken as to the school the gallant youth belonged to. It was possible that the brave act had been performed by an Abbotsford fellow or a Grammarian, and that Mr. Brown had mistaken him for a St. Jim's chap. Indeed, as nobody admitted that he was the noble youth, that seemed the only explanation. It was rather an awkward thought to the committee, for the bike was on their hands to be disposed of, and if the right fellow did not turn up they had no idea what to do with it.

"It's beastly awkward!" said Kerr, when the committee discussed that theory.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Darcy. "We shall have to go wound to the othah schools lookin' for the wight partay."

"I don't mean that! I mean that if it's not a St. Jim's chap at all, that will make it safe for some rogue to come forward and pretend he's the fellow!"

"Bai Jove! I cannot believe there is such a wogue in this school, Kerr!"

"The committee will see that a spoofer doesn't get the bike," said Jack Blake emphatically.

"I wufuse to believe that any St. Jim's chap would make a false claim," said Arthur Augustus equally emphatically.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Lowther.

The committee were discussing the matter in the Common-room after tea. Monty Lowther interrupted with that exclamation as Baggy Trimble of the Fourth entered the room.

Trimble had his arm in a sling!

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CHAPTER 7.

Trimble Tries It On!

ALL eyes were turned upon the podgy Baggy. There was an expression of patient suffering upon his fat face as he came in, as of one who was enduring pain with heroic fortitude. Clarence York Tompkins brushed against him, and Trimble gave a yelp.

"Mind my hand!"

"What's the matter with your paw, then?" asked Tompkins.

"It's hurt, of course!"

"Faith, and how did ye hurt it so much intirely?" asked Mulvaney minor.

"I—I knocked it to-day, and that started it paining again," exclaimed Trimble. "I got the injury last week!"

"Last week?" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"I thought so!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Behold the gallant hero, you fellows!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

Baggy Trimble was the cynosure of all eyes. His statement that he had hurt his hand last week was a warning of what was coming.

"How did you hurt your hand last week, Trimble, old nut?" asked Cardew of the Fourth, soft as the cooing dove.

"Well, I didn't want to talk about the matter, really," said Trimble modestly. "But as Mr. Brown has sent me a new bike, I suppose I ought to claim it."

"You!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I don't see why you should be surprised at that, Merry. I suppose most chaps here know that I am as brave as a lion."

"Ye gods!"

"Give Trimble a hearing," grinned Cardew. "Go it, Trimble! You rescued beauty in distress. I've been expectin' you to come forward."

"So have I," said Levison, "now that it's pretty clear that it wasn't a St Jim's chap at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Clive.

"Go it, Trimble!"

"Yaas, go it, Twimble, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with unusual cordiality.

Thus encouraged, Baggy Trimble went it.

"I hope you won't think I'm bragging," he said. "It's not my way to brag, as you all know—"

"Bai Jove!"

"But as the bike's mine, I've really got no choice but to explain," said Baggy calmly. "It happened last Saturday. I was lying in the grass—"

"Well, that's right," said Lowther. "You needn't tell us you were lying—we know that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was lying in the grass," roared Trimble, "near Rylcombe Lane, thinking of of the scenery and—things, when the motor-car rushed by. I jumped out into the road and seized her—"

"Her? Who?"

"The motor-car?"

"Of course not, you duffer—the little girl—Brown's daughter—"

"Was she there?"

"Of course she was there, or how could I have rescued her at the risk of serious injury to myself?" demanded Trimble.

"She was—was gathering buttercups, and didn't see the car—"

"Gathering buttercups in the road?" yelled Manners.

"I—I mean she had been gathering buttercups, and was crossing the road to—to—"

"To gather daisies?" suggested Cardew.

"I—I don't know why she was crossing

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the road, anyway—but there she was, and the car was rushing down on her. I didn't stop to think of the risk. I sprang into the road and seized her by the hair—"

"And swam ashore with her?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, I mean no—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course I didn't swim ashore, as it was on dry land," said Trimble, glaring at the humorous Cardew. "How could I? I'm telling you the facts!"

"The facts!" Oh, my hat!"

"Go it, Trimble! Get on with the facts!"

"You seized the runaway car by the bridle, and forced it back on its hind legs?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No!" yelled Trimble. "I seized the little girl in my arms—"

"It was by the hair just now!"



GET ONE OF THESE CARDS.

IT is mostly on the impulse of the moment that we fritter away our money. If we stopped to think we should remember that we are asked to save, so that our money may make things easier for the brave boys "out there."

If you carry a War Savings Card in your pocket, it will be a very useful reminder.

You won't mind going without your little pleasures when you remember for whom it is that you are saving.

If you haven't one of these War Savings Cards, get one to-day from any post-office.

Each card is divided up into thirty-one spaces. Whenever you have 6d. to spare, you just buy a stamp at the post-office and fix it on one of the spaces. As soon as all the spaces are filled up you can take the card to a post-office and exchange it for a 15s. 6d. War Savings Certificate.

In five years' time that certificate will be worth 21.

This is the best way for a patriotic boy to put money by. Won't you try it?

"I mean by the hair—and dragged her into safety in the nick of time. The motor-car swept by. Mr. Brown rushed up and wrung my hand—"

"I wonder he didn't wring your neck, if you seized his little girl by the hair!" remarked Cardew.

"And that's what hurt your hand?" asked Lowther.

"Nunno! My hand was hurt in the rescue. It was dashed by a flying hoof—"

"A whatter?"

"A hoof of a motor-car?" shrieked Wilkins.

"I—I mean one of the wheels passed over it—"

"You silly chump!" roared Tom Merry. "You wouldn't have had any hand left if it had."

"Try again, Baggy!" said Levison, amid a roar of laughter.

It was evident that Baggy Trimble's claim was not being taken seriously by

the School House juniors. Indeed, from his mixed assertions, it was pretty clear that he had thought first of making it a runaway horse, and decided on a motor-car on second thoughts.

"I—I mean it didn't pass over my hand," stammered Trimble.

"Not much difference!"

"It dashed against my hand, you see. It was my other hand that Mr. Brown wrung, in a—transport of gratitude," said Trimble. "He said I should hear from him later, and he rushed away with his daughter—for a doctor, I think. I never thought much about the matter—never thought of mentioning it, in fact—"

"Trimble does these heroic things every day, an' forgets 'em," remarked Cardew.

"But now," said Trimble, "as Mr. Brown's sent me a bike, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you fellows are cackling at! You can hand that bike over to me, Tom Merry!"

"That bike isn't a prize for the biggest liar in Sussex," answered the captain of the Shell, laughing.

"Trimble would bag it if it was!" grinned Blake.

"Look here, you're not going to do me out of that bike!" howled Trimble. "If you think you're going to keep my new bike, Tom Merry—"

"Shut up, while the committee gives its decision," said Blake. "Gentlemen, it's agreed that every false claimant gets a good bumping, isn't it?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"As a warning to Trimble, and to other rogues who may think of following in his footsteps, Trimble is going to be bumped!"

"Passed, nem. con."

"Here, I say— Leggo!" roared Trimble indignantly. "I say— Yar-oooooh!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yow-ow-woooooop!"

Amid roars of laughter Baggy Trimble crawled out of the Common-room. The first claimant to Mr. Brown's bike had been disposed of.

CHAPTER 8.

Claimants Galore!

AUBREY RACKE of the Shell was looking very thoughtful as he went up to his study. He was looking thoughtful because he had his prep to do; he was not thinking of prep. Quite other thoughts were working in the active mind of the black sheep of the School House.

Crooke and Scrope of the Shell and Mellish of the Fourth were in the study when Racke came in and closed the door after him.

"Well?" said Scrope. "What's on? You asked us to come here."

"A jolly good thing!" answered Racke, sinking his voice. "If we four stick together, it's a good thing all round."

"What's the game?" asked Mellish suspiciously.

"Brown's bike."

"Are you the giddy rescuer?" grinned Crooke.

"Yes," answered Racke calmly.

"What!" It was a yell of astonishment and disbelief from his comrades.

"You?"

"Exactly," said Racke.

"Don't be funny, old chap!"

"Draw it mild, you know!"

"Think again!"

Aubrey Racke shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Shut up and listen!" he said. "Of course, I don't know a dashed thing about old Brown and his blessed daughter. But nobody else does, either."

It's clear enough that the chap doesn't belong to St. Jim's at all—the man made a mistake about the school. He may have mistaken an Abbotsford cap for a St. Jim's cap, or somethin' of the sort."

"Likely enough."

"If it was a St. Jim's cap, he'd have come forward," said Racke. "I've been waitin' to see whether anybody would come forward. Nobody has."

"Exceptin' Trimble," grinned Crooke.

"That fat fool was lying, of course. Well, as it wasn't a St. Jim's chap at all, the course is clear," said Racke. "That bike cost sixteen pounds at least, and we can sell it for nearly as much. What's the good of lettin' it go beggin'?"

"But—"

"I rescued the blessed little girl, and you chaps saw me do it," said Racke. "Three witnesses are good enough. Well, I keep the bike, and I stand you fellows a quid each for your evidence."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Scrope indignantly. "You want all the butt-end of the bargain, and no mistake!"

"Well, it's my idea, isn't it?"

"Not good enough!" said Crooke.

"If we bag that bike, I suggest selling it, and whacking it out fair."

