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TOM MERRY & CO.'S TRIUMPH!

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



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

TOM MERRY & CO.'S TRIUMPH!

By
Martin
Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Fallen Among Foes.

"**B**AI JOVE, it's those Gwammah wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus sat up. The ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's was reclining in a leafy glade in Rylcombe Wood that sunny afternoon.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. were engaged upon a scout run; but Arthur Augustus had deserted the scouts for once.

The swell of St. Jim's was not slacking, however.

He had his Latin grammar with him, and was digging deeply and dismally into deponent verbs as he lay in the long grass under the trees.

His Form-master, Mr. Lathom, had become quite excited on that subject in class that morning. What Arthur Augustus did not know about deponent verbs would have filled whole volumes. Arthur Augustus had listened to Mr. Lathom's eloquence for a good five minutes with pink cheeks, while the rest of the Fourth Form sat smiling. And the unfortunate Gussy had taken his Latin grammar out with him that afternoon with the heroic determination of mastering, once for all, those worrying verbs which were passive in form but active in meaning. He meant to surprise Mr. Lathom next time the subject came up in class.

But he seemed fated never to get really to the bottom of the entrancing subject of deponent verbs. For he had not been engaged upon his grammar for ten minutes when there were footsteps and voices close at hand, and he recognised the familiar tones of Gordon Gay, of Rylcombe Grammar School.

"Ripping place here, you fellows! Not likely to be interrupted!" Gordon Gay was remarking as he came along under the trees.

Then Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up in some dismay.

Keen as he was to get on terms of closer acquaintance with deponent verbs, he was not wholly sorry for his studies to be interrupted, for he found the task more dry and uninteresting than ever that afternoon. But he did not want to meet the Grammarians in force.

It was only too probable that if Gordon Gay & Co. came upon him in the wood; they would improve the shining hour by ragging him. The Saints and the Grammarians seldom met without a rag.

Arthur Augustus glanced round him quickly.

The Grammarians were coming from the direction of the road, and the trees, as yet, hid them from sight. But they were evidently making for the glade where Gussy's elegant form reclined.

The swell of St. Jim's thought for a moment or two, and then he rose quietly to his feet and slipped into the nearest thicket.

As a scout he had learned to take cover promptly, and prudence counselled him to keep out of view of the merry Grammarians.

A minute after he had disappeared from

sight Gordon Gay & Co. came tramping into the glade.

There were six of them, and Gordon Gay and Frank Monk were carrying large bags.

Arthur Augustus, peering through the foliage, noted it, and wondered what the bags were for.

Gay and Monk set them down in the grass.

"Topping place!" said Frank Monk. "We shan't be interrupted here by a lot of silly fags."

"Just the place for a rehearsal!" agreed Wootton major.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The silly asses have come here for a rehearsal in the open air! Bothah them!"

He did not venture to move. Wootton major was standing within three yards of him opening one of the bags, which evidently contained theatrical "props."

The Grammarians were not likely to depart for some time to come, and Arthur Augustus could not move without betraying himself. He settled down to wait, rather interested in the Grammarians' proceedings. Gordon Gay was very keen on amateur theatricals and had great skill in that line. Gussy was rather curious to see the Grammarian players in a dress rehearsal; and such it was evidently going to be. Some kind of uniforms were being unpacked from the bags, as well as an assortment of beards, whiskers, and moustaches. Among the other articles that came to light, Arthur Augustus was surprised to observe feminine apparel. This was taken possession of by Gordon Gay.

"Now, get on with the bizney!" said Gay. "This is the last rehearsal but one, and I want to see how you shape. You ought to know your parts pretty well by this time."

"Oh, mine's all right!" said Wootton minor. "I don't know about you as a girl, though. With your face."

"Fathead! When I'm made up you wouldn't be able to tell me from your own sister," said Gordon Gay.

"I don't think! We ought to get a girl for the part," said Wootton minor, shaking his head. "With your face, as I said."

"Let my face alone, ass!" "I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole, old scout! But the title-role isn't really in your line, Gay. If we're playing 'The Beautiful Spy,' the spy ought to be beautiful."

"Yes; that's rather a drawback," agreed Carboy.

"I shall be beautiful enough when I'm made up, you duffers!" grunted Gordon Gay. "That's all right!"

"Blessed if I see how you'll manage it!" persisted Wootton minor. "Paint and powder go a long way, I know. But then, there's your features."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do dry up and get on with the washing!" growled Gordon Gay. "You get yourself up as Fritz von Shorter—you're born for that part, anyway! No need for much make up to make you look like a Hun!"

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Your features will come in handy for that part, anyhow!"

"Look here—"

"Order!" said Wootton major. "This isn't a slanging match! Let's see how Gay turns out as Fraulein Klara, anyhow! After all, we could alter the title, and call the play 'The Ugly Spy,' so that Gay would be all right in the title-role."

Gordon Gay snorted.

"That's a good idea," chimed in Lane. "After all, German frauleins ain't beautiful!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Gay. "Dry up, and get to bizney!"

The Australian junior stepped towards a tree to fix up a mirror on the trunk. It was the tree beneath which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been reclining during his painful struggle with the deponent verbs.

"My hat!" exclaimed Gay suddenly.

"Here's your hat," said Wootton major. "A bit crumpled—"

"Ass! Look here!"

Gay had not been alluding to the hat he was to wear as Fraulein Klara, the beautiful spy. His ejaculation had been caused by the sight of a Latin grammar lying in the grass.

He picked it up in surprise.

"That's a St. Jim's book," he said.

"Hallo, there's a name in it—A. A. D'Arcy! The one and only has been here."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in dismay.

He had taken cover with a skill worthy of a scout; but, unfortunately, the grammar had been left behind.

The Grammarians dropped their "props" at once, and looked round sharply.

"St. Jim's cads!" growled Lane. "See if there's any of the rotters hanging about!"

Gay was scanning the grass under the tree, and with hardly a pause he followed Arthur Augustus' track into the thicket.

The swell of St. Jim's backed away, with a loud rustling of foliage.

"Here he is!" shouted Gay.

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus jumped out of the thicket and ran, and at the same moment Gordon Gay jumped after him and caught him by the neck.

"Bai Jove! Leggro!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Collar him!"

"Ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus whirled round on Gay and hurled him off. But the other Grammarians were round him now. He was collared on all sides, and marched back into the glade. And the rehearsal of "The Beautiful Spy" was postponed while the swell of St. Jim's was dealt with.

CHAPTER 2.

On the War-path.

"**W**ELPASE me, you wuff duff-fahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

The Grammarians chuckled.

The six of them were round the swell

of St. Jim's, and there was no escape for him. Arthur Augustus' look was apprehensive. True, he had no rough handling to expect from the merry juniors of the Grammar School, but he had no doubt that Gordon Gay & Co. intended to be humorous at his expense.

In fact, Gay was already taking out his grease-paints and a burnt cork, and Gussy could guess what they were intended for. Gussy was to get some of the make-up as well as the amateur actors of the Grammar School.

"If you put that howlid stuff neah me, Gay, I shall give you a fearful thwash-in!" said Arthur Augustus in concentrated tones.

"Thrash the other chaps first, will you?" asked Gay, without looking round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus breathed wrath.

It was really a little difficult to see how the thrashing was to be bestowed, as he was held by three or four of the Grammarians.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" asked Wootton major. "This is your Latin grammar, I suppose?"

"Yass."

"Mugging up Latin on a half-holiday?" demanded Wootton severely.

"I was lookin' out deponent verbs, deah boy."

"My hat! What a taste! Chaps who look out deponent verbs on a half-holiday are setting a bad example, and have to be bumped. That isn't the way to win the war," said Wootton major sternly.

"Bump him!"

"Bai Jove! If you— Yawooh!"

Arthur Augustus was swept into the air.

He came down towards the ground with a terrific rush, and he gave a little yelp in anticipation of the sickening thud to follow.

Within a few inches of the grass, however, he slowed down and was sat down very gently.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "You uttah wottah!"

"Ha ha ha!" roared Wootton major. "Did you think you were going to be squashed. Give him another for yelping when he's not hurt!"

"You uttah aases you are wumplin' my clothes!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "Welaase me at once! I do not approve of this wotten practical jokin'. I wegard it as bad form."

"Hold him!" said Gordon Gay. "I'm ready!"

"Keep off, you uttah wottah!" yelled Arthur Augustus as the burnt cork approached his aristocratic visage.

But the playful Grammarian did not keep off.

Arthur Augustus wriggled painfully as his face was blackened and he gradually assumed the complexion of a Hottentot.

The Grammarians howled at the change in his appearance.

Having blacked in most of Gussy's unfortunate face, Gay added crimson circles round his eyes and a white spot to the tip of his nose.

Then he held up the mirror for Gussy to look at himself.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped the swell of St. Jim's as he gazed at the awful visage in the glass. "You howlid beast! Ow!"

"Don't let him crack the glass with his face!" chuckled Lane.

Satisfied, Gussy

"Oh you fearful boundah!"

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever!" grinned Gay. "Behold, he is black, but comely! I think that will do. You can run home now, Gussy. If your face frightens anybody, that won't be a new experience for you, will it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was released.



Baggy Bunks!
(See Chapter 3.)

Instead of departing, however, the watchful swell of St. Jim's made a rush at Gordon Gay, and got his head in clancery.

"You fearful wottah! You howlid, practical jokin' beast!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Take that—and that—and that!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Gordon Gay. "Dragginoff! Oh, my hat!"

The sudden attack had taken Gay by surprise. The other fellows seized Arthur Augustus and yanked him off, yelling with laughter.

Gordon Gay clapped his hand to his nose.

"Oh, dear! Ow! Ow! Jump on him!"

Arthur Augustus fled into the thickets without waiting to be jumped on.

"Boko hurt, old chap!" asked Wootton major, as Gay dabbed it with his handkerchief.

"Ow! Yes, ass! What are you cackling at? Nothing funny in a chap's nose being squashed, is there?" growled Gay.

"Ha, ha! Yes, a little," chuckled Wootton major.

"Oh, rats!"

Gordon Gay dabbed his nose, while his comrades chortled, apparently seeing a humour in the matter that was lost on their leader.

"Oh, chuck cackling, and let's get on with the rehearsal!" said Gay. "We've wasted time over that dummy."

And the amateur actors of the Grammar School set to work, Gordon Gay transforming himself into Fraulein Klara, the Beautiful Spy—more or less beautiful—the two Woottons into a pair of decidedly unbeautiful Hans, Monk into a German baron, and Lane and Carboy into British Tommies. The six were the leading characters in the great play which was to create a record in the annals of the Grammar School Dramatic Society. That it was a great play there could be no doubt whatever, for they had written

it themselves, and, as Carboy remarked very truly, there was nothing like it to be found in Shakespeare.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wended his diemal way through the wood, his feelings towards the playful Grammarians quite humish.

