

THE VALUE-FOR-MONEY STORY PAPER!

The **GEM** *1*
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"THE TUCK DOPERS!" & "MAKING A HERO!"

Two Grand Complete School Stories in this Issue.



A BAD TIME FOR THE "NUTS" OF THE SIXTH!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in our First Splendid School Tale in this issue.)

A Chance to Show What YOU Can Do!



NOTE.—Half-a-crown will be awarded to the sender of every paragraph published on this page.

A Reader at Torquay.

Dear Editor,—I have been a reader of the Companion Papers for nearly four years, but I have never noticed in the "Chat" any correspondence from Torquay, so I think you would be glad to hear from a Torquay boy. I was first introduced to the paper when I was working at an hotel as a page. A chum told me about the stories, and advised me to get them, so I have read them ever since.—John Cahill, 2, Temperance Place, Torquay, South Devon.

Mock Trials.

Much fun can be obtained by holding mock trials. You form a court of a judge, jury, counsel for the defence, counsel for the prosecution, court usher, constable, etc. The charge preferred may be one of bullying. The witnesses give their evidence, and the decision is referred to the jury. If the verdict is "Guilty!" the judge passes sentence of fining or suspension. Many a pleasant hour can be passed this way, and all boys enjoy it immensely. A table may be used for the judge's seat, and a desk will answer the purposes of a dock.—Alfred Goodman, St. Edmund's, 76, Auhurst Park, Stamford Hill, N. 16.

Napoleon at Elba.

A peculiar sentence was supposed to have been said by Napoleon when he was interned in the Isle of Elba: "Able was I ere I saw Elba." This is the only complete sentence which spells the same backwards as well as forwards in the English language.—C. A. Jackson, Manor House, Gladding Road, Manor Park, E. 12.

The Origin of Cigarette-Cards.

The cigarette-card, so popular to-day, came in with the cheap packet cigarettes. The card was a stiffener, and saved the cigarettes from being crushed in the pocket. Originally, the card was plain. Then an American firm started printing attractive photographs on these protective cards. Later on all sorts of designs were used. There are history subjects, also matters dealing with geography and other affairs of interest. The cigarette-cards dropped off considerably during the war, owing to the paper shortage.

but they are now beginning to appear again.—A. Morley, 102, Shaw Road, Shaw Heath, Stockport.

Two Tricks.

Get a glass of water and a fine sewing-needle. Rub a little machine oil, or, for that matter, any common oil, on the needle, and place it in the water very carefully. It will float if you put it down gently. Another trick is to fill a glass to the top with water, and place a sheet of writing-paper on the top of the glass, holding the paper on with your hand until you have inverted the glass. Remove your hand and the water will remain in the glass.—Thomas Molloy, Woodville, Lawton, near Kildgrove, Stoke-on-Trent.

"Lift Me Up!"

In some parts of Scotland large rocks are found with ancient writing cut deep into them. One such rock on a farm in Galloway bore the words carved on it: "Lift me up and I will tell you more!" The farmer did as enjoined. Assisted by the farm hands, he raised the boulder, but instead of finding that it covered some treasure they merely found these words on the other side: "Lay me down as I was before."—F. Brown, c.o. Mrs. Farmery, Dearne Valley View, Doncaster Road, Conisboro'.

The Ancient City of Dunwich.

This ancient city has long since been washed away by the sea. A great many years ago my father and grandfather were fishing off Dunwich, when, suddenly, their boat—the Dart—had its progress arrested. The two occupants tried to draw in their nets, but could not, so they towed them to shore, and found they had dragged up a portion of the old wall of the submerged city.—Ralph F. Herrington, Ivy Cottage, Mount Pleasant, Reydon, near Southwold, Suffolk.

Kangaroo