"Four quid each, or nearly," said Scrope. "That's worth pickin' up, especially as we've had such rotten luck with the gee-gees lately."

Racke frowned.

"Look here. Half at least ought to come to me, as it's my wheeze!" he said hotly. "You've only got to bear witness."

"You get all the glory for nothin', anyway," said Crooke. "It will give you a leg-up in the school, to be supposed to have acted decently for once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, suppose we say equal whacks all round," said Racke grudgingly. "It's worth pickin' up—especially for the kudus. May get to the Head, and lead to a public compliment on Speech Day, or somethin' of the sort. Might even get a medal or somethin'. Whacks all round, then. I can spin a good yarn, and you fellows can witness it. They can't get round that."

"They'll want to know why you never mentioned it before."

"Modesty."

"Modesty—you!"

"Oh, don't be a funny idiot! I didn't want to swank about it—that sounds all right. I'm only comin' forward, finally, because of Trimble's false claim. I feel that the truth ought to be known."

"Well, that may go down," said Scrope. "Make up a good yarn that will bear wind and weather, and we'll back you up all right, on fair terms."

"Right!" agreed Crooke.

"What about you, Mellish?" demanded Racke.

The shady member of the Fourth had been listening, but he had not spoken. Mellish shook his head.

"I'm afraid it can't be done, Racke," he replied.

"Conscientious scruples—what?" sneered Racke.

"Not exactly. Only, you see, I can't very well let you bag the bike, because it—"

"Because what, confound you?"

"Because it really belongs to me," said Mellish calmly.

"You?"

"Mean to say you were the chap?" shrieked Crooke.

"That's it!"

"Well, of all the liars—"

"I'm telling the simple truth," said Mellish, unmoved. "I rescued Brown's little girl, and I don't see why I shouldn't say so to all the school."

Racke & Co. stared at Mellish as if



Tompkins Makes a Quotation.

(See Chapter 4.)

they would bite him. The Fourth-Former's claim took their breath away.

"You—you—" stuttered the enraged Racke.

"Remember what Trimble got!" said Crooke warningly.

"Trimble was lying," answered Mellish.

"Well, you're lying, ain't you?"

"Certainly not! I happened to rescue the little girl from serious injury, at great risk to myself, and I don't see why I shouldn't claim the bike."

"You've got the nerve to keep that up to us, who know you?" shouted Racke.

"It's true."

"Liar!"

"You can think as you like, of course," said Mellish, rising to his feet. "Make your rotten claim, Racke, if you choose. I shall make mine!"

And Mellish left the study, slamming the door after him.

Racke & Co. looked at one another in angry exasperation.

"I—I say, he couldn't really have done it, could he?" said Scrope.

Racke gave a scornful laugh.

"Of course not, ass! He's too big a funk to run risks for anybody. He'll be laughed at, like Trimble."

"If he makes a claim, though, he may give away what we've just been arranging," said Crooke uneasily.

"That won't work. We shall simply say he's lying to back up his own false claim," said Racke coolly.

"The fellows know Mellish, and they'll believe that at once."

"Well, that's so."

"With a good yarn and two witnesses we shall bag the bike," said Racke confidently. "Easy enough for us. Let's arrange the details, and have it all pat."

And, instead of getting on with their preparation, Racke & Co. proceeded to arrange their precious scheme.

Meanwhile, Mellish looked in at No. 10 in the Shell, where the Terrible Three were at work. Tom Merry pointed to the door at once.

"Busy!" he said. "Cut!"

"Just a word, please!" said Mellish. "I'm claiming Brown's bike—"

"Oh, my hat! You?"

"I expected you to be down on me," said Mellish suddenly. "I'm prepared to prove it before the fellows."

"My dear chap, I'm not down on you," said Tom Merry good-temperedly. "It's rather a surprise, that's all. I suppose you know you're not the only claimant?"

"Trimble's a sneaking liar—"

"There's others!"

"Has Racke been here already?" exclaimed Mellish.

"Racke! No. Is Racke claiming it?" ejaculated Tom, in astonishment.

"I—I believe so. He's a liar!"

"Very likely. We shall see. But Chowle has been over here from the New House, and he claims it," said Tom Merry. "He says Clampe saw the thing, and is prepared to bear witness."

"Oh!" ejaculated Mellish.

More of his shady friends than he had supposed were after Mr. Brown's bike, that was evident.

"Can't attend to it now," said Tom. "Prep. you know. The committee meets in public to-morrow afternoon, in the Hobby Club-room, to decide the question, and award the bike. All claimants have to put in their claims by then."

"I'll be there," said Mellish.

"If you've got any proof, you'd better bring it."

"Lots! And I'll bring it!"

And Mellish left the study.

"My hat!" murmured Manners. "It can't have been Mellish. Everybody knows he's a funk, anyway!"

"Well, even a funk might buck up, seeing a little girl in danger!" remarked Tom. "He'll have to prove it, though!"

The Terrible Three went on with their prep. Ten minutes later the door opened, and Wally of the Third came in, with Levison minor, marching Reuben Piggott between them.

"Here he is!" announced Wally.

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"Take him away and bury him!" said Monty Lowther. "Smoky little cads are not wanted in this study."

"He's the giddy hero!" exclaimed Levison minor warmly.

"What?"

"That's it!" said D'Arcy minor. "You might have guessed it was one of the Third, though I admit that Piggott isn't the likeliest chap to do a thing like that. But he says he did."

"So you were the chap, Piggott?" asked Tom, with a very curious look at Racke's Third Form henchman.

"Why shouldn't it be me?" said Piggott doggedly.

"No reason why it shouldn't, if it was. I'll put your name down. Hobby Club-room to-morrow afternoon," said Tom. "Good-bye!"

The Third-Formers departed, and the interrupted prep was resumed. It was nearly finished when Racke of the Shell looked in.

"If I'm not interrupting you fellows—" began Racke.

"You are!" answered Manners.

"Sorry! I thought I'd better mention that I'm the chap who's entitled to Mr. Brown's bike—"

"Your name goes down!" said Tom Merry. "Hobby Club-room to-morrow afternoon! Good-night!"

"Oh, all right!" said Racke.

And he retired.

Tom Merry looked rather grim.

"That makes five claimants," he said. "Four spoofers, at least!"

"Five, I fancy!" said Monty Lowther. "They're about the unluckiest chaps in the school to have done such a thing, anyway, and the likeliest to make false claims!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Looks to me as if it wasn't a St. Jim's chap at all," he confessed. "Still, they'll have a hearing, and the spoofers will get it in the neck! This affair doesn't seem likely to bring much credit on the Lower School in the long run. It seems to be bringing the rogues into the limelight. I wonder if there'll be any more?"

But there were no more, and the Terrible Three were suffered to finish their prep in peace.

CHAPTER 9.

The Committee Sits.

CLARENCE YORK TOMPKINS was waiting for Tom Merry when the Shell came out after morning lessons the following day. Tom gave him a friendly nod.

"About that bike—" began Tompkins.

Tom stared.

"You putting in a claim, too?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Was it Tompkins who rescued beauty in distress, after all?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A number of the Shell fellows stopped, and Racke & Co. burst into a roar of laughter. Certainly Clarence York Tompkins was not very convincing as a heroic rescuer.

But Clarence York shook his head.

"I'm not the giddy hero!" he said. "I ain't laying claim to being one. I only wanted to know if the bike had been claimed."

"Oh, yes!" said Tom. "Five fellows have got their names down already. The investigation's coming off this afternoon."

"Only five?" asked Tompkins.

"My hat! Isn't that enough?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Only one can be genuine, and four must be telling crams." Tompkins grinned.

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"You can see the genuine one here, if you like!" said Aubrey Racke.

"You!" exclaimed Tompkins.

"Certainly!"

"Well, I thought it might be you!" said Tompkins unexpectedly. "In fact, I was sure your name would be down, Racke. I'd have betted on it!"

And with that Tomkins walked away, leaving Racke rather surprised. Racke had not expected that testimony from the Fourth-Former, whom he had always treated with contumely.

"Well, that's an unsolicited testimonial if you like!" remarked Manners. "Could it have been Racke, after all?"

"He says so," remarked Talbot mildly.

"Yes; but that's only evidence that it wasn't!"

The juniors chuckled as Racke scowled and stalked away. Few fellows in the Shell believed that Racke had done a courageous action. They knew him too well.

The investigation of the afternoon was keenly looked forward to; and early after dinner the committee repaired to the Hobby Club-room in the School House. It was a committee of ten—the Terrible Three, Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co. They were to see justice done; honour to the hero of the piece, and drastic punishment to false claimants.

A swarm of juniors came in to watch the proceedings. Both Houses were well represented, with Third and Fourth and Shell. The committee sat at the big table, and the audience stood or sat at a respectful distance. A space was left for the claimants. Racke was the first to appear. He swaggered in with a confident manner, with encouraging looks from Crooke and Scrope.

Tom Merry stood up.

"Gentlemen, you are all aware of the circumstances under which we meet this afternoon—"

"Hear, hear!"

"A brave action has been performed, presumably by a St. Jim's fellow. A little girl was rescued from danger—"

"Bravo!"

"Her father has sent a handsome new bike as a souvenir of the occasion to be presented to the—the—"

"Noble youth!" said Lowther.