He certainly could not return to St. Jim's with his face in that state, and he was heading for the stream in the wood, at some distance, to get a wash—the best he could do under the circumstances.

He came into a footpath, and followed it, fervently hoping that he would meet nobody.

There was a sudden exclamation as he came along the path, and Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, jumped up from the grass, where he had been resting after a surreptitious feed.

Trimble's fat face was quite pale as he blinked at the black-faced stranger, and his little round eyes bulged out.

"G-g-good heavens!" stammered Trimble.

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "It's all wight, Twimble. Oh, cwumbs!"

"Keep off!" yelled Trimble, as D'Arcy was approaching him. "Yah! Ow! Keep off! Oh, dear!"

The fat junior spun round and took to his heels.

"Twimble, you ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus in great exasperation.

But Baggy Trimble did not even look round.

What the terrible apparition might be he did not know, but he was terrified almost out of his fat wits, and he ran for his life.

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus in dismay. "Oh, cwumbs! I am afraid I must be lookin' watah awful! I will thwash those Gvammah wottahs all wound! I weally hope I shall meet nobody else."

He hurried on his way, anxious to get to the water.

As he came through the thickets to the little stream in the heart of the wood there was a yell—

"Look out!"

"What's that?"

Three juniors, in scout garb had stopped at the stream to drink; and Arthur Augustus came on them suddenly.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther fairly jumped as they saw him.

They saw his face first, and the sight of a black face with red circles round the eyes was startling enough.

Manners grasped his staff, and Arthur Augustus yelled:

"Hold on, you ass! Mannahs, you chump!"

"Oh!" gasped Manners, recognising the voice, "Gussy!"

"Gussy?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What have you got yourself up like that for?" yelled Monty Lowther.

"You uttah ass, I have not got myself up! Do you think I am likely to black my face and go wound like this on purpose?" howled the swell of the Fourth.

"It was those Gwammah wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatever to laugh at, you asses. This is not funny. However, I am glad I have met you. Aftah I have washed my face you can come back with me and mop up those fearful wottahs."

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Well, you are a giddy beauty!" said Tom Merry. "You shouldn't let the Grammarians handle you like that, Gussy. It's up against St. Jim's!"

"There were six of the wottahs!"

"Why didn't you give them a fearful thrashing?" inquired Monty Lowther innocently.

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus knelt by the stream and laved his face. Washing off the black cork, however, was a difficult process.

The Terrible Three watched him, grinning. Gussy's face was looking very mottled when he left off to rest.

"Do I look vusy howwid, deah boys?" he asked.

"Not more than usual, but in a different way."

"Oh, wats!"

"Where are the Grammar boudners?" asked Tom Merry. "There's a lot of our fellows in the wood, and we may as well give those boudners a lesson, if they're still on the spot."

"Yaas, wathah! They're, wehearsin' a wotten play. Gay is makin' himself up as a girl," said Arthur Augustus.

"They call it 'The Beautiful Spy,' or some such rubbish. Call the fellows, and I will guide you there, and we will give them some of their own gwase-paints, the boudnahs!"

"Good!"

Tom Merry gave the curlew-call, and in a few minutes the scouts of the School House were gathering by the stream.

Blake and Herries and Digby were the first to arrive and they grinned at Gussy's mottled complexion. The swell of St. Jim's resumed his washing operations.

Talbot of the Shell arrived with Kangaroo and Gore, then came Julian and Kerruish and Reilly and Hammond, and then Levison, Clive, and Cardew.

Several other fellows came along, and all wanted to know what was wanted.

As soon as Tom Merry explained Jack Blake jerked Arthur Augustus away from the stream.

"That'll do!" he said. "Come on!"

"I have not finished cleanin' my face, Blake."

"That's all right! Lead on, Macduff!" answered Blake.

"Wats! I am still wathah black."

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"You've got to guide us, fathead!" said Tom Merry. "Get a move on!"

"I am sorry, deah boy, but it is utterly imposs for me to do anythin' of the sort until my face is clean."

"Get a move on!" roared Herries.

"I wufuse to get a move on, Hewwies!"

"Help him with your staff, Blake."

"Certainly!"

"Yawwooh! If you pwood me again, Blake—"

"Yawwooh! You faithful ass, keep that staff away fwom my wibs!"

"All together!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Go it!" chuckled Manners.

Six or seven staves prodded the swell of St. Jim's together, and he roared.

"Stoppit, you sillay asses! On second thoughts, I wiff guide you now, and wash aftahwards. Oh, crumbs! Stoppit!"

And this time Arthur Augustus led on; and the School House scouts followed him on the war-path.

CHAPTER 3.

Nice for the Grammarians.

"M Y only hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

Keeping under cover, the leader of the St. Jim's scouts looked into the glade where the Grammarian players were at rehearsal.

Tom Merry, like a good general, had taken all his precautions: and the crowd of St. Jim's scouts had separated, and were surrounding the little glade, ready to close in on the enemy when the signal was given.

Gordon Gay & Co. were too busy to have eyes or ears for them, even if they had not been so cautious.

The rehearsal of "The Beautiful Spy" was going strong.

Tom Merry gazed on at the scene, quite impressed by what he saw.

Gordon Gay, in the guise of the Fraulein, was quite unrecognisable. He was made up with great skill, and his face was tinted quite nicely, and his wig of golden hair gave him a very girlish appearance.

If Tom had not known who he was, he would certainly have taken him for a young boy of Teutonic nationality.

The others were barely recognisable, and might almost have been taken for real Tommies and Huns, had they been on a larger scale.

"There they are, the wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus, who was close behind the captain of the Shell. "I wathah think we shall take them by surprise."

"I rather think so," agreed Tom Merry.

There was a curlew-cry from across the glen, telling that the surrounding of the enemy was complete.

The Grammarians heard it, and evidently scented danger, for the rehearsal stopped all of a sudden, and the amateur actors started round them suspiciously.

But it was too late.

Tom Merry gave the signal whistle, and on all sides the St. Jim's scouts rushed out of the trees.

Twenty juniors of St. Jim's were round the group of Grammarians, and escape was cut off on all sides.

"Surrender!" called out Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Our turn now, you know."

Gordon Gay & Co. drew together, as if to offer resistance. But the odds were too great. Gay accepted the inevitable.

"Your game!" he said tersely.

"Halle, Gussy! Where did you get that face?"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Collar them!" ordered Tom Merry.

The Grammarians were collared—a

couple of scouts seizing them by the arms.

"Go easy!" said Gay coolly. "Don't damage the props! That isn't in the game."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We won't damage the props. Gather up the clobber, you fellows!"

The Grammarians exchanged dismayed glances as the clothes they had discarded were gathered up by the grinning scouts.

"I say, you're not going to take our clobber away?" said Carboy.

"You bet!"

"Look here! How are we to get home?"

"Walk."

"We can't go back to the school in this rig!" roared Lane.

"No? Then you'll have to spend the rest of your natural life in this wood!" answered Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha!"

"Look here, this is playing it too low down!" exclaimed Frank Monk.

"Worse than blackin' a fellow's shikvay?" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Ahem!"

"You sent Gussy home as a blackamoor," said Tom Merry. "We're going to send you home as Huns and things. One good turn deserves another!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"We'll send your clothes home by parcels post," said Tom. "I dare say you'll get them to-morrow."

The scouts yelled.

"I regard this as tit for tat, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, in great enjoyment. "Mind you don't fall in with a policeman, Gay. It's against the law to go about dressed up as a gal, you know!"

"I—I can't go out of the wood like this!" gasped Gordon Gay. "Look here, you sillay ass, I can't do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll up that clobber!" said Tom, unheeding. "Make it into bundles. You can use those bags. Now march those boudners out into the road."

"Look here—"

"I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You rotters!"

In spite of their frangic expostulations, the unhappy Grammarians were marched through the wood and out into Rykcombe Lane.

There they stood in a dismayed group.

They were a peculiar party to be on view in broad daylight—two Hun soldiers, a wicked German baron, a Fraulein, and two diminutive Tommies.

Behind the footlights they were all very well; but in Rykcombe Lane they seemed extremely out of place.

The prospect of walking home to the Grammar School in that guise was simply unenvying.

"Here, here, we're not going home like this!" roared Wootton major.

"Please yourself, old scout," said Tom Merry blandly. "Ta-ta! This way, you fellows; it's time we got home to tea."

Taking the bags with them, crammed with the Grammarians' clothes, the St. Jim's scouts marched off.

Already two or three people were gathering to stare at the unhappy Grammarians, and grinning.

It was manifestly impossible to remain where they were, and still more impossible to discard their remarkable get-ups, as they had nothing to replace it with.

The best they could do was to remove the beards and moustaches, and cram them in their pockets.

Then they started for home, with feelings too deep for words.

The adorning of Arthur Augustus' face with burnt cork had seemed a great joke to the Grammarians; but their sense of humour did not rise to the present occasion.

"For goodness' sake, let's get out of this!" groaned Frank Monk. "Get a move on! We shall have a crowd round soon."

"Oh, dear!"
"Oh, the rotters!"
"Oh, crickey!"

The unhappy Grammarians hurried on their way, taking the most unfrequented cuts to the Grammar School.

But they had to pass people in the lanes, and everyone they passed stopped and stared at them, and grinned or yelled. Their faces were burning under the make-up by the time they reached the gates of the Grammar School.

A dozen urchins were following them by this time, calling out remarks to them in great enjoyment.

It required a great effort to enter the school gates and run the gauntlet of a hundred pairs of eyes.

But there was no help for it.

"Come on!" said Gordon Gay desperately.

He marched in, and the rest followed. There was a shout as they were sighted, and Grammarians came speeding up from all sides.

There were howls of laughter as Gordon Gay & Co. were recognised.

"You silly asses!" exclaimed Garber of the Fourth. "You'll get into a row. What have you got yourselves up like that for? There's the Head at his window."

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Gordon Gay. "What have you done it for?" yelled Tadpole.

"We haven't, you ass!" snapped Frank Monk. "We were rehearsing in the wood, and the St. Jim's beasts have taken our clobber."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you idiot?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tadpole.

Making their way through a shrieking mob, the Grammarian players hurried on, and as they reached the House they were met in the doorway by an awe-inspiring figure in cap and gown. It was Dr. Monk.

The Head of the Grammar School did not recognise them for a moment. His countenance displayed astonishment and wrath.

"What—what?" he exclaimed. "Who are you? Why have you come here? Leave this place at once!"

"Oh!"

"You cannot give a circus performance here," exclaimed Dr. Monk severely, apparently taking the unhappy juniors for a band of strolling players.

"Oh, dear! I—I say, pater—" stammered Frank Monk.

The Head jumped as he recognised his hopeful son.

"Frank! What—what—what does this mean?"

"We—we—were—" mumbled Monk.

The Head's brow was thunderous.

"Is it possible that you—you have been out of doors in this ridiculous attire?" he thundered.

"We couldn't help it," groaned Frank. "Somebody took our clothes while we were rehearsing in the wood, sir."

"Oh!" ejaculated the Head.

"Rehearsing our play, sir," mumbled Carboy. "Our—our clothes were pinched, sir, and—and we had to come home."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the dense crowd gathered round the steps.

"Silence!" exclaimed Dr. Monk, though his own lips were twitching. "I—I see. If—if it is not your own fault,

go indoors at once, and take off those absurd things. As for this young lady,

"What—a-at?"

"I fail to see why this young lady has come here with you," said the Head, eyeing Gordon Gay severely. "Is she a relation of one of you?"

"Oh, my hat! She—I—I mean he—she's Gordon Gay, sir."

"What—a-at?"

"Only me, sir," said Gordon Gay meekly. "I'm Fraulien Klara in the play, sir."

"Bless my soul! It—it is Gay!" exclaimed the Head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Go indoors at once, and if this occurs again I—I shall punish you very severely!" exclaimed the Head.

And Dr. Monk beat a retreat, and did not laugh till he was in his study. There was a roar of merriment in the quadrangle as Gordon Gay & Co. disappeared indoors. The unfortunate actors did not feel like laughing, however. In the dormitory they changed in a great hurry, murmuring vows of vengeance upon St. Jim's and all who dwell therein.

"You silly ass, Gay!" growled Frank Monk. "If you ever propose an open-air rehearsal again, we'll scalp you!"

"How could I know—" began Gay. "Oh, rats!"

"We shall get chipped to death over this!" groaned Carboy.

There was no doubt about that. When the unfortunate six came down from the dormitory they had to run the gauntlet of chipping without end, and all that evening the Lower School was in a ripple of merriment. Gordon Gay & Co. were glad when bed-time came, and they had a rest at last.

CHAPTER 4.

Lowther's Luck.

"O H, what luck!"

Gordon Gay uttered that exclamation.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Gay and the two Woottons, major and minor, were sitting on the stile in Rycombe Lane, talking in rather a morose mood.

The affair of the amateur actors had not been forgotten, and Gordon Gay was growing rather "fed-up" with the japing he had been receiving in the Grammar School on the subject.

The three juniors were discussing ways and means of wiping out their defeat and regaining their lost prestige, when Monty Lowther of St. Jim's came strolling along from the village.

Lowther was alone, and he did not observe the three Grammarians sitting on the stile.

Gay and his comrades exchanged glances.

"What luck!" repeated Gay. "There's one of the worms, and we'll make an example of him. Hallo, Lowther!"

The Shell fellow of St. Jim's stopped. "Hallo!" he replied.

"Fancy meeting you!" grinned Gay. "Only fancy!" said Lowther, eyeing the three Grammarians warily. "Did you get your clobber safe, dear boy?"

"Yes, you ass?" grunted Wootton major.

"Oh, good! Doing any more theatricals lately?" asked Lowther blandly. "Any more open-air performances?"

He was approaching the Grammarians on the stile as he spoke.

He was quite aware that he was not to be allowed to pass without a ragging, and his intention was to take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

As he came closer he made a sudden rush, and the trio, who had not been

expecting an attack, were taken quite by surprise.

Monty Lowther gathered up an armful of astonished legs, and in a moment the three Grammarians were rolling off the stile on the inner side.

They bumped down in the field with a series of fiendish yells.

Lowther did not stay to look at them; he took to his heels, and scudded up the lane to St. Jim's, leaving them to sort themselves out at their leisure.

Gordon Gay scrambled to his feet. "Oh, my hat! Why, the cheeky rotter—"

"Gerroff my neck!" shrieked Wootton major. "You ass, what are you treading on me for?"

"Oh, bother your neck! After him!" yelled Gay.

He bundled over the stile and rushed in pursuit of the St. Jim's junior, and his comrades scrambled up and dashed after him.

Monty Lowther had gained a good start, and he was as good a sprinter as any of the Grammarians. He glanced back, and kissed his hand to them.

"Put it on!" gasped Gay. "Why, we'll scalp him! We'll—we'll—Put it on!"

The three Grammarians ran hard; but Monty Lowther kept his distance. Suddenly on the road ahead of him a cyclist came in sight.

It was Lacy, of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School. He was pedalling at a leisurely pace as he came round the corner ahead.

Gay yelled to him at once.

"Stop him, Lacy!"

Monty Lowther paused.

Algernon Lacy jumped off his bike at once, and jammed it against a tree, and stood in the lane to stop the fugitive.

Lowther glanced back; Gordon Gay & Co. were coming on at top speed. His pause was only for a moment, and then he rushed on, to tackle Lacy before the other three could arrive.

"Stop!" rapped out Lacy, as he came up.

Lowther did not answer. He rushed straight at the Grammarian, and they closed.

"Hold him!" panted Gay.

Lacy was holding him, but he had caught a Tartar. Monty Lowther swept him off his feet, and bumped him down in the road.

Lowther lay as he rolled in the dust.

Wrenching himself loose, Monty Lowther ran for the bike.

The trio behind were close now, and the bike was his only chance. He grabbed it, and rushed into the road, and put his leg over just as Lacy scrambled up.

"Let my bike alone!" shrieked Lacy. He sprang at Lowther, and grasped him.

Monty Lowther released one foot, and Lacy reaped it on his waistcoat, and sat down in the road again with a gasp, as the cyclist started.

The pedals whizzed round, and the bike shot away just as Gordon Gay came breathlessly up.

Gay's hand missed Lowther by about a foot.

But a foot was as good as a mile. The cyclist shot away, and Gay did not have another chance.

Lacy sat up in the dust.

"Stop him! He's got my bike! Ow!"

"How can I stop him?" howled Gay. "What did you let him take the bike for, why did you let him take the bike for?"

"Ow, ow!"

Monty Lowther looked back, grinning now.

"Ta-ta, dear boys!" he shouted. "You can call for the bike. Thanks for the loan, Lacy!"

Algernon Lacy shook his fist after him. "Bring my bike back!" he shouted.

"Bow-wow!"

"You rotter!"

"Same to you, dear boy, and many of them!"

And Monty Lowther pedalled away cheerfully to St. Jim's on Lacy's bike.

Algernon Lacy clenched his hands. "The rotter!" he exclaimed between his teeth. "I'll make him sit up for that. Look at my clothes!"

"Both your clothes," growled Gordon Gay, "and not so much of your rotten temper, Lacy. Play the game!"

"Oh, hang your silly rows!" snarled Lacy. "You know I never take part in them. I don't like it."

He turned in the direction Lowther had taken. Gordon Gay caught him by the arm and stopped him.

"Where are you going, Lacy?" he said quietly.

"I'm going to St. Jim's," said Lacy suddenly. "I'm going to complain about my bike being taken!"

"I thought so," said Gay grimly. "You're a worm, dear boy, and I suppose you'll never learn to play the game. Still, we'll try to teach you! You're coming back to the Grammar School!"

"I'm going to St. Jim's!"

"Take his other ear, Jack!"

"You bet!"

"Let go!" yelled Lacy furiously, as his ears were laid hold of. "I tell you I'm going to complain—"

"Well, we're giving you something to complain about!" said Gay. "For instance, you can complain about your ears being pulled—like that—"

"Oooh!"

"And like that!" grinned Wootton major.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Now, are you coming?"

Algernon Lacy decided that he would especially as Wootton minor was behind him, helping him with his boot.

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther pedalled on cheerfully to St. Jim's. Tom Merry and Manners were in the gateway, and they looked surprised when their chum arrived on a bicycle.

"Hallo! Where did you get that jigger?" inquired Tom.

"Lacy lent it to me," explained Lowther, as he dismounted.

"Lacy of the Grammar School?"

"Yes!"

"My hat! I didn't know you were friendly with that worm!" said Manners. "I'm not, dear boy! He lent it me because he could not help it!" answered Lowther. "I'll leave it with Taggles, to be called for!"

The bike was left at the porter's lodge, and the Terrible Three went in together. Tom Merry looked rather thoughtful as Lowther detailed what had happened in the lane.

"That fellow Lacy is a bit of a worm," he said. "He doesn't play the game like the rest. I shouldn't wonder if he raises a howl over this!"

"Let him!" said Lowther carelessly. "I'm blessed if I know how those chaps stand Lacy. We'll scalp him if he was a St. Jim's chap!"

"Hallo! What's that about Lacy?"

Cardew of the Fourth was lounging on the steps of the School House, and he heard Lowther's remark.

"That cheery old schoolfellow of yours ought to be scalped," said Lowther. "That's all! I've had a row with Gay and his gang, and I got away on Lacy's bike, and Tommy thinks he may kick up a howl about it."

Cardew nodded.

"Very likely!" he said. "I remember what he was like at Wodehouse, when we were there together; always howling if he was hurt. I shouldn't wonder if he makes a complaint to the Head. You'll be called over the coals!"

"I'll jolly well punch his nose if I am!" growled Lowther. "I'm fed up with that fellow!"

"There's still time for some cricket before tea," remarked Tom Merry.

"Coming along, Cardew?"

Cardew shook his head.

"Levison and Clive are leadin' the strenuous life and they're doing enough for three," he answered. "I represent the intellect in No. 9, you know! At present, I'm doing some thinkin'!"

"What with?" asked Lowther, with an air of surprise.

"Fifteen!" said Cardew.

"Who-ee-ee?"

"Fifteen!"

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Lowther, wondering whether the dandy of the Fourth was wandering in his mind.

"I mean it's the fifteenth time!"

"What's the fifteenth time?"

"The fifteenth time I've heard you make that little joke," answered Cardew calmly.

"Oh!"

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. Lowther was a great humorist; but it was not to be denied that some of his little jokes did service over and over again.

"I'm thinkin' out a little joke on the Grammar cads," went on Cardew. "I shall have to use a telephone. Which one would you advise me to use—the Head's or Raitton's?"

"Neither, you see!" said Tom Merry. "Better go down to the post-office!"

"Too much fog!"