"To the noble youth. The chap is requested to come forward and put in his claim. False claimants will be scragged!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Five names have been put down," said Tom Merry. "Of course, only one can be genuine. The five claimants will please step forward." Tom Merry read out the names—"Chowle, Mellish, Piggott, Racke, and Trimble."

The five juniors stood up to general inspection. Clarence York Tompkins indulged in a chortle.

"Silence!" rapped out Blake.

And Clarence York blushed, and was silent.

The five fellows standing before the committee scowled at one another. They were all members of the black sheep brigade, and generally on more or less pally terms. But there was division and rancour now. They were rivals for honour and glory, and for a bike worth sixteen pounds, and that made all the difference. The kind of friendship that existed among Racke & Co. was not warranted to stand much strain.

It was rather a matter of surprise to some fellows that the rest of the black sheep weren't claiming the reward of merit, too. Clampe and Scrope and Crooke were just as likely candidates as the rest. But there were reasons for that. They had their own parts to play in the affair.

Tom Merry looked rather grimly at the candidates. There were plenty of

fellows at St. Jim's likely enough to have acted in the way described by Mr. John Brown; but the fellows who had come forward were not at all likely. It was curious that the reward of heroism was being claimed by fellows generally regarded as funky.

"I don't think there's much need to examine Trimble," said the captain of the Shell. "Trimble's done with—"

"Look here, you know!" exclaimed Trimble warmly. "You just give me a chance! I'm the man, and I've told you so. Give a chap a chance! I want that bike—I—I mean, I did the trick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very well! Fair play's a jewel!" said Tom. "State your claim!"

"Last Thursday," said Trimble. "I was walking by the river, when I heard a scream for help. Looking round, I saw a little girl struggling in the waves—"

"The what?"

"I mean, the river. Plunging in, I seized her and bore her to the shore, to the arms of her sorrowing father," said Trimble.

The committee gazed at Trimble as if fascinated.

The bumping the day before had apparently convinced Baggy that the motor-car story would not hold water; and he had set his mighty brain to work to invent another yarn. It did not seem to occur to the fatuous Baggy that the second story was disproved by the first. He seemed to regard it as a great improvement, and he blinked quite confidently at the committee.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry at last.

"That chap beats the Prussians at their own game!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in wonder.

"Look here, you know it's true—"

"You told us a motor-car story yesterday!" roared Blake.

"Yes; but—but you yourselves said that wasn't true," said Trimble. "I'm telling you the facts now, the exact facts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole assembly.

"We've had enough of your exact facts!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Stand aside! Put him in his place, you chaps!"

Half a dozen members of the committee jumped up and seized Trimble. The fat Fourth-Former roared protests, but his roaring was not heeded. Jack Blake produced a cord, and Trimble was tied by the ankle to a leg of the long table at the lower end. Evidently this was to secure him till he could be dealt with, with the rest of the false claimants.

"Look here, you know—" howled Trimble.

"Shut up!"

"But I say—"

"Kick him every time he opens his mouth, somebody!"

"Yaroooh!"

"You'll be dealt with later, Trimble. Silence, please! Piggott, come forward."

Reuben Piggott of the Third Form came forward rather uneasily. Trimble's fate did not seem to encourage him. But there was a howl of encouragement from the Third. Piggy was not popular, but the Third loyally backed up their own representative. Blake called for silence, and there was a hush for Piggott's story of heroism.

CHAPTER 10.

Rival Claims!

"YOW-OW! Lemme go!"

"Kick that fat idiot!"

"Yaroop!"

Baggy Trimble was silenced

again.

"Go on, Piggott!" said Tom Merry,

kindly enough. Tom did not like the smoky little rascal of the Third, but he was there to give fair play all round.

"Go it, Piggy!" called out Wally of the Third encouragingly.

"Tell the truth, or as near as you can get, old nut!" said Reggie Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Now, Piggott!"

Piggott licked his dry lips.

"I—I haven't much to say," he began. "It—it happened like this. You know the level crossing between here and Abbotsford. I was passing it Wednesday, last week, and—saw a little girl playing on the metals. The express was coming along. I—I just cut in and pulled her away in time. That's all."

"Better than Trimble's yarn," commented Mulvaney minor.

Tom Merry regarded Piggott keenly. "What time did this happen?" he asked.

"About three. I'd gone out for a stroll after dinner."

"Don't think I disbelieve you, Piggott, but we've got to inquire. Any chap know anything about the Abbotsford trains?" asked Tom, looking round. "Was there an express at that place at that time?"

There was a roar from Grundy of the Shell.

"No, there jolly well wasn't!"

"How do you know?"

"Because I went to Abbotsford Camp on Wednesday last week, and caught the local from Wayland at a quarter to three. It was going over the level crossing at three."

Piggott jumped.

"I—I meant to say four!" he exclaimed. "I didn't notice the time exactly, but it was nearer four than three, now I come to think of it."

Then there was a howl from Wally of the Third.

"You measly little Hun, you came in before four last Wednesday! I saw you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Piggott opened his lips again, but no word came forth this time. He was hopelessly exposed, and further lying did not seem much use.

Tom Merry's brow grew stern.

"Put him with Trimble!" he said.

Piggott, with crimson face, was marched down the table, and tied to the leg of that article of furniture. Trimble had a companion in misfortune now. Two claims had been disposed of.

"Next man in!" said Figgins.

"Next liar wanted!" remarked Monty Lowther. And there was a chuckle.

Chowle of the Fourth came forward, scowling at the other waiting claimants.

"Go it!" said Tom Merry laconically.

"It didn't happen anything like Piggott said," began Chowle. "It was a simple affair enough. The little girl had fallen into Giles' pond, and I waded in and fetched her out. I didn't run much risk. Old Brown's overdone that part of it. Still, I did the trick, such as it was."

Chowle's story made a better impression. By not laying claim to heroic distinction he certainly made it sound more plausible.

"Anybody with you at the time?" asked Kerr.

"Yes; Clampe."

"Oh!"

"Bring your witness," said Tom Merry.

Clampe of the Shell came out of the ranks of the audience. There was a murmur of interest now. An eye-witness was impressive.

"You back up Chowle's story?" asked Tom.

"Certainly!" said Clampe. "I saw it

done. Not that it was anything to make a fuss about. The old gentleman was excited, and he seemed very grateful to Chowle. But there was nothing in it. That pond is too shallow to be dangerous."

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "Mr. Brown says in his letter that the chap hurt his hand. How did you hurt your hand in a pond, Chowle?"

"Only scratched it on a pin the kid had in her togs," said Chowle. "I just grabbed her, you know, to pull her out, and the pin stuck in my hand."

The committee consulted in low tones. Chowle had made an impression. Kerr turned to him again.

"Why didn't you mention the matter before this, Chowle?"

"Never cared to. It wasn't anything, really. It's just old Brown's gratitude that made him think I'd done a lot," said Chowle modestly.

Cadet Notes.

One of the most striking results of the war has been the growth and expansion of the Cadet Movement. It is estimated that since the war broke out the number of members of various forms of Cadet Corps has nearly doubled. Before the war not more than about 60,000 boys belonged to Cadet Corps altogether, and it is now stated that the present strength of the movement is about 120,000. This is very good so far as it goes, but there is still plenty of room for further expansion. Out of the million and a half lads in the country of suitable age for the Cadet Movement, at least half a million ought to be enrolled in the Corps.

Every boy between fourteen and eighteen years of age ought to belong to some recognised Cadet Corps. In such times as these it is necessary that all should prepare for the possibilities of the future. Nor need it be supposed that the membership of the movement involves nothing more than tiresome and monotonous exercise in military drill, etc. The Movement provides all kinds of other relaxation, and this side of its work will be enormously extended in the near future. All our readers should join the Cadet Force, and any desiring to do so should apply to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C. 2, who will send them full particulars of the nearest corps, etc.

It was a good answer enough.

"Well," said Tom Merry at last, "we must give the others a hearing, Chowle so stand aside for a bit, will you?"

"Certainly!" said Chowle.

He was not put with Trimble and Piggott. The fellows, in fact, were inclined to believe his story, especially as he had a witness. But the other candidates for distinction had to be heard. Chowle and Clampe sat down beside the table, to wait for the rest to be disposed of.

"Racke!" called out Tom Merry.

Aubrey Racke lounged forward.

"Go ahead, Racke!"

"Blessed if I half care to get into a wrangle with a set of liars like these chaps!" he said sulkily. "Still, as I did the trick, I don't see letting them get the credit. Chowle's yarn is a lie from beginning to end!"

"Never mind that, give us your yarn," said Blake.

"Oh, all right! Last Saturday I was out with Scrope and Crooke, when a trap passed us with a runaway horse," said Racke. "There was a little girl sitting in the trap, frightened to death almost, and I saw a man running after it. He yelled to us to stop the horse. Crooke

made a grab at it, but he missed, and I managed to get hold of the reins and stop him. It gave my hand a bad twist but I got the horse stopped. Nothing specially heroic about it. I might have got a kick, but I didn't, as it happened. The man came up, and overwhelmed me with thanks, and drove off in the trap. That's all."

"Scrope and Crooke were with you?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Come forward, you two witnesses!"

Scrope and Crooke joined Racke before the committee. They were quite prepared to give evidence. The seriousness of the proceedings were marred by a sudden cackle from Clarence York Tompkins, and Mulvaney minor took Clarence York by the collar and shook him.