"Well, try the 'phone in the prefects' room!"

"Kildare and Darrel are there jawin'."

"Then chuck it!"

"But it's really a good wheeze," said Cardew. "My last little joke on the Grammarians was rather turned against me. This time—"

"This time you'll make a muck of it, same as before," said Monty Lowther. "Leave that kind of thing to our study, Cardew. It's above your weight!"

"Bow-wow!" answered Cardew.

And the Terrible Three went down to cricket, leaving Cardew still thinking it out whether he should borrow the Head's telephone or Mr. Raitton's.

CHAPTER 5.

Cardew is Humorous.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW detached himself from the stone balustrade at last, and went lazily into the School House. His chums,

Levison and Clive, were at cricket, and his cousin, Durrance, was with them, and Cardew felt the time hanging rather heavily on his hands. He had not energy enough to join the cricketers, and so he had been turning his thoughts to the Grammarians. He had played a little joke some time ago on Gordon Gay and his friends, but the result of it had not been entirely satisfactory to Cardew, and he had determined to try again—

when he found energy enough. Apparently the slacker of the Fourth had found the required energy now. He sauntered down the corridor, and came on Racke and Crooke and Mellish in discussion in a window recess.

"Three to one against!" Racke was saying in a low voice.

Cardew grinned. The black sheep of

St. Jim's were discussing a race, such matters being very interesting to them.

"Hallo, Cardew!" called out Crooke. "Give us your opinion. You know something about gee-gees!"

"Certainly!" said Cardew, stopping.

"It's about Nun Nicer for the Traffell Plate," said Racke. "It's between him and Bonnie Boy. Where would you advise a man to put his money?"

Cardew assumed a look of deep reflection. It amused him sometimes to pull the leg of the sportive set.

"I fancy I'd leave those gees alone," he said. "But if you want a dead cert—"

"You've got a snip?" asked Crooke.

"Yes."

"Something good?" asked Racke, with interest.

"Tip-top!"

"Let a fellow in, Cardew!" exclaimed Mellish eagerly.

"I don't mind," said Cardew, with some hesitation. "I don't see why you fellows shouldn't share in a good thing, if you come to that."

"Oh, be a sport, and let us into it!" said Crooke.

The three black sheep looked quite eager. Cardew, in idle moments, dabbled in the questionable pursuits of Racke & Co., rather from idleness and recklessness, than from any other motive, and in such things he had a good deal more judgment than the other black sheep. The three young rascals were quite keen to hear his "dead cert."

"Well, I'll let you in, if you like," said Cardew.

"Got anything on it yourself?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Much?" asked Crooke.

"Twenty pounds odd."

"Phew! You feel so sure of it as all that?"

"My dear man, it's a dead cert!" said Cardew. "If you lose your money on it, I'll undertake to pay up every bob you lose. I feel so sure about it."

"My hat!" said Mellish, opening his eyes. "You must feel very certain you've got a winner, then."

"I am certain!"

"A regular romper—what?" asked Crooke, eyes glistening.

"Absolutely certain!" said Cardew confidently. "Put your money on my selection, and you're bound to clear profit, and I'll stand all your losses, if you like."

"Well, that sounds like a good thing, and no mistake," said Aubrey Racke.

"You've a good fellow to let us into it, Cardew."

"Not at all. Only too pleased, old bean!"

"Well, what's your selection?" asked the three sportive youths together.

"War Savings Certificates," answered Cardew cheerfully.

"What?" yelled the three together.

"War Savings Certificates."

"What-ah! You silly ass, what do you mean?" howled Crooke.

"I mean what I say," answered Cardew calmly. "Put your money in War Savings Certificates and it's a dead cert—a regular snip. You pay fifteen-and-six—"

"Look here—"

"And in five years—"

"You silly ass!"

"They hand you out a quid," continued Cardew, unmoved. "Your money's safe as the Bank of England, and you make a handsome profit. I've never seen a surer snip in my life!"

And with that Cardew sauntered on, leaving Racke & Co. looking furious, realising at last that the dandy of the Fourth had been pulling their leg.

As a matter of fact, Cardew had given them a real "dead cert," much more valuable than the certs Racke & Co.

generally found. But they did not feel grateful for Cardew went on his way smiling, greatly entertained by the looks Racke & Co. gave him as he left them.

He stopped outside the door of the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes was out of doors that afternoon, as he knew, and it seemed safe enough to drop in and use his telephone. Safe as it was, there were few juniors at St. Jim's who would have had the nerve to enter that dreaded apartment and telephone there without permission. But Ralph Reckness Cardew was blessed with an unusual amount of nerve, and, after a moment's hesitation, he opened the door and went in, closing it behind him. Cardew glanced from the windows into the green old quadrangle. There was no sign of the Head returning yet. He turned to the telephone, and as he did so the bell rang.

The sudden buzz of the telephone-bell in the quiet, dusky study made the Fourth-Former jump.

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

Cardew stood still, breathing rather quickly. He wondered whether anyone would hear the bell, and come to the study to take the call. If that happened he was caught, and, in spite of his nerve, he did not relish the prospect of having to explain his presence there to Mr. Ralston or Mr. Linton.

Buzz!

"By gad, that row's goin' to stop!" murmured Cardew, and he stepped to the telephone and took the receiver off the hooks.

His intention was to take the call, and state that Dr. Holmes was absent. There was no sound of footsteps in the passage so far, but it was pretty certain that if the telephone-bell continued to buzz someone would hear it and come there. The buzz ceased abruptly as Cardew picked up the receiver, and he put it to his ear, and his mouth to the transmitter.

"Hello!" he said, disguising his voice by assuming a deep bass.

"Hello!" came the reply. "Is that St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"I wish to speak to Dr. Holmes."

Ralph Reckness Cardew almost dropped the receiver. For, he recognised the voice on the telephone. It was the voice of Algernon Lacy of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School.

CHAPTER 6.

Tricked on the Telephone.

"ARE you there?"

Lacy's voice came impatiently along the wires.

Cardew stood dumb. He did not need telling why Algernon Lacy wished to speak to the Head of St. Jim's, as he knew all about Lowther's affair with the bike. The cad of the Grammar School wanted to lay a complaint. It was simply unprecedented for a junior schoolboy to ring up the Head of St. Jim's, and that was the only possible explanation.

Cardew looked grim. He began to feel pleased that he had happened to be in the study to take that call.

"Are you there?"

Cardew bent to the transmitter again. "Yes. Who is speaking?" he asked, in deep bass.

"Are you Dr. Holmes?"

"Kindly state your business," said Cardew. "I am a busy man. Who are you?"

"My name is Lacy—Algernon Lacy. You know me, Dr. Holmes."

"Do you belong to Rylcombe Grammar School, Master Lacy?" asked Cardew, still in deep bass.

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, I remember seeing you, Master

Lacy. For what reason, pray, have you rung me up? Are you not aware that my headmaster's time is valuable?"

"I should have come over to see you, sir, but some chaps here have prevented me. I have a complaint to make."

"Pooh, pooh!"

"It is a serious matter, sir," went on Lacy, in that sharp voice. "I have been assaulted by a boy belonging to your school, and my bicycle has been taken away."

"Bless my soul!"

"The boy's name is Lowther."

"Montague Lowther of the Shell?"

"That's the fellow."

"And you state, Master Lacy, that Montague Lowther assaulted you, and took away your bicycle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Without provocation?"

"Quite!"

"And has Montague Lowther retained possession of the bicycle?"

"He has."

"Bless my soul! This matter shall certainly be inquired into, and I will call and see your headmaster, Master Lacy," said Cardew, in deep tones, very like those of Dr. Holmes. "It is very odd that you should have rung me up, as I have to see your headmaster about you, Master Lacy."

"A-a-about me, sir?"

"Yes. Certain delinquencies on your part have come to my knowledge, Master Lacy!" said Cardew sternly.

"I—I don't understand, sir. You are not my headmaster!" said Lacy, with a touch of insolence in his tone.

"Precisely. For that reason I intend to acquaint Dr. Monk with the circumstances."

"I—I— Really, sir, I think there must be some mistake," came a faltering reply on the wires.

Cardew grinned. He was beginning to enjoy this little talk on the telephone.

"Indeed, Master Lacy! Is it not a fact that you are on friendly terms with some boys in this school named Racke and Crooke and McIlsh?"

"I—I know them, sir."

"It has come to my knowledge, Master Lacy, that these boys have been involved in gambling transactions."

"Oh!"

"You have been a party to these transactions, Master Lacy."

"Oh!"

"Racke and his friends I shall deal with," pursued Cardew. "But you, Master Lacy, will naturally be dealt with by your own headmaster, whom I shall acquaint with the whole matter."

Cardew heard a gasp on the telephone.

"If—if you please, sir, I—I—I admit I—I have acted rather thoughtlessly," came Lacy's voice, now in a whining tone. "I am sorry—truly sorry! I—I hope, sir, that you will not think it necessary to speak to my headmaster."

"I feel it my duty, Master Lacy."

"If you'd let me off, sir—"

"It is not in my power to let you off, as you term it, Master Lacy; for, as you very truly remarked a few moments ago, I am not your headmaster."

"I—I beg your pardon, sir! I—I beg you to give me a chance, and I will promise, most faithfully—"

Cardew nearly gave himself away by a chuckle; but he kept it back. Algernon Lacy was in the blindest of blue funk by this time. His sportiveness in company with Racke & Co. was certain to earn him at least a flogging if Dr. Monk learned of it. At the Grammar School end of the wire the festive youth was palpitating.

"I fear that I cannot make conditions with you, Master Lacy," said Cardew, more deeply than ever. "You may expect to see me shortly."

"Oh, sir, I—I beg of you—"

"Or, rather, as I am a busy man, I shall send a note over by a junior," said Cardew. "I will command Lowther to bring back your bicycle, and bring a note to your headmaster at the same time."

"But, sir—"

"Enough!"

Cardew rang off.

He sat in Dr. Holmes' chair and smiled at the telephone. He could picture the state of funk Algernon Lacy was in, and it entertained him immensely. The sneak of the Grammar School had been rewarded as he deserved for his sneaking.

Having disposed of Lacy, Cardew took up the receiver again after a few minutes, to carry out the little scheme for which he had come to the study. He asked the exchange for a number, and waited.

"Hello!" came along the wires.

"Hello! Is that Mr. Wiggs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you send up two silk hats in the morning, Mr. Wiggs?"

"Certainly, sir! What name?"

"Master Gay—Gordon Gay, Rylcombe Grammar School. You know my size, Mr. Wiggs?"

"Certainly, Master Gay! I'll send them without fail! Shall I send the bill with them, sir?"

"By all means! And tell your lad to wait for payment."

"Yes, sir."

Cardew rang off.

He took a glance through the telephone directory, and rang on again. This time he asked for the number of Blankley's emporium at Wayland.

"Hello! Is that Blankley's? Have you any silk hats in stock?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Can you send two in the morning—Master Gordon Gay, Rylcombe Grammar School? And instruct your young lady to wait for the account?"

"With pleasure, sir! Size?"

"Largest size in schoolboy toppers, please."

"Very well, sir."

"Can I depend on having them in the morning? It's rather important."

"Most certainly, sir; without fail! Two of our twenty-five-shilling hats, I presume?"

"Are they the best you have?"

"We have a very special silk hat at thirty-five shillings, sir."

"That's what I want, then."

"Very good, sir. Master Gay, Rylcombe Grammar School?"

"Right!"

Once more Cardew rang off. He listened for a moment at the door of the study, took a glance into the quadrangle, and then went to the telephone again. This time he rang up Brown's, in Wayland, and ordered two more silk hats for Gordon Gay. Having completed the arrangements to the satisfaction of Messrs. Brown, he rang up Messrs. Pipkin's, and gave the same order.

Then he left off, because he could not remember the addresses of any more hatters in the neighbourhood.

There was a cheery smile on Cardew's face as he left the Head's study. His visit to that sacred apartment had been quite a success, as he had killed two birds with one stone, so to speak.

He sauntered out of the School House and down to Little Side. Some of the juniors were at practice, and Tom Merry & Co. stood in a group watching George Figgins of the Now House playing some marvellous bowling from Paddy Wynn. Levison and Clive called to their chum as he came sauntering up.

"File in, Cardew, you slacker!"

"My dear mon, I've been working!"

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Cadet Notes.

CHAPTER 7.

Six for the Sneak!

"GAY!" "Hallo, Jacky! What's the row?" asked Gordon Gay. "That awful cad Lacy!" breathed Wootton major.

"Well?" Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed a little. The failure of Algernon Lacy to "play the game" was a sore point with the Grammarians. There were few fellows at the Grammar School who did not wish that Lacy had stayed at his old school, Woodhouse.

"The awful worm!" said Wootton major with deep wrath. "We bumped him for wanting to go over to St. Jim's with a complaint, and it hasn't done him a bit of good."

"Perhaps we didn't bump him hard enough," grinned Gay. "He's an ungrateful brute, anyway. But what's the trouble now?"

"I've just spotted him at the 'phone."

"Mr. Adams is out, and Lacy's using his 'phone," said Wootton major. "You can guess where he's 'phoning. Who ever heard of a sneak sneaking by telephone before? I suppose he thought we'd never spot that."

"He wouldn't be worm enough," said Gay. "But we'll jolly well see! Come along!"

Gordon Gay hurried indoors, and Wootton major followed him. They met Lacy of the Fourth as he came out of Mr. Adams' study. Algernon started as he saw them. He had a deeply troubled look.

"You've been 'phoning to St. Jim's?" asked Gordon Gay abruptly.

"I—I say, Gay, I—I want you to help me out!" faltered Lacy.

"What?"

"I'm in an awful scrape."

Gay and Wootton stared at him. This was not at all what they expected. But Lacy was evidently in serious trouble, as his looks showed.

"I don't quite catch on," said Gordon Gay. "I thought you'd been 'phoning to St. Jim's, to make some sneaking complaint about Lowther bagging your bike."

"I—I did," stammered Lacy. "But—but I'm in an awful scrape!"

"Serve you jolly well right, you miserable sneak!" said Gay unsympathetically. "But what's the trouble?"

"It—it's come out, somehow, about Racke and that gang at St. Jim's," said Lacy. "Dr. Holmes knows about their little games, and—and about me with them. He's sending a note over to Dr. Monk about it."

"Crack pip!"

"It means a flogging, if not the sack!" muttered Lacy. "I—I say, can't you fellows help me? Lowther's been sent over with the note. It—it could be got away from him—"

"Get it away from him, then," said Gay grimly. "You won't get any help from us. You knew what you were risking when you went blagging with Racke and Crooks, I suppose. You've got just what you deserve for sneaking, and if you get a flogging I hope the Head will say it on hard."

"Same here!" said Wootton major heartily.

And the two juniors walked away with that charitable wish. Algernon Lacy looked after them with almost haggard eyes. He had no help to expect in that quarter. He wandered miserably down to the gates to wait for Monty Lowther to arrive from St. Jim's.

Somehow, anyhow, he had to prevent

Dr. Holmes' note reaching the Head of the Grammar School if he could.

If it disappeared in transit, Dr. Holmes would naturally suppose that it had reached its destination, and would trouble no further about the matter in all probability.

If he could only prevent Lowther from delivering the note!

It was a chance, at least, and Lacy was glad that Dr. Holmes had sent a note by hand instead of telephoning to Dr. Monk, as he might easily have done. It was rather odd that he had not taken the latter course, but Lacy was glad of it.

The idea of taking the note by force from Lowther was rather a desperate one, but Lacy would have attempted it if he could have enlisted Gordon (Gay's) help. As matters stood, it was out of the question, and he had to rely upon his persuasive powers.

There seemed little hope of persuading a fellow whom he had just landed, as he believed, into trouble with his headmaster; but it was Lacy's only hope, and there was no depth of humiliation he was willing to descend to in order to gain his point.

As a rule, Lacy was a lofty fellow, much given to swank; but his swank was quite gone now.

A cyclist came in sight on the road at last, and he recognised Monty Lowther of St. Jim's. Lowther dismounted at the gateway, and gave Lacy a grim look as he wheeled the bike in.

"There's your jigger, Lacy!" he said.

Lacy threw it carelessly to the wall.

"Never mind about that," he said nervously. "You've got a note for my headmaster, Lowther."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I—I do know. Will you give it to me, old chap?"

"Give it to me," muttered Lacy. "It means a flogging for me if that note gets to Dr. Monk. It might mean the sack for me."

"Jolly good thing for your school, in that case!"

Monty Lowther walked on into the quadrangle, and the wretched Lacy followed him. Frank Monk and Lane and

said Cardew. "I've got something to tell you fellows—especially you, Lowther!"

"Hallo! What's on?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Lacy's rung up the Head to complain of you."

"My hat! The measly, sneaking cad!"

"Bai Jove! That fearful wotah ought weally to be wagged!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arry warmly.

"Fortunately, I was in the study, and I took the call!"

"You did?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes," yawned Cardew, "I put on a bass voice, an' Lacy appears to be under the impression that he was talkin' to Dr. Holmes. Queer, the impressions you can get on the telephone, ain't it?"

"Bai Jove!"

Cardew explained the result of his talk with Lacy, and there was a roar from the cricketers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, if Lowther goes over with the bike, Lacy will think he's got a note for Dr. Monk in his pocket," said Cardew, with a chuckle. "He will come round Lowther tryin' to beg that note off him, I fancy."

"Oh, my hat! I'll lead him a dance!" exclaimed Lowther, his eyes glistering. "I'll make the cad sit up for trying to sneak!"

And Monty Lowther rushed away for the bike, leaving Tom Merry & Co. chortling.

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Carboy bore down on the St. Jim's junior.

"Pax!" called out Lowther, holding up his hand. "I'm here on business, dear boys. No larks."

"That's all very well," said Frank Monk, "but—"

"Is your headmaster at home?" asked Lowther.

"Yes," the pater's in his study," said Frank Monk. "You don't want to see him?"

"Quite so. I don't want to. I don't pull with headmasters," agreed Lowther.

"But I was sent here, you see."

"He's got a note for the Head, you fellows!" said Lacy desperately. "It's a note about me. Don't let him take it in."

"Hallo! Is robbery with violence one of your little games here?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"You silly ass, Lacy!" said Frank Monk witheringly. "I'll see you safe in if you like, Lowther."

"Thanks!" said Monty cheerfully, but he did not hurry.

As he had nothing to see Dr. Monk about, he had no intention of calling on that scholastic gentleman. He kept one eye on Lacy's tormented face.

Lacy was standing in his path, almost desperate.

"Lowther, old man, you don't want to get me sacked," he said shrilly. "Give me the note, and I'll burn it."

"My hat!" said Carboy. "You cheeky idiot! Don't do anything of the sort, Lowther. You'd get into an awful row."

"I don't mean to," said Monty.

"Dr. Holmes won't inquire about it," said Lacy. "He'll think our Head's had his note. You can tell him you brought it here; that will be true."

"What on earth does it all mean?" asked Frank Monk in wonder.

"Don't ask me!" yawned Lowther. "Lacy seems to know more about it than anybody else."

"It's a note from Dr. Holmes to our Head about—about my betting and playin' cards with Racke an' his set," muttered Lacy. "Old Holmes has bowled them out, and—me, too, so he's telling our Head. Lowther oughtn't to give him the note. I—I might be sacked for it."

"Well, I don't want to get a fellow sacked," said Lowther, "but I don't see what's to be done. You pitched a tale at St. Jim's about my bagging your bike, like the sneaking worm you are, and—"

"I'm sorry!"

"Your sorrow comes a bit late!" said Lowther sarcastically.

"I—I'll say anything you like, do anything you like!" gasped Lacy. "I tell you it's safe enough to suppress the note. I'll never come out."

"Safe enough for you. But what about me?"

"I—I'm sure—"

"You mean you're only thinking of your own precious skin," said Lowther contemptuously. "I'm jolly well not going to hand you any note, I know that!"

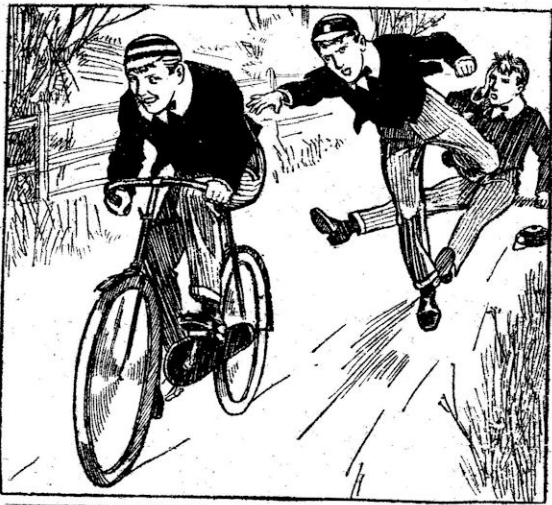
Lacy groaned.

"Where's Gary?" asked Lowther. "Let's ask his opinion."