"Shurrup, ye spalpeen!" he said. "Nothing to cackle at now, is there?"

"Silence!"

"You two fellows corroborate Racke's statement?" asked Tom Merry, eyeing the two witnesses.

"Oh, yes!" said Scrope carelessly.

"It's right enough."

"Certainly!" said Crooke. "It happened just as Racke says. I jolly nearly stopped the horse, but just missed. Racke happened to do it, that's all."

"When did this happen?"

"Saturday afternoon."

"And where?"

"Rylcombe Lane, about a hundred yards from the Green Man."

"What time?"

"I remember hearing three strike a few minutes afterwards."

Tom Merry looked round.

"Anybody remember being in Rylcombe Lane about three last Saturday?" he asked.

There was no reply. Whether the incident had happened or not, it was pretty clear that Racke & Co. had been on the spot at the time mentioned, and had observed that no St. Jim's fellows were near. Their story could not, at all events, be disproved.

The committee consulted again, puzzled and perplexed.

Chowle's witness had impressed them; but Racke had two witnesses! And all the witnesses were eye-witnesses! Evidently there was some hard lying going on, but upon which side it was the committee could not guess.

"Two witnesses are better than one, dear boys," Arthur Augustus remarked sagely.

"Much of a muchness, the lot of them!" grunted Blake.

"Somebody's lying!" growled Fatty Wynn.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, there's still another claimant to be heard," said Tom Merry at last.

"Racke, stand aside a bit, will you, while we hear Mellish?"

"Certainly!"

Racke & Co. sat on the table, with a confident air. Whether the bike was awarded to Racke or not, they felt safe enough. Trimble and Piggott, tied to the table-leg, eyed them savagely. Two of the claimants had been proved false, and two were doubtful. All eyes were upon the fifth as Tom Merry called on Mellish of the Fourth to come forward.

CHAPTER 11.

What Clarence York Knew.

"GO it, Mellish!" Mellish glanced disdainfully at his rivals, and they gave him wolfish looks in return. Percy Mellish seemed confident enough.

"Well, I'm the chap," he said modestly. "I may as well mention that Racke asked me to be a witness for him when he fixed it up with Crooke and

Scrope to tell lies for him. I refused, naturally."

"That's a lie!" growled Racke.

"It's the truth, and you know it. In your study last evening—"

"You weren't in my study last evening!"

"Look here—"

"Order!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Never mind Racke now, Mellish. Let's hear your yarn."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This is how it happened," said Mellish. "It was a runaway trap, just as Racke said; only I did it, not Racke. Mr. Brown seems to have left the trap outside an inn, with the little girl in it, and the horse was frightened by something, and bolted. I was in the field when I heard it coming by, and the man after it, yelling. I plunged through the hedge, and jumped in the way, throwing up my hands to stop the horse."

"Liar!" came from Racke.

"Shut up, Racke! Go on!"

"The horse rushed right down on me," continued Mellish. "I caught at the bit, but missed, but managed to grab the shaft. I held on to it, and the horse stopped. Then Mr. Brown came up. My hand was cut on something—part of the harness, I suppose—and Mr. Brown gave me a lift into the village, to go to the doctor's."

"Oh!"

This statement made something like a sensation. If Mellish had been to the school doctor's with an injured hand on the day in question that was pretty good proof.

"What doctor?" asked Kerr.

"Dr. Short, the school doctor, of course."

"You showed him your hand?"

"Yes, and he bandaged it for me."

"When did this happen?"

"Wednesday, last week."

"You're willing for us to telephone to Dr. Short, and hear what he says?"

"Certainly."

"Did anybody notice Mellish with a bandaged hand last Wednesday?" asked Tom Merry, glancing round at the impressed audience.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a start. "I did!"

"So did I," said Jack Blake. "I remember on Thursday morning Mr. Latham asked him, in class if he'd hurt his hand."

Several other fellows added their testimony to that. It was established that Mellish had hurt his hand the previous week, at least.

Racke's face was a study now.

"Did you tell anybody at the time about this, Mellish?"

"Yes—Racke," said Mellish coolly.

"Of course, that's what put it into his head to make the claim."

"It's a lie!" yelled Racke. "He never said a word about anything of the kind. I know he hurt his hand, but it was nothing to do with stopping a runaway horse. He caught it in a gate, and he told me so at the time."

Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"Not much good piling up whoppers like that, Racke!" he answered. "I told you about having stopped the trap, and you said nobody would believe I'd done a plucky thing, and that I should be set down as a liar if I told anybody else. That's why I never mentioned it."

"You—you—" spluttered Racke.

"Silence!" said Tom Merry. "Was anybody with you at the time, Mellish?"

"No; I happened to be alone. And I haven't promised to sell the bike and whack out the money among witnesses, like Racke!" said Mellish sarcastically.

"Bai Jove! Has Wacke done that?"

"Yes, he has!"

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"It's a lie!" shouted Crooke.

Tom Merry scratched his curly head perplexedly. Two out of the five claimants had been disposed of easily enough; but the other three had all made out good cases. The witnesses were not of very good character, certainly; still, a witness was a witness. Mellish had no witnesses, but the fact that he certainly had injured his hand the previous week was good evidence. Possibly, of course, the fact that he had injured his hand in a gate had put into his head the idea of making the claim. Still, he had a good case.

"John Brown's set us a pretty good job," remarked Figgins, rubbing his nose. "Two of them are lying right enough. But which?"

"Echo anewahs which!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Put it to the vote!" suggested Herries.

Tom Merry shook his head. It was a matter of fact that had to be decided, and it was no use voting on it. The bike had to be awarded to the genuine claimant.

The committee consulted anxiously, but a decision was hard to reach. Percy Mellish had quite a vaunting look while he waited. He seemed to be feeling sure of success.

Racke and Crooke and Scrope and Chowle and Clampe were scowling. As for Trimble and Piggott, they were hopeless. Their lying had been clumsier than that of the other candidates, and they were done for.

There was a buzz of voices in the crowded room. Discussion was going on among all the juniors. And all of them admitted that it was a puzzle. The bike could have been awarded to one claimant, but there were three whose claims seemed to be as good as one another.

"Blessed if I know how it can be decided!" said Tom Merry. "If any fellow here has any suggestion to make, the committee would be glad to hear it."

"I'm your man!"

That reply came from Clarence York Tompkins.

"Oh, dhry up, ye gosssoon!" said Mulvaney minor.

"Keep that idiot quiet!" said somebody.

Tompkins sniffed.

"I've got something to say," he shouted, "and I'm jolly well going to say it, too!"

And Tompkins of the Fourth marched forward determinedly.

His face was red, but his manner was resolute as he came up to the table, regarded rather impatiently by the committee. Nobody hoped to hear a suggestion of any value from the duffer of the School House.

"Tompkins, deah boy, wun away and play," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy kindly.

"I've got something to say!" answered Tompkins. "I can let in some light on this matter!"

"You can?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes, I can!" said Tompkins defiantly.

"Well, go ahead and do it, then, old scout," said the captain of the Shell good-naturedly. "Blessed if I know what to make of it! What do you know about the matter, anyway?"

"I know this much—and can prove it—that all these rotters are lying like Huns, every one of them!" said Tompkins.

"I shouldn't be surprised. But I don't see how you can know anything about it."

"Well, I do. I know all about Brown, and about what happened, and—everything," said Tompkins.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, if you know everything, you may as well tell us," said Tom. "Pile in, and cut it short, kid!"

Tompkins was the centre of attraction now. He was not quite accustomed to being the centre of attraction, and the swarm of eyes turned upon him made him red and nervous; but he was very determined.

"Don't be afwaid, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Go ahead! What can you prove?"

Tompkins raised a dramatic forefinger and pointed to Racke & Co.

"I can prove that every one of that gang is a liar and an attempted swindler!" he said. "Not one of them ever saw Mr. Brown's little girl, or saved her from injury!"

"How do you know?" exclaimed Tom Merry impatiently.

"Because there isn't such a person as Mr. John Brown—"

"What?"

"And there isn't such a person as his little girl—"

"Eh?"

"And I can prove it!"

CHAPTER 12.

Tompkins' Triumph.

CLARENCE YORK TOMPKINS certainly held the limelight now. Every eye was glued on him.

His astounding statement had taken away the breath of every fellow present, including the many claimants. Tom Merry found his voice at last.

"Are you potty?" he demanded.

"I can prove it!" said Tompkins doggedly.

"Prove that there isn't a John Brown?" demanded Lowther.

"Yes!"

"You know he sent us a letter, and a notice to be put in the 'Weekly'—"

"He didn't!"

"Then who did?" roared Blake.

"I did!"

"YOU?"

It was a howl from the whole committee. It was echoed by the crowd of juniors, in blank amazement.

"Bai Jove! The poor chap's wandewin' in his mind!" said D'Arcy.

"Mad as a hatter!" said Blake.

"I think everybody knows what an idiot Tompkins is!" said Racke. "What are you wasting time on him for?"

"Bedad, come away and be quiet, Tompkins darling!" called out Mulvaney minor.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"We'll go into this. You say you sent us that letter, and the notice for the 'Weekly,' Tompkins?"

"Yes, I did!"

"How, and why?"

Tompkins pointed to Racke & Co. again.

"Those cads ragged my study—they're always ragging and chipping me," he said. "I told you, Tom Merry, that I was going to show them up in their true colours!"