It was Monty's intention to allow himself to be persuaded in the long run, as he had no note at all for Dr. Monk, but he was lingering out the agony, as it were, for Algernon Lacy's benefit. The sneak deserved punishment, and Lowther kindly hoped that the fright would do him good.

Lacy called Gordon Gay, who came up with the two Woottons. They delivered the opinion emphatically.

"Take the note in to the Head," said



Lowther Lands Out Lustily, and Lacy Gets Left!
(See Chapter 4.)

Gordon Gay. "You've no right to give it to Lacy."

"You'd get flogged if it came out!" said Wootton major.

"Can't you put in a word for me?" muttered Lacy. "You know what it means for me if old Monk gets the note."

"That's your look-out. I know what it will very likely mean for Lowther if he doesn't!" snapped Gay.

Lacy turned from him, and fixed a beseeching look on Lowther.

"For goodness' sake don't take the note in, Lowther!" he muttered. "I'll do anything you ask—"

"I don't want you to do anything, you worm!" said Monty Lowther. "Still, I won't go in. Don't ask me for the note. I'm not going to give you any note. But I won't go in and see Dr. Monk."

Lacy brightened up.

"Thanks, old chap! You're a good sort!" he gasped.

"A silly ass, I think!" said Gordon Gay. "You've no right to suppress your headmaster's note, Lowther!"

"I'm going for make conditions, though," said Lowther. "Lacy's sneaked about me. A sneak ought to be punished. I'll go away without seeing Dr. Monk on condition that Lacy takes six with a cricket-stump."

"Oh!" gasped Lacy.

"Yes or no?" snapped Lowther.

"Yes, yes!" stammered Lacy. He would have agreed to six dozen if six dozen had been demanded.

"Anybody got a stump?" asked Lowther.

"I'll jolly soon get a stump!" growled Wootton major.

And he did. Behind the trees in the quad Lacy received the six, and they were well laid on. The Grammarians stood round grinning, while the unfortunate sneak wriggled and squirmed under the infliction. Lowther did not spare the rod.

"Better give him a few more!" said Gordon Gay.

"A bargain's a bargain," said Low-

ther, throwing down the stump. "You can crawl off, Lacy."

"You—you won't go to the Head now?" gasped Lacy.

"No, you worm!"

Algernon Lacy limped away, sore in body, but relieved in mind. Monty Lowther smiled at the Grammarians.

"Now, I'll tell you fellows a little joke," he said agreeably. "It's understood that I've got a safe conduct out of gates—what? Pax, you know."

"Oh, yes. But what—"

"You see, I had to let Lacy off, as I haven't any note for your blessed headmaster," explained Lowther. "Cardew happened to be in our Head's study, and he took the call, and spoofed our sneak on the phone. I didn't come over with a note for your Head. I came over to lick Lacy for sneaking. See?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Gordon Gay.

"Ta-ta, dear boys! Always happy to pull the leg of a Grammarian ass," said Lowther affably; and he strolled away to the gates, leaving the Grammarians staring.

"Pax" was sacred, or certainly the St. Jim's humorist would never have got out of gates without a record ragging. As it was, he strolled home to St. Jim's in cheery spirits, and at St. Jim's there was loud laughter when he related what had happened at the Grammar School.

"Poor old Gwammawians!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "They really can't keep their end up against us, you know. I really think that they will have to sing small, and hide their diminished heads, bai Jove!"

And Tom Merry & Co. fully agreed.

CHAPTER 8.

No Shortage of Toppers.

"DEAR ME!" said Mr. Adams. The master of the Fourth Form at the Grammar School was busy with his class the morning, when there was a following

tap at the Form-room door and the page put his head in.

"What is it, Tipkins?" asked the Form-master acidly.

"The 'ats for Master Gay, sir!" said Tipkins.

"You should not come here in class hours, Tipkins. If anything has come for Master Gay, it can wait till after lessons," said the Form-master severely.

"Yessir; but the lad's waiting for the money, sir!"

"Bless my soul! Gay, you may attend to the matter, but kindly arrange in future for any goods you purchase to be delivered at a more reasonable time!" snapped Mr. Adams.

Gordon Gay looked astonished.

"There's some mistake, sir," he said. "I haven't ordered any hats."

"Oh! You are sure?"

"Quite sure, sir!"

"Very well. Tell the lad he has made a mistake, Tipkins!"

"Yessir."

Tipkins retired; but in a couple of minutes he returned; Algernon Lacy was construing when the page's head was put in at the door again. Mr. Adams gave him an impatient stare.

"Really, Tipkins—"

"Sorry, sir, but the lad says as there ain't any mistake, and he's brought the 'ats, and was told to wait for the money, sir."

"This is really intolerable!" exclaimed Mr. Adams. "Tell the boy to come in here, Tipkins!"

"Yessir."

A minute or two later Tipkins showed in a youth who carried two bandboxes tied together. He touched his cap to Mr. Adams.

"The 'ats for Master Gay, sir!" he said.

"Where do you come from, my lad?"

"Mr. Wiggs', sir."

"Gay, did you order these hats?"

"No, sir," said the astounded Gay.

"Certainly not!"

"Two silk hats, hordered by Master Gay yesterday, sir," said the lad. "I'm to wait for the money, sir! Ere's the bill, sir!"

Mr. Adams glanced at the bill.

"This appears to be in order, Gay," he said. "For what absurd reason, Gay, did you order two new silk hats to be delivered here? Surely, one silk hat at a time is sufficient!"

"But I didn't order them, sir!" ejaculated Gay. "I haven't the least idea what makes Mr. Wiggs think I ordered them."

"The bill is made out in your name."

"I can't help that, sir! I never ordered the hats! I haven't been near Mr. Wiggs' shop this week."

"This is very extraordinary. However, I must accept your statement. My lad, pray take the hats back to Mr. Wiggs, and inform him that there is a mistake, and Master Gay did not order them and does not require them!"

"Ho!" said the youth.

With visible reluctance he took the bandboxes, and marched out with them; and Gay sat down again, puzzled and perplexed. Mr. Adams gave him a very sharp look. He could not understand so curious a mistake, and he had a suspicion that there was a practical joke somewhere.

The lesson ended, but the next lesson was interrupted by Tipkins.

"Well, what is it, Tipkins?" exclaimed Mr. Adams sharply, as he glanced at the grinning page.

"The 'ats for Master Gay, sir."

"What?"

"The two noo silk 'ats from Blankley's, sir, for Master Gay, and the young lady waiting for the money, sir!"

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"Gay, this really passes all patience!" exclaimed the Form-master. "It appears that you have ordered silk hats from Blankley's, to be delivered here during lessons."

"I haven't, sir!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"What? Do you mean to tell me that it is another mistake?"

"It must be, sir! I haven't been to Blankley's, and I certainly haven't ordered any hats there!"

"Gay, you must be perfectly aware that two such mistakes could not possibly be made by two different firms of hatters at the same time."

"I—I can't understand it, sir!"

"Neither can I!" said Mr. Adams, very drily. "Tipkins, tell the young lady that it is a mistake, and the hats must be taken back."

"Werry well, sir."

Tipkins disappeared, with a broad grin on his face. Most of the Fourth were grinning, too; but not Gordon Gay. He was puzzled and worried, utterly unable to make head or tail of the strange affair.

But Tipkins was not done with yet. In five minutes he was back again, and Mr. Adams fairly snorted at him.

"Tipkins! What—"

"The 'ats, sir—"

"Have told you to tell Blankley's young lady to take them back!"

"Yessir; she's gone with them 'ats, sir, but this is another lot!" gasped Tipkins.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Two noo silk 'ats, sir, for Master Gay, from Messrs. Pipkins', in Wayland, sir, and the man's waiting for the money!"

"Bless my soul! Gay, will you have the audacity to tell me that this is another mistake?" thundered Mr. Adams.

"Yes, sir!" gasped Gordon Gay. "I—I do not know anything about it, sir!"

"Planned this, as an absurd practical joke, to interrupt lessons this morning."

"I—I haven't sir—on—on my word, sir!"

"Pish! Tipkins, tell the man the hats were not ordered, and they must be taken back!"

"Yessir."

There was a chortle in the Form-room as the page vanished. Gordon Gay sat with a crimson face, while Mr. Adams frowned thunderously, and the Fourth-Formers grinned.

Third lesson was in progress, when the inevitable Tipkins reappeared, his grin broader than ever.

"Tipkins," thundered Mr. Adams, "I have warned you not to come here and interrupt lessons!"

"Yessir, But—"

"Go away at once!"

"But the 'ats, sir—"

"What?"

"The 'ats—"

"Have they not been sent back as I directed?"

"Yessir, But—"

"Then the matter is closed. Go away!"

"But, sir, the man's waiting."

"What man?" roared Mr. Adams.

"The man from Brown's, sir, with two noo silk 'ats for Master Gay, sir!" gasped Tipkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the class.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Adams.

"Tipkins, do you mean to say that a man silk hats for Master Gay?"

"Yessir; and he's waiting for the money."

"Gay, stand out here!"

Gordon Gay, with a crimson face, came out before the class. He was wondering by this time whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Gay, this is a practical joke on your part!" exclaimed Mr. Adams.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Did you order two new silk hats at Brown's?"

"No, sir! Never!"

"Do you mean to say that a fourth firm of hatters have made the same extraordinary mistake in the same morning?"

demanded the Form-master.

"I—I don't understand it, sir! I—I can't—"

"I understand it only too well, Gay! Tipkins, tell the man to bring the hats here at once!"

"Yessir."

Tipkins departed, and Brown's man came in with two bandboxes. He touched his cap to Mr. Adams, and presented the bill.

"Two guineas!" said Mr. Adams grimly. "As it has pleased you to order silk hats to be sent here, Gay, you will pay for them. You will pay for all goods that are delivered here in your name, and that may help to cure you of your propensity to practical joking."

"But, sir—"

"Pay this bill at once!"

"But, sir, I—I never ordered—"

"Nonsense!"

"I don't understand—"

"Will you pay this bill, Gay, or shall I come you?"

"Oh, crums!" gasped Gordon Gay.

He fumbled in his pockets.

"I—I haven't enough tin, sir!" he stammered.

"The bill is to be paid!" said Mr. Adams grimly, "otherwise I shall request Dr. Monk to administer a flogging, Gay; and the money will be paid and deducted from your allowance."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You should not order goods that you cannot pay for, Gay. I advise you to find the money," said the Form-master.

Gay turned out his pockets. He had thirty shillings; and Frank Monk found twelve to lend him. The bill was paid. Brown's man looked on in surprise, and grinning.