Tom started.

"My hat! I remember you talked some piffle," he said.

"I thought it out," continued Clarence York Tompkins, amid a breathless silence now. "I meant to show them up before all the fellows for the liars and cheats and swindlers they are. I knew that if there was something valuable to be had, and it seemed safe to claim it, they would be on. I worked it all out. I made up Brown's letter in my study, and took it down to Rylcombe to get it typed. I couldn't risk writing the lot of it, in case my fist should come out. I practised a jolly long time writing 'John Brown' to get it unlike my fiancé."

"Oh, begorra!" murmured Mulvaney minor.

"When the letter was ready, I biked away to a distance to post it to you,

Tom Merry," went on Tompkins. "Mulvaney knows my uncle had sent me the money for a new bike. I bought my bike, and had it sent here to you. That was the bait," explained Tompkins. "My bike had to be delivered here, anyway, and I made use of it to draw these rotters on and make them give themselves away."

The committee gazed at Tompkins in wonder.

Was this the duffer of the Fourth—the butt of the School House—this deep and almost Machiavellian plotter!

The St. Jim's fellows were learning something about Clarence York Tompkins!

"I knew you'd put that notice in the 'Weekly,' as soon as the bike came along, and proved that it was a genuine bizney," said Tompkins, grinning a little. "I knew that when these cads saw the notice they'd wait a bit to see if the right chap came forward, and then, if it seemed safe, they'd scheme to annex that bike. You see, I knew them!"

"Bai Jove!"

Racke & Co. were looking sickly now. Chowle made a movement towards the door, but Cardew headed him off. There was to be no escape yet for the claimants.

"Go on, Tompkins," said Tom Merry quietly.

"It worked out just as I expected," said Tompkins coolly. "Nobody made a claim for the bike, so it was supposed that John Brown was mistaken about the chap being a St. Jim's chap. Then all these rotters saw their chance to bag a bike worth sixteen pounds. I knew they would!"

"My hat!"

"How they'd work it I didn't know," said Tompkins. "I rather thought Racke would get the whole gang to bear false witness for him, or something of the kind. I knew they'd be after the prize, anyway, either as rivals for it, or by arranging to whack out the plunder. Every sneaking cad in the place was sure to show himself up in his true colours when it looked as if sixteen quid was to be had by telling a few lies!"

"Old Machiavelli come to life again!" said Monty Lowther in wonder. "Can this really be Tompkins? Are we dreaming?"

"Bai Jove, it weally seems like it!"

Tompkins grinned.

"If you want proof, I'll give it you," he said. "I've got the bill from the man

who typed the letter for me. I've got the receipt from the bicycle shop, with the number of the bike specially put in. That bike's my new bike, and I'm not giving it away to anybody. Thank you for minding it for me for a day or two, Tom Merry."

"Oh, begorra!" gasped Mulvaney minor.

Tom Merry's expression was very peculiar. He glanced at the receipts Clarence York displayed, but it was not necessary. It was clear enough to whom the handsome new bike belonged.

"There never was a little girl in danger at all," added Tompkins. "There never was a Mr. Brown. These chaps have all stood up and sworn that they rescued Mr. Brown's little girl—who never existed. They've always been chipping me for being a duffer. I think I've got my own back now! Liars and rogues the lot of them!" said Clarence York, with withering scorn.

"Does it occur to you that you've spoofed us, as well as them, and got us to put a spoof notice in the 'Weekly'?" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Serve you jolly well right, too!" retorted Tompkins.

"What?"

"If you think a chap's a silly duffer, you can't be surprised if he pulls your leg, and proves that he isn't," said Clarence York. "You asked for it, and you got it, and serve you right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The committee looked at the ineffable Tompkins as if they would eat him. The whole proceedings were unutterably ridiculous, seen in the sober light of the facts. Tom Merry & Co. had been utterly spoofed, coolly used by the amazing Tompkins to pay off his old score against Racke & Co. The staff of the "Weekly" had been hopelessly hoaxed, and Racke & Co. had been shown up, in the full light of day, as the rogues and rascals they were. Truly it was a triumph for Clarence York Tompkins!

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus at last. "That cheeky young wotah ought to be wagged! He has been foolin' the whole of the Lowah School!"

"Serve 'em right," said Tompkins indifferently.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, he's pulled our leg," he said. "Perhaps it does serve us right, too. Tompkins isn't quite the duffer he's been thought. He ought to be lynched, but I

think we'll let him off. But as for these dingy cads—"

Tom Merry's eyes blazed at the unhappy claimants and their precious eye-witnesses.

Racke & Co. looked quite sick.

Only Trimble and Piggott grinned. They were glad to see the other claimants in the same boat as themselves.

"Have you anything to say, Racke?" demanded Tom Merry.

Racke was making for the door; but Grundy stopped him quickly enough. The others did not attempt to escape. They knew it was futile.

"I—I say, it—it was really a—a—a joke—" mumbled Mellish.

"Shut up, you worm! Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "there are five awful liars here, and three other awful liars who have borne false witness for them. I call upon all present to make them understand what we think of them!"

Tom Merry did not need to call twice. Like a wave the indignant juniors swamped the black sheep of St. Jim's: and the ragging that followed was a record.

When Racke & Co. escaped from the Hobby Club-room at last, they were feeling that life was not worth living.

And worse, perhaps, than the ragging itself, was the utter scorn and contempt of the whole Lower School. For a long time after that crushing exposure, Racke & Co. hardly dared to show their faces in public.

Clarence York Tompkins was an object of great interest to his schoolfellows for some time afterwards.

It was admitted on all hands that Clarence York was not the duffer he looked.

He had smitten Racke & Co. in a way they were not likely to recover from in a hurry; and even Mulvaney minor admitted that he had more than vindicated the honour of Study No. 4. It was very probable that Racke & Co. would let that study alone in the future. They were not likely to forget the Triumph of Tompkins!

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's — "THE SCHOOLBOY HUN!" by Martin Clifford.)

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highcliffe means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. Goggs of Frankingham comes to Highcliffe. Flip and Hazel go to London, and after many exciting adventures make for Wayland. They tramp for some time, and eventually lose their way. Suddenly Hazel disappears from view, and Flip, moving forward, pulls himself up in the nick of time on the edge of a steep downfall.

News of the Fugitives.

"O H, how d'ye do, Miss Derwent?" said the fatuous Bunter, as Flap and Walter Leith shook hands. Then he sniggered at the tall Australian stooped and kissed the girl.

"You're growing wonderfully like Helen, kiddie," he said simply. "And I really don't think you're too old to be kissed."

"He, he, he! I should say not!" burbled Bunter. "Don't you know they ain't really worth—"

A strong hand gripped what should have been the back muscle of Bunter's right arm in a strong grip that was quite painful. There was more fat than muscle there, by very long odds; but it evidently hurt.

"Yoop! Lemme alone, you sheep-faced cad!" squealed Bunter. "I ain't—I mean, I won't—I—I mean, I want to speak to Marjorie!"

"I do not quite understand where you come in in this, Bunter," said Goggs quietly. "But I should suggest that, whatever your particular mission may have been, it may now be considered as accomplished."

"Oh, really! I hardly know you, and certainly not going to put up with being talked to by you like that!" replied Bunter defiantly. "I met the officer wandering about looking for Cliff House, and I inquired politely whether I could be of any service to him. I don't suppose he'd have found Flap—"

"Miss Derwent," Goggs corrected him,

"Well, really! I suppose I can call her Flap. Mayn't I, Marjorie?"

"I don't think she would be pleased, Bunter," Marjorie answered.

She did not like hurting anyone's feelings; but she had learnt that the feelings of the obtuse Bunter were not really hurt very easily, and he certainly needed a decided snub at times.

"I think you are quite wrong, Marjorie!" said Bunter loftily. "Or you're jealous—I don't know which— Yow! Ow-yow! Wharrer you doing, Goggs, you beast?"

The grip tightened again.

"That's quite enough—rather more than enough, indeed," said Goggs quietly.

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"Oh, really! I'm sure I don't want to argue—I hate argument!" Bunter said. "But I brought this chap along, and I consider he ought to tip me."

"How much do you expect?" asked Goggs, with a sudden directness that rather took Bunter aback.

"Oh, well, it might be almost anything, y'know!"

"Or, on the other hand, it might be nothing."

"That's not at all likely, unless the chap's an abominable skinflint!" replied Bunter indignantly.

"Will half-a-crown relieve us of your presence?" asked Goggs.

"No, it jolly well wouldn't! And I'm jolly well not going to be talked to in that way by you, Goggs!" snapped Bunter. "But"—he lowered his voice—"five bob might."

"Here you are!" said Goggs; and he put two half-crowns into the fat hand that was extended for them. "But you clear out, mind!"

"Oh, really! The captain may want to speak to me again."

"I think not. He exhibits no symptoms of insanity that I can see," replied Goggs.

While this was going on Captain Leith and the young sister of the girl he loved had been talking a little apart. Now Flap called to Marjorie.

"Walter's seen them!" she cried. "And they were all right, though they had had nearly all their money stolen."

"Hazel hadn't any money," said Marjorie sadly.

"Well, Flip's would be his, too, as long as he had any, of course. You ought to know that. They were going with Walter to his hotel, but—"

Flap faltered. It was not an easy story to tell Marjorie, as she saw suddenly.

"Sheer off, Bunter!" hissed Goggs.

"Oh, really! I don't see why I should. The fellows at Greyfriars might be interested to hear—"

"Sheer off, or I'll make you!"

For once Goggs spoke like an ordinary school-boy. Bunter felt just a trifle alarmed by his tone. But still he tried to hang on.

"I'm not going," he said. "Surely you don't think you can bribe me with a few measly bob, Goggs?"

"You will either go or hand back that money!"

"I sha'n't! You can't make me do either—so there!"

Bunter did not trouble about keeping his voice low; but Goggs retained a quiet and even tone that rather deceived the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove.

The two girls and the captain had no attention to spare for Bunter, however. The Australian officer was telling again the story of how Hazel had bolted and Flip had followed him. Marjorie stood with downcast head and damp lashes. The story did not reflect credit on her brother, though Walter Leith let her off as lightly as possible in telling it; and Marjorie felt ashamed of him.

"Can I not?" asked Goggs. "I think you are mistaken here, Bunter."

"Just you try it on, then!"

"You are presuming on the presence of ladies, I fear."

"Yah! Ladies! Mere school-kids, I call them! Yarroogh!"

Bunter suddenly found himself getting hurt. Goggs was not at all violent. He suddenly took hold of Bunter. To anyone but an acute observer it might seem that he was stroking him. But it did not feel at all that way to Bunter.

Captain Leith glanced round.

"Don't worry, Walter!" said Flap cheerily. "It's only Bunter; and if Johnny Goggs is hurting him I'm quite sure that Bunter deserves it. Aren't you, Marjorie?"

"I'm afraid he does, dear. Bunter really is a nuisance."

"He didn't impress me very favourably," said Walter Leith.

"Yarroogh! Help! Stoppit! Rescue!" howled Bunter. "Flap—Marjorie! Make the best stop!"

That appeal earned him another twist; and the two girls kept their backs turned, while Captain Leith grinned in a most unsympathetic manner.

"Yowp! I'm going! Stoppit, you cad!"

"I thought you would," said Goggs grimly. "But you seemed to be of a different opinion. Go, or—"

"Yah!" snarled Bunter. But he went.

He disappeared round the bend of the road, and they supposed him gone. But that was

not Bunter's way. There might still be things to be told that would interest him to hear. So he dodged back to the other side of the hedge, and hid himself behind an evergreen.

Bunter got little change out of this manoeuvre, however. All that he heard was mere casual conversation.

"I thought the only thing I could do was to run down to Highcliffe and let the authorities there know what had chanced," said Captain Leith. "I don't see how it can help them much; but they should know of it. And then I thought I would see you first. I shouldn't have gone away without seeing you in any case, of course."

"You'd have caught it jolly hot if you had!" said Flap. Then her tone changed as she added "I don't believe they care a rap at Highcliffe what happens to poor old Flip! The Head and all those people, I mean. Of course, some of the boys do."

"Including our rather simple-looking young friend here," said the captain good-humouredly.

"He isn't simple-looking!" burst out Flip. Her energy surprised both the Australian and Marjorie, though Marjorie knew already that her chum liked Johnny Goggs better than any of the juniors of the two schools. She added, in a lowered voice: "At least, if he looks simple, he isn't! And he's just the truest, cleverest, nicest boy I know!"

Goggs did not hear this quite unsolicited testimonial. With his usual courtly politeness he had concluded that, not being called to the conclave, he was not wanted; and he had followed Bunter round the bend, though without any thought of Bunter.

"I'll take your word for it, my dear," said Captain Leith. "You are a pretty good judge, I know."

"Ah, you think that just because I like you—which proves nothing at all," replied Flap saucily.

"Flip isn't far wrong, though, Captain Leith," Marjorie said. "He really is ever so nice and clever, despite his queerness."

"I don't see that he is really queer!" said Flap, with a toss of her head.

"He certainly is not so simple as he looks," said the Australian, with a smile. "I miss my guess if he hasn't bowled the fat specimen out in something not to be approved of."

"Yowp!" came from Bunter again.

Goggs had caught him eavesdropping. "Lemme alone, can't you? I'm not doing any harm! Really, Goggs, or whatever your silly name is, you are the most interfering—Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Captain Leith. And the silvery laughter of the two girls chimed in with his deep laugh.

Next moment Tunstall, with Phyllis and Clara, appeared; and at the same time Bunter appeared, running his hardest, with Johnny Goggs in pursuit. Bunter's fat legs went like machinery, but Goggs' running was only make-believe.

Bunter, howling, disappeared in the direction of Greyfriars. Those left behind drew together in a small crowd, and there were introductions. Captain Leith had expressed a special desire to know Goggs.

"By the way, how's Cocky?" asked the Australian officer. "I should have been quite ashamed of myself later on if I had forgotten to ask about him."

"Oh, you're coming to see him?" answered Flap. "Of course you are! We shouldn't let you off that. And to see Miss Primrose, too. She's queerer than Cocky is in some ways, but a real dear for all that. Come along, you two!"

Tunstall and Goggs went readily enough. Neither was shy, and neither dreaded the mistress of Cliff House in the least.

The Haunting of Vavasour.

THE peace of slumber was on the Fourth Form dormitory at Highcliffe. The just and unjust—the decent fellows and the Ponsby brigade—alike slept.

All but two—Johnny Goggs and Frederick Guest Tunstall.

Now, in the darkness, Tunstall slipped out of bed, and made his way towards that in which reposed Adolphus Theodore Vavasour. He lifted the clothes, caught Vav's arm, and gave it a hard pinch.

Vav awoke on the instant.

"Whassermarrer?" he mumbled.

Then a voice spoke, and it seemed to be the voice of Flip Derwent.

"Vavasour!" it said sternly.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Vavasour.

He recognised the voice, and his nerves were in anything but first-class condition. No one could have been much more ready to believe in a supernatural visitor than Vav was at that moment. As far as it was in his nature to be, he was repentant for his share in the unfair play Flip had had at the hands of the nuts; but far deeper than his repentance was his fear of consequences.

"Vavasour, my spirit is about to appear to you!" said a voice.

"Oh, don't let it! Don't, Derwent, there's a decent chap!"

"There are no decent chaps in the place which I now inhabit," the voice replied. "Disembodied spirits must not be spoken of in such terms."

Tunstall thought that speech sounded more like Goggs than Flip. But Vav did not seem to smell a rat.

"I'll call you anythin' you like, absolutely," groaned Vav, "if you'll only go away."

"I shall not appear unless it is necessary. I would not have your death at my door, though mine be at yours!"

Tunstall, who had got back into bed, noticed the form into which the last sentence was put. There was no assertion of fact. Merely a conditional clause. But Vavasour failed to note that.

"I—Oh, you can't say that absolutely!"

he groaned.

Tunstall grinned. Goggs, speaking in Flip's voice, had refrained from saying it absolutely.

"You were act and part in the treachery," said the voice.

Again Tunstall grinned in the darkness. Flip would never have talked about anyone being act and part, hardly even of treachery.

"But—but it was Gaddy really, not me. Please go away. Oh, do!"

"I must stay until my mission is accomplished. But unless you render it needful by your obstinacy—Flap—that is to say, the spirit—"

"But you aren't really dead, Derwent—really?" moaned Vavasour.

"How could my spirit appear to you if I weren't?"

"I don't want it to appear at all. I—I'd much sooner you kept it away."

"But that is impossible, and I have a duty to fulfil."

"Never mind about that," said Vavasour generously.

A half-suppressed chuckle came from the Caterpillar's bed. That was very like Vav.

"You say that the treachery was Gaddy's?" went on Goggs.

"I should think that you'd know all about that if you were dead," said Vav sulkily.

He was beginning to be slightly less afraid of the voice. But he still dreaded an apparition.

"Your theories of what is known and unknown in the spirit plane are of no account," the voice said sternly.

At this moment the door creaked. Both Tunstall and Goggs heard. Another sound followed. Tunstall recognised Mr. Mobbs' characteristic manner of clearing his throat, but he did not know whether Goggs also had heard and recognised.

It was not at all out of Mr. Mobbs' way of spying thus. Tunstall hoped that he would receive some enlightenment from Goggs' dealings with Vav.

"Well, I never pretended to know anything about such things," said Vav, in rather an injured tone.

"Henceforth you will know," the voice replied.

"Oh, yaas, absolutely."

But Vavasour did not speak as though the new knowledge afforded him any special pleasure or comfort.

"Do you feel remorse?" asked the voice.

"Oh, yaas—that is, I don't quite see why I should, y'know, particularly. I didn't kill you, did I? Seems to me I'm innocent, absolutely."

"So does it not seem to me," said the voice sepulchraly.

"Oh, dear! Dash it all, y'know—"

"But for your base treachery—"

"It wasn't me, I tell you! It was Gaddy, all through. Or, if it wasn't Gaddy, it was Pon. Anyway, I was out of it, absolutely."

Gadsby and Ponsby still slept on. But a subdued chuckle from the Caterpillar's bed showed that Rupert de Courcy was awake, and seemed also to indicate that he had tumbled more or less to what was afoot.

Mr. Mobbs, standing by the half-open door, listened eagerly. The snobbish little Fourth Form master was always ready to gloss over the wrongdoings of his aristocratic pets, among whom Ponsonby, Vavasour, and Gadsby stood foremost. But he did not always desire to be kept in ignorance of them. It suited his book to know.