The hats were left on the table, and Gay returned to his place in the class with a receipt for two guineas in his pocket, and the happy possessor of two new silk toppers that he did not want.

He was on tenterhooks for the remainder of the morning, wondering whether any more hats were to be delivered.

Fortunately, there were no more.

When the Fourth Form were dismissed Gordon Gay was surrounded at once in the quad by a grinning crowd.

"Are you potty?" Wootton major demanded. "What did you order all those blessed hats for, you chump?"

"I didn't!" yelled Gordon Gay.

"Then who did?"

"Some blessed practical joker, I suppose!"

"Oh, crums!"

"It wasn't a joke of yours on old Adams?" grinned Wootton minor.

"No, you ass! I'm done for two guineas!" howled Gay. "Bless the silk toppers! Who wants new silk toppers in war-time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly duffers?"

"Are you going to wear 'em both at once, like an old clo' man?" chuckled Carboy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dry, dry!" granted Gay. "I've been done! I wish I knew the merry idiot who's ordered those hats for me! I'd give him hats!"

Tipkins came out of the House with an envelope in his hand.

"Master Gay," he said, "this 'ere letter was left for you, sir, to be give to you arter lessons."

"Any hats left with them?" roared Lane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, sir!" grinned Tipkins. "Jest his note. The carrier left it as he passed. He said it was given to him by a young gent at St. Jim's."

Gay opened the letter mechanically. Then he gave a roar.

"Cardew! The cheeky rotter! Oh, my hat!"

"My hats, you mean!" chorled Monk.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's Cardew got to say?"

"Look!" hooted Gay.

Cardew's note was short, if not sweet. It ran:

"Dear Gay,—I hope you are pleased with the hats. Kindest regards.

"R. R. CARDEW."

"I—I—I'll give him hats!" gasped Gordon Gay. "I—I—I'll squash him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gay, old chap, you're growing into a back number!" said Frank Monk chidingly.

"You get it in the neck every time! We may as well give St. Jim's best, at this rate, and own up we're dead beat!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"You'll have to wake up!" said Wootton major, with a nod.

"You clump—"

"We're losing all our prestige," said Carboy.

"If you don't wake up, Gay, we shall back you and get a new captain!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Gordon Gay.

And he strode away in great wrath.

A howl from Carker followed him:

"Were you pleased with the hats, Gay?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay did not reply to that question. He was tired of the subject of hats.

CHAPTER 9.

Simply Great!

TOM MERRY held up his hand. "Pax, dear boys!" he said.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the Terrible Three were walking down to Rylcombe, when they came on Gordon Gay and the two Woottons. Monty Lowther was carrying a bag, and a rug on his arm, and looked as if he were bound on a journey.

"No rags now!" said Tom, with a smile. "We're seeing Monty off, and he's got to catch a train."

"All serene!" said Gordon Gay amicably.

"We'll let you off a licking, under the circus."

"Thank you for nothing," said Manners.

"Going on a holiday?" asked Gay.

"Not exactly a holiday," said Lowther, with a grin. "I'm going home to see my uncle for a day or two. Sorry I shan't be able to pull your leg again for a few days. Ta-ta!"

The Terrible Three walked on, leaving Gordon Gay with a very thoughtful expression on his face.

They arrived at the railway-station in good time for the train.

Tom and Manners waved their straw hats to their chums as the train bore him away, and then walked back to St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay & Co. had disappeared, and the chums of the Shell did not see them on their way back.

As a matter of fact, the three Gram-

marians were not far away. Gay had led his comrades into the wood, and sat down under a tree there, somewhat to their surprise.

"What's the game?" Wootton major asked.

Gay waved him off. "Don't interrupt! I'm thinking," he replied.

"Are we to watch you while you think?" inquired Harry Wootton.

"Dry up!"

"Yes, but—"

"Ring off, ass! It's a wheeze!"

Wootton major and minor obligingly dried up, and waited till it pleased their leader to speak.

Gordon Gay was deep in thought, though the wrinkles on his face occasionally gave place to a grin.

He looked up at last, and spoke.

"It will work!" he said.

"What will work, ass?" demanded Wootton major.

"Oh, one of your wheezes!" said Jack Wootton disparagingly.

"The catch of the season!" said Gay impressively.

"Mind, it's got to be kept dark—deadly dark! Not a whisper! Hallo! What's that?"

He glanced round suspiciously, as there was a faint rustle in the thickets.

"Only a blessed rabbit!" said Wootton major.

"Get on with the wheeze! I don't suppose it's any good, old chap!"

"Fathead!"

"Same to you, and lots of them! Still, we'll give you a hearing, if you buck up."

"Lowther's gone home for a holiday," said Gay.

"What the dickens—"

"It follows that he won't be at St. Jim's again to-day."

"Gay, old man, you ought to be Lord Chancellor," said Wootton major.

"A chap with a brain like that is simply wasted at school. Did you work that out in your head?"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass! This gives us a chance of paying off all our old scores."

"Blessed if I see it!"

"Do you ever see anything, old nut?" asked Gay politely.

"Of course you don't see it till I explain. While Lowther's gone, Lowther's Cousin Bob is going to call at St. Jim's and see him—or, rather, ask to see him."

"Eh? How do you know?"

"Because that's what I've decided."

"Blessed if I knew he had a Cousin Bob!"

"He hasn't!"

"Eh?"

"It's because he hasn't a Cousin Bob that his Cousin Bob is going to call at St. Jim's this afternoon!" explained Gordon Gay.

Wootton major and minor looked at their chief fixedly. Whether Gay's brain was wandering, or whether he was trying to pull their leg, they could not quite determine.

"Say that over again!" said Jack Wootton at last.

"Lowther hasn't a Cousin Bob—"

"Exactly!"

"And his Cousin Bob is going to call at St. Jim's?"

"You've got it!"

"I suppose that's funny!" said Wootton major.

"Is this where we laugh?"

"Ass! I'm his Cousin Bob!"

"You!" yelled the two together.

"Precisely!"

"Midsummer madness!" said Wootton major.

"Let's give him a jolly good bumping, and see if we can make him sane again!"

Gordon Gay jumped up.

"Chuck it, you duffers! Don't you understand? If I can make up as Fraulein Klara, the Beautiful Spy, I can make up as a chap who doesn't exist. I've only got to alter my complexion and put on some goggles and change my clothes, and nobody at St. Jim's will know me. Tain't like making up as a real person.

I can look like anything but myself, and it will do."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wootton major.

"See at last!" asked Gay sarcastically.

"Yes—"

"It's as easy as falling off a form," said Gordon Gay, his eyes glistering.

"I call at St. Jim's, as Lowther's Cousin Bob, to see him. I'm awfully disappointed to find that he's gone away unexpectedly. Naturally, his friends will be hospitable. I shall be landed in the school House, and if I don't find a chance to make them sit up and take notice you can use my head for a football."

The Woottons chuckled.

"Not a bad wheeze—if you can work it!" said Harry Wootton.

"I could work it on my head!" said Gay disdainfully.

"There's nothing in it, even if I wasn't the best actor in the Grammar School!"

"Blessed is he that bloweth his own trumpet!" grinned Wootton minor.

"I'm stating facts, old bean! Once I'm in the place, unsuspected, I'll make their hair curl!" said Gay.

"I'll mix up Gussy's toppers with the ashes, and rag Tom Merry's study. I'll stick up notices in the studies telling 'em what we think of 'em, and watch 'em wondering who did it. It will be the jape of the season!"

"It'll come off!"

"It will come off!" roared Gay.

"All serene, old chap! Keep your wool on!" said Wootton major soothingly.

"I don't see why it shouldn't work. Come along, and we'll help you make up! We'll get the things out of gates, and do it out of doors—safer!"

"Come on, then!" said Gay.

And the three juniors left the wood, taking a short cut back to the Grammar School, eagerly discussing the wheeze which was to make the St. Jim's fellows "sit up and take notice."

A few minutes after they were gone a fat face glimmered through the foliage, with a fat grin and a smear of jam on it.

Baggy Trimble, of the St. Jim's Fourth, chuckled softly.

The estimable Baggy had been seated on the other side of the tree, in the thickets, enjoying a jar of jam. The jam had belonged to Cutts of the Fifth, which was Baggy's reason for retiring to such a secluded spot before he proceeded to devour it.

The Grammarians had been talking within three yards of him, and Trimble had heard every word.

He had been so interested that he had actually forgotten to finish the jar while the chums of the Grammar School were there.

He made up for that neglect now, however. The remnant of jam disappeared down his throat, while he grinned over the jar.

"What a wheeze!" he murmured.

"He, he, he! Lucky the beasts didn't know I was here—they'd have ragged me! I think it's Gay that's going to get the ragging now! He, he, he!"

And the last possible morsel having been extracted from the jam-jar, Baggy Trimble relinquished the empty jar, and took his way back to St. Jim's, chuckling a fat chuckle as he went. A quarter of an hour later Tom Merry & Co. were receiving some very interesting information.

CHAPTER 10.

Cousin Bob Catches It!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of the Fourth, was lounging elegantly in the old stone gateway of St. Jim's when a youth came up the road from Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus screwed his celebrated

"Come back and be taled!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Gordon Gay bolted out of the gates, and Taggles, looking out of his lodge, had quite a turn, as he expressed it, at that strange vision of a hurrying figure with a face half black and half light-green.

Lowther's Cousin Bob had been an egregious failure. The unfortunate perpetrator of the jape of the season was only thinking of getting away. He went down the road as if he were on the cinder-path, and the St. Jim's fellows sent a roar of laughter after him.

"Oh, coward!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as the fleeing Grammarian vanished down the road in a cloud of dust. "Oh, ewikey! I wathink think that the Gwammians will be surprised when they see that feaful object. And I weally considah, deah boys, that they will have to admit that they are not up to our wath." "Ha, ha, ha!"

Wootton major and Wootton minor were lounching by the gates of the Grammar School to meet their chum on his return. While they waited they were discussing the probable success of the great jape.

"If it comes off he won't be back soon," remarked Jack Wootton. "He'll stick it out till the last minute, japing the bounders. Hallo! What's that?"

"What the merry dickens—" The two juniors stood transfixed at the sight of a fearsome object that came dashing breathlessly up the road.

The clothes were the clothes of Lowther's Cousin Bob, but the face—The face was half dead-black and half light-green, and wholly hideous to look at. Wootton major and minor stared at it spellbound.

"It—it can't be—" gasped Wootton major.

"Gay!" "Oh, crumbs!" Gordon Gay halted, panting for breath. "I—I've had bad luck!"