The great ambition of Mr. Mobbs was to be a welcome visitor in the halls of the aristocracy. To achieve that ambition he was ready to lie and fawn and toady—even to practise something very like petty blackmail. A knowledge of Ponsonby's shady secrets gave him a better chance of being invited to Ponsonby's home. Gadsby was less important in that way than Pon; but Gadsby's were quite "good people." And the story seemed to implicate Pon.

Therefore, Mr. Albert Hicks Mobbs listened with all his ears. He had only the usual number, of course, but they were big enough to make two pairs of ordinary ears.

Tunstall slipped out of bed again, and bent over Goggs.

"Mobbs's at the door, listenin' like one o'clock!" he whispered.

"I do not see any reason why he should not hear," replied Goggs, also in a whisper.

Then he spoke aloud, in the voice of Flip Derwent.

"Explain yourself!" said the voice curtly.

"I should think you'd know all about it now you're dead, absolutely!" Vav replied sulkily.

"What you think—or imagine that you think—is of no consequence. Tell the whole story, and, on your peril, keep back nothing!"

Vav saw nothing for it but to obey. He was still in a dire funk, believing that it was Flip's ghost who spoke. Mr. Mobbs could hardly have believed that; he must have been considerably puzzled. The Caterpillar certainly did not believe it; but he was not puzzled in the least, knowing Goggs as he did.

"It was Pon's notion gettin' you to that place—the gamblin' show, y'know," said Vavasour.

"And why?" demanded the voice.

"Oh, dashed if I know! I suppose he wanted you in the same boat with us. Pon's like that, absolutely."

"And Gadsby did not want me to go?"

"Oh, yaas, he did, you bet! But Gaddy's fly; he doesn't say all he means."

"You did not want it, of course?"

"Well, it wasn't my bizney, y'know," replied Vavasour, in rather injured tones.

Vav was getting quite used now to talking to a ghost—or to the voice of a ghost. He still felt some dread lest the voice should turn visible, so to speak. There was a good deal of thorough-going funk about Adolphus Theodore Vavasour. As long as the ghost did not show itself, however, he could not only go on conversing with it, but could argue.

"Answer a plain question! Did you want to entrap me?"

"I didn't care much, one way or the other. That's the truth, absolutely."

"Were you a party to the conspiracy with Chicker?" the voice demanded sternly.

"Eh? You seem to know all about that. I wasn't, then."

"You knew nothing of it?"

"Well, I did know that Gaddy was makin' up to the cad for somethin', or other. Gaddy doesn't chum up with chaps of that kind unless he wants to get somethin' out of 'em, y'know."

"And you guessed what it was?"

"Not likely! How should I?"

"You knew later, however?"

"Yaas. Gaddy told us a bit about it—not much."

"And you helped to spread a lying story that I had given Ponsonby a foul blow during the row which took place in the gambling-den?"

"I didn't, then! That's all rot. There wasn't any such yarn told here—dashed if there was!"

"It was told to someone, if not here. The story was that I was in bad odour with everyone at Highcliffe on that account."

"I can't help that, can I?" replied Vav weakly. "I didn't tell the yarn. It wasn't my fault that Gaddy pitched a tale to the post-girl, when he tumbled to it that she knew the beastly hole you'd got yourself into."

"And who was it that took from the post-girl a letter belonging to me, and kept it back?"

Vavasour writhed in his bed, perspiring profusely, in spite of the chill of the night.

"Oh, by gad, this is too thick!" he groaned.

"It's too thick, absolutely. What d'ye want to jump on me for like this? Why don't you go for Gaddy?"

"What's that about me?" snapped Gadsby.

He had just awoke, and had caught his own name.

"Now it's all up!" muttered Tunstall to himself. "Gaddy's no hero, but you don't catch Gaddy believin' in a ghostly voice as easily as Vav."

Very much to the same tenor ran the Caterpillar's thoughts.

But here Johnny Goggs made his master-stroke.

Taking Chances.

I T had a touch of genius in it, and it had also a touch of recklessness.

Goggs had not started out with any intention of giving away the nuts to the Head of Highcliffe. He had not, of course, counted upon Mr. Mobbs' presence at the door, which complicated his task upon the chicken-hearted Vavasour.

But now he felt utterly disgusted both with Pon & Co. and with Mr. Mobbs. Why should he spare the nuts? Why should the toadying little master be allowed to conceal their shady secrets to serve his own ends?

There was Flip Derwent to be thought of—and Flip's sister. Perhaps it was chiefly of Flap that Goggs thought. But he cared about Flip, too. Even if you don't care very much about a fellow before you start in to help him, you generally end up by doing so, if he is worth caring for. And, on the testimony, spoken or unspoken, of more than one fellow at Highcliffe, Flip was quite one of the best.

Also, Goggs cared very much for fair play, for justice. And Flip had not had fair play. He had been most basely betrayed.

So Goggs spoke—in the voice of Dr. Voysey, Head of Highcliffe!

"The voice seemed to come out of the darkness, behind Mr. Mobbs. The Fourth Form master started violently as he heard it."

"What does all this mean? I cannot understand the purport of this curious conversation!" the voice said sternly.

"By gad, there's the Head!"

It was Ponsonby who spoke. He had just awakened, and in his surprise he spoke rather loudly.

"I—I fear that I have no key to the meaning of it, sir!" stammered Mr. Mobbs, peering into the darkness. He could see nothing of the Head, but he did not doubt that the voice he had heard was that of Dr. Voysey. There really seemed no room for doubt about that.

"Nonsense, Mr. Mobbs! I do not know how long you have been listening here; but the statement that you do not understand does discredit to either your intelligence or your veracity. I trust that you are not trying to shield—"

"Not at all, sir! Not in the least, I assure you!" murmured Mr. Mobbs, shaking in his shoes. "I would not dream—"

"This is no time for dreaming, or talking of it. Some most extraordinary story is suggested here, and I mean to be told it. Vavasour, Gadsby, and Ponsonby, you will dress at once, and Mr. Mobbs will bring you to my study when you are dressed!"

Those who heard could almost have sworn that they heard the rustle of the Head's gown as he departed. As he did not depart at all, not being there, this must have been imagination—or Goggs again. But probably it was imagination, for the rustle of a gown is not an easy sound to imitate by the human voice.

Everyone was strung up and excited—except the Caterpillar. Even Goggs was scarcely his customary cool self. But Rupert de Courcy had a way of taking things as they came and refusing to be moved by them.

Vavasour groaned heavily as he got out of bed. He felt like a condemned man going to execution. But there was still some hope of a reprieve for him.

He would tell all that he knew! Of the three he was the least guilty—he felt that. Perhaps the Head would be content with sacking Ponsonby and Gadsby, and would spare him!

Ponsonby said something very lurid, and coupled with it the name of Mr. Mobbs. Pon was even more in the dark than Gadsby as to what had been happening, and he had a vague notion that "Mobbs's" dashed eaves-droppin' was somehow at the bottom of the trouble.

Gadsby, as he crawled unwillingly from between the sheets, only growled something inaudible. The brain of Reginald Havers Gadsby was in a whirl. In some dim fashion

he realised that the hour of reckoning had really come; and he felt that the mystery of its coming made it even harder to meet than it would otherwise have been. He was in the dark, mentally and physically.

But now the physical darkness was relieved. Mr. Mobbs switched on a light. He stood, blinking uneasily, greatly confused, half inclined to excuse himself to his highly-connected pets, yet retaining sufficient sense of what was due to his dignity as a master to realise that any explanation would be out of place. After all, he had a right to visit the dormitory of his Form if he chose.

He seldom did so. But Dr. Voysey was hardly ever seen in the dormitories at all; and his appearance—if appearance it could be called—at this critical juncture seemed little short of an unfortunate minor miracle.

No one there but Goggs—not even the astute Caterpillar—had any idea that the miracle was a manufactured one. The light caused several more fellows to awaken. Frank Courtenay sat up in bed, wondering. Smithson growled something, and stuck his shock head between the sheets in an effort to persuade himself that he had not really awakened. But the shock head showed again when Yates asked:

"Is it a giddy air-raid?"

"Not precisely," replied the Caterpillar.

"In point of fact, not at all, as far as I am aware. Best to be careful on such important questions, by gad! Therefore I will only say that I fancy—I do not state it as a fact—that the Head has summoned Pon, Gaddy, an' Vav to his presence with the intention of donatin' their leavin' good-conduct prizes to them instanter."

"This ill-timed levity, De Courcy—" began Mr. Mobbs.

"Not at all, I assure you, sir. In fact—"

"But Pon and the other two ain't leavin', are they?" asked Smithson, in amazement.

"Better inquire of them," replied the Caterpillar blandly. "For my part, by gad, I should think it probable that they are!"

"It ought to be a cert, by Jupiter!" growled Tunstall.

"What's it all about, Rupert?" asked Frank Courtenay.

"Too long an' involved for an immediate explanation, Franky, dear boy! Goggs alone would be capable of doin' justice to the story with brevity an' perspicuity. With my ramblin' an' discursive methods it might last out the night, an' still be a tale but half told. For, to be candid, I'm dashed if I understand it all!"

The Caterpillar spoke as if completely unaware of the presence of Mr. Mobbs. That gentleman glowered at him unamiably, but made no verbal protest against his cool disregard of what was due to a master. Rupert de Courcy did not hold that much was due to Mr. Mobbs.

"The Head! Was the Head here, Goggs?" asked Benson, whose bed was next to that of the Frankingham junior.

"I did not see him," replied Goggs, quite truthfully.

"He was here right enough," Tunstall said.

"Vav looks rather as if he had seen a ghost, by gad!" remarked the Caterpillar cruelly.

And, indeed, Vavasour was in a most horrible state of funk. He fairly twittered with fear, and kept glancing around him as he dressed.

Vav's nerves, such as they were, had gone all to pieces. But Goggs felt no pity for him, and certainly no inclination to spare him anything that might be in store.

"Or heard one?" put in Tunstall, with a chuckle.

"Pray be quick, you three!" said Mr. Mobbs impatiently. "As for the rest of you, be good enough to keep silence. I have no wish to listen to your puerile comments on a very mysterious affair. As to which I wash my hands entirely, I may say."

"I should, sir," said the Caterpillar blandly. "It can't do them any harm, by gad! An' there's bound to be some washin' of another sort. I should imagine. Takin' your dirty linen along, dear boys?"

"Be silent, De Courcy, and cease making foolish remarks!" snapped Mr. Mobbs.

"I'll dry up, sir, certainly. I may still be foolish—bein' built that way, no doubt—but if it doesn't work out at my mouth it won't annoy you. An' I dare say you've quite enough to think about!"

Again Mr. Mobbs glowered. But now the three were dressed, and he led them out of the dormitory.

Pon went with an anxious face, but with his chin up. As long as there was the fraction of a chance of brazening matters out. Pon would freeze on to that chance.

Gaddy's expression was one of gloom and rage beyond words. He felt as though the bottom had fallen out of his world. After all the care he had taken, the game was up! How it had come about he could not even guess; but he felt sure that Goggs had something to do with it, and he darted a glance of inexpressible animosity at the new boy as he went.

Vavasour brought up the rear, so nervous that his knees trembled. But the switching out of the light cast a kindly veil over his exhibition of funk.

As he passed through the door Monson minor spoke for the first time.

"Dashed glad I'm not in this!" he said heartily. "It looks like bein' a regular, right-down beastly row!"

"I share your noble sentiments, Mon," remarked Drury.

Pelham and Blades and the other satellites of Pon left behind said nothing. But it was easy guessing that they also shared Monson's sentiments.

Most of the Fourth were awake now. Questioning was rife; but those who could do any answering seemed loth to oblige. The Caterpillar, indeed, transferred himself for twenty minutes or so to Frank Courtenay's bed, where, huddled together, with the clothes pulled round them and dressing-gowns over their shoulders, they sat up and whispered.

But Goggs was as mute as an oyster; and Tunstall was only a little less uncommunicative than Goggs.

The Fourth waited for the return of the three.

One by one the three were long time in returning. One by one the Fourth dropped off to sleep. With the possible exception of Monson minor, not one of them had any really keen anxiety about the fate of the trio. It was mere curiosity they felt.

The Caterpillar returned to his bed, but he did not sleep yet, nor did Courtenay. Neither, however, heard the whispered colloquy between Goggs and Tunstall a little later.

"They don't come back," said Tunstall.

"I am quite resigned to their absence, even if it should prove permanent," replied Goggs.

"By Jupiter, they're bein' dashed well put through it by the old bird, I should fancy!"

"If he's there," said Goggs.

"Eh? No 'if' about that, surely! Didn't we hear him tell Mobby to take them along to his study?"

"I cannot aver that I heard the Head say that, Tunstall."

"Dash it all! Are you deaf?"

"Some people imagine so," answered Goggs meekly.

"But that's all rot! And you did hear—you must have heard!"

"Not the Head, Tunstall."

"Who, then?"

"Let me confess. I did it with my little voice!"

"Great Scott! What a co-loss-al nerve you have!"

"You do not consider it unfair?"

"No; I'm hanged if I do! Though what's goin' to come of it—"

"If they find the Head in his study, I am inclined to think that, between the nervousness of the respected Mobbs and the fears of the dear Vavasour, much may come of it. In fact, I expect the whole story to come out."

Tunstall considered that for a moment before replying. Then he said:

"Shouldn't wonder, by Jupiter! It will serve them jolly well right if it does; an' it will go a dashed long way to clearin' Flippy."

"So I thought. I am glad that you approve of my course of action."

"You're a giddy knock-out, Goggs! How in the world did you think of it?"

"I acted on the spur of the moment, as a matter of fact. A design to frighten the dear Mobbs was the first thought in my brain. The rest followed."

"An' now those three rotters are gettin' it in the dashed neck!" said Tunstall, with deep satisfaction.

"I fervently hope so," replied Goggs. "I am sorry to give trouble to Dr. Voysey who, I believe, does not like being troubled with matters relating to discipline or conduct. But I think that this is an affair in which he should take at least some slight interest."

"I don't suppose the old bird will thank you," Tunstall said.

"I trust that he will never have the opportunity. Let this remain a mystery. It is best so."

"Quite well, Goggs. I shall stay awake to see how the three sweet creatures look when they return."

"I shall not, Tunstall. I am going to sleep now."

But Tunstall did not see the trio return. They did not come back to the Fourth dormitory that night at all.

St. Jims to the Rescue.

"BUT I must go, old man!" said Flip earnestly. "Can't you see that? If I don't, it may be ever so long before any help comes. And how can you lie here for hours in that state, without grub or drink?"

"I don't care about that!" Hazel answered, his face and tones alike desperate. "I'll take

my chance of that, anyway. But if you go I know it will kill me! I can't move, and I can't stay here alone!"

Flip would have said that that was utter rot; but he saw that to reply to Hazel in that way would be of no use. Hazel had got past all that. In his selfishness and his fear he thought of no one but himself, and even for himself did not think reasonably.

It was a nasty situation for Flip. At best it would have been unpleasant. But that morning Flip was less fitted to bear than at any time since their pilgrimage had begun.

He had suffered all through the frosty night on that narrow ledge, and even now that the sun had risen, its rays gave no warmth. While Hazel had lain wrapped up in Flip's overcoat Flip had paced up and down the few yards of platform in the darkness, unable to move fast enough to warm himself because of the darkness and his ignorance of what gulf might yawn beneath him. He had beaten his arms upon his chest, he had gone through gymnastic exercises; but all to little avail.

Now he felt almost light-headed, and moments of shivering chill alternated with moments of feverish heat. He was faint from want of food, too; but he had no real feeling of hunger. That had passed.

Ill as he felt, he pulled himself together—for his comrade's sake and for the sake of that promise to Marjorie.

"I think I ought to go, Hazel," he said.

"Right-ho! Go, if you feel like that. It would be best for you, of course!" Hazel replied, in his sulkiest tones.

"I'm not thinking of myself, old fellow."

"Time you did, then! You've done a heap too much thinking for me!"

But even that speech was ungracious and sulky, though Hazel may not have intended it.

"It seems the best chance for both of us," urged Flip.

"It's not the best chance for me—it isn't a chance for me at all! I know jolly well how it will be if you go! But don't let that stop you!"

Flip set his teeth hard to stop them chattering.

"I'll stay," he said.

He sat down by Hazel, almost too faint to stand longer.

Still wrapped in Flip's overcoat, the Greyfriars junior fell into an uneasy doze. He muttered in his sleep. Flip could not follow his ramblings, but he heard his own name, and Marjorie's and Wharton's, and Vernon-Smith's, and Ponsonby's. Hazel's restless brain seemed to be busy, even in sleep, with the trouble which had driven him from Greyfriars.

(To be continued.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY HUN!"

By Martin Clifford.

This story was announced for this week; but, owing to an accident at the last moment, I had to substitute "The Triumph of Tompkins." You have lost nothing, as you are getting a ripping good yarn in this number, and will have the story which should have appeared now in the next.

LIST OF TOM MERRY STORIES
IN THE "GEM"—(continued).

- 356.—"Finding His Level."
- 357.—"Tom Merry & Co.'s Ally."
- 358.—"The Four Conspirators."
- 359.—"An Affair of State."

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- 395.—"Your Editor at St. Jim's."
- 396.—"The St. Jim's Volunteers."
- 397.—"The Honour of a Jew."
- 398.—"Mason's Last Match."
- 399.—"A Soldier of the King."
- 400.—"When Duty Calls."
- 401.—"Grundy's Great Game."
- 402.—"Well Played, Julian!"
- 403.—"The Call of the Cinema."
- 404.—"Gussy and the Girl."
- 405.—"Skinnole's Windfall."
- 406.—"The Last Hope."
- 407.—"A Stolen Holiday."
- 408.—"The Great Sports Tournament."
- 409.—"Redfern's Barring-Out."
- 410.—"Talbot's Rescue."
- 411.—"True Blue."
- 412.—"D'Arcy's Daring."
- 413.—"Grundy the Hypnotist."
- 414.—"The Bounder of St. Jim's."
- 415.—"Barred by the Study."
- 416.—"In the King's Khaki."
- 417.—"Trouble for Trimble!"
- 418.—"The Grammar School Mascot."
- 419.—"The Study Wreckers."
- 420.—"The Sportsmen of St. Jim's."

Yours Editor