"Where did you get that face?" howled Wootton major.

"I—I was spotted! They—they knew I was coming, somehow!" groaned the unhappy practical joker. "It—it was a frost! I—I say—"

"Oh, my hat! You'll have to sneak in the back way, somehow, and keep out of sight!" gasped Wootton major. "Oh,

you frabjeous ass! So that's what comes of your wheezes!"

"I—I couldn't help—" "I could have told you that, old chap." Gordon Gay succeeded in getting into the House by the back way, and in gaining the dormitory by an unfrequented stair. He was very busy for some time afterwards with a big audience. Nearly all the Fourth Form turned up to watch him, much to his wrath. And the opinion of the Grammarian Fourth, expressed with great frankness, was that Gordon Gay was a back number, and that the sooner he gave up japing japes and wheezing wheezes the better it would be. And for once Gordon Gay hadn't a word to say. And when, the next day in the study, he informed his study-mates that he had another wheeze, Wootton major and Wootton minor collared him forcibly and bumped him on the study carpet. Evidently the Grammarian leader's wheezes were at a discount.

THE END.

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

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"TWO IN THE TOWLS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Herbert Skimpole and Baggy Trimble are the two; and the story tells of some very queer adventures which befell them at a town-house not far from St. Jim's. But though they play the chief parts in the story, others come into it as well—Tom Merry & Co. and some of the Grammar School brigade figuring prominently. You will all be interested, I think, in Professor Pomey Burnham, and his man, Silas Stout, and in the mysteries of the Moat House. Look out for a cover picture in which Skimmy and Baggy appear in trouble together!

BUCKING THINGS UP!

There is nothing to complain of in the circulation of the GEM. It has seldom, if ever, been better, though we have been compelled by force of circumstances to charge more money for less reading-matter than in the days before we made everything dear. But we can always do with a rise of circulation. This is one of the few things upon which all editors agree. There are many different ways of running any paper; but the one and only right way from our point of view, is that which means a rising circulation.

I don't believe very much in printed advertisements for bringing about this. There is a far better method of advertising a paper—the testimony of keen readers. Tell your friends how much you like the GEM, and some of them will be stirred into trying it on their own account. They will tell others; and so it goes on, like a snowball rolling down a snow-covered hill. Talking of snow, will you let me see what you can do among you to get up the GEM figures between now and Christmas? Any time for such help is a good time; but this is a specially good time, for the coming months are the best reading season of the year.

Set to work to buck things up, if you care to oblige me.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED BY—

Wallace Bowker, 2, Bickerstaffe Street, off Dale Street, Blackpool, Lancashire, wants members for correspondence and book exchange league. Stamped and addressed envelope to be enclosed.

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Edward Macpherson, P.O. Box 311, Port

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W. Warren, 13, Milton Road, Walthamstow, E., with boy about 16, in France.

John Gordon Wilson Leitch, 50, Armitage Road, Milsbridge, near Huddersfield, Yorks, E., aged 10, 12 in Arabia, Norway, Egypt, Italy, Spain, or Persia.

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 553.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 18.—George Francis Kerr.

KERR does not rank as low as eighteenth among the St. Jim's folk, either in my estimation, or, I am sure, in that of Mr. Martin Clifford's many thousands of admirers. He comes much higher than that; there are some rascals, I know, with whom he is first Lathom, but no order of merit or of interest could possibly set a series like this. If only for the reason that it would be a big mistake to leave all the less notable characters for the end. George Francis Kerr has qualities all his own. He is quite the longest-headed of all the St. Jim's juniors. He is somewhere near the coolest of them. He has courage as good as that of the best. He can stand as much in the way of strain and fatigue, without growling about it, as most. Though he is small and slight, he can hold his own at any game. His sense of humour, though different from Lownther's, and less a matter of words, is very keen indeed. And he is as loyal a chum as you could find anywhere. Biggy knows that, and so does Fatty Wynn, and they alone, though they stand nearest. The Terrible Three and the Chums of Study No. 8 on the Fourth passage, Talbot, Redfern & Co., these and others may all be counted among the chums of Kerr.

It is chiefly in two roles that one thinks of Kerr—as an impersonator and as a detective. The fellow is a born actor. Perhaps he could yield pride of place to Wilby of Greyfriars; but there is no one at St. Jim's to equal him. Monty Lowther comes second; but there is some distance between them.

Merely to give a list of Kerr's many impersonations would be of little use. To tell the story of each is obviously impossible. The one that I recall most vividly is that of "Walker," the supposed new boy, very dandy and very stupid, who came to the School House, and took in Tom Merry and the rest most completely. That was a big score for the New House; and many of Kerr's impersonations have been done in the cause of his own House against the School House, their deadly rivals and good friends. It was to lower School House pride and prestige that Kerr became a general—no general officer, but an Army general—and ordered about the Territorials who were camping at St. Jim's, and spoiled the concert which was being given there by the enemy. It was because for the time being Jack Blake's uncle, it was also out of a desire to make the School House sing small.

Kerr makes quite a charming girl, and the noble Arthur Augustus fell in love with him when he appeared in feminine guise. Another essay of this kind was directed against the Grammar Mr. Ratcliff. It was very pure to the feelings of that gentleman who has never married, which may be considered as a lucky thing for the whole female sex, since no one can tell whom he might have had as a life partner and victim—when a lady who claimed to be his wife turned up. Kerr never did anything more audacious than that, for he could hardly have escaped the sack had he been found out. As it was, he had to go for his life. But in such situations his coolness invariably serves him in good stead. However desperate the peril, Kerr does not lose his head.

He was in danger when, having made up as Knox's uncle, he found himself confronted by the real holder of that doubtfully disreputable title. As it was, he had to go as an impostor. But his chums stood by him and got him out of that scrape when all his resource was powerless to get him out on his own.

He has quite a fondness for making up as Mr. Lathom, the Form-master of the Fourth. Quite an easy one for Kerr, this, as he has long known. As a turn of speech and a trick of manner of that gentleman it was as Mr. Lathom that he went over to the Grammar School and recovered the declaration of superiority to the Grammarians which some of the St. Jim's juniors had been forced

to sign. Again he went on a somewhat similar mission in the same guise, and got back Glyn's ingenious line-riding machine, which had been captured by Gordon Gay & Co. Then, when Monty Lowther played Lathom, and took in those of the Fourth who were not in the secret, Kerr again played Lathom, and took in Lowther and the Shell!

He made up as Skimpolee once, and there were three Skimpolees about, for Glyn had made an automatic figure of the Shell philosophic genius. But perhaps that will be better dealt with when one comes to tell of Glyn and his many inventions.

Another exploit in the course of the long feud with the Grammarians was shared with Kerr by Tom Merry. They went to the Grammar School as two new fellows. Gay and the rest were in for a lively time while



the deception lasted, naturally; but it was not a complete success, for Gussy, in all innocence, spoiled it.

Kerr's coolness was well exemplified in all these happenings. But there is one slight funnier instance of it which must be mentioned here. Again and again has Kerr taken in Mr. Ratcliff; but never did he take him in more effectively than when, with two other fellows—but the dodge was Kerr's, of course—he led him on and on until he had taken him to a spot only just inside the new temporary boards imposed by the Head, and then the three sat down to take some refreshment. Mr. Ratcliff had stalked them every day of the way, under the delusion that they were quite unaware of his being on their track. He noticed upon them then. But what could he do? He was helpless. They had committed no offence; they certainly would not break boards while he was near; and he knew Kerr well enough to be sure that there was no use in lurking in hiding again after he had once been spotted.

One wonders—against which Mr. Ratcliff cherishes the most bitter animosity—Kerr, or

Figgins? Most assuredly he hates them both—hates them as no man has to be a teacher would or could hate any boy under his charge. Figgins is blunt and lacking in tact, and shows plainly that he has no liking for his sour Housemaster. Kerr can conceal his feelings better when he chooses, but he can think of a score of ways of riling Mr. Ratcliff where Figgins might have difficulty in hitting on one. In fact, Kerr is undoubtedly the brainy member of the famous New House trio. No one is more sure of that than are Figgins and Fatty Wynn. George Figgins holds Kerr's brains quite the best at St. Jim's, and does not mind saying so.

The constant trouble between the three and Mr. Ratcliff does not prove the contention made by some—that boys and masters are natural enemies. No decent fellow in the School House ever looks upon Mr. Ratcliff as an enemy; and no one admires that great-hearted gentleman more than such fellows as Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. do. Their feeling is one that really amounts to envy. Do what they may to make the best of their tyrant—and out of House loyalty they do that—they cannot pretend that he begins to compare with Ratcliff. And even as between those two, any outside the Third would have a fair case for upholding the superiority of Selby to Ratcliff, if anyone thought it worth while to argue the point. If the New House only had such chums as Ratcliff!

Kerr's detective exploits have been many; but, as with the impersonations, their number prevents any full account of them. The Scots Juniors has a logical and analytical mind. Manners may be his equal at mathematics and his better at chess, but Manners would be the first to admit that he could not touch Kerr in the School House. Kerr has the faculty of observation, which is most important. But many fellows have this faculty who are not detectives. Something needs to be added to the faculty of observation in the detective line. There are plenty of fellows who can walk past a shop window, for instance, and after one long glance be able to tell you most of the things that are in it, and to indicate the positions of many of them. That sort of thing is part of the excellent Boy Scout training, and, even alone, it has its uses. But the detective requires also the faculty of deduction. Having noticed something, he must be able to work back from the thing observed to something beyond it; it must tell a story to him. Deduction is Sherlock Holmes' strong card. It is his great strength again and again in Sir Conan Doyle's famous detective yarns. Holmes can tell a man's calling by slight indications that almost anyone else would overlook. It is not the ordinary police detective reads in one way he reads in quite another, because his mind goes farther than the other man's. It would be as well to compare Kerr to the most famous of detectives; yet it is correct to say that in his little way he is a disciple of the great Sherlock, who not only sees clues, but also reads them accurately.

The episode of Skimpolee's lost manuscript is a case in point. It was of no real value, though Skimpie thought it of epoch-making importance. Anything might have happened to it—anyone might have found it. It is not to go beyond the bounds of possibility when he allowed his mind to entertain the notion that it might have been stolen by Mr. Ratcliff. It was not to be so, but the Skimpie, on behalf of the Shell; Kerr, Roylance, and Levison for the Fourth—and points in the great Form competition hung upon the result. He was not a great detective, but he was a line, accepting the ordinary theory—that as the MS. had gone, someone must have taken it, and that as it was of no value to anyone, it must have been taken by the enemy. This narrowed their field considerably, but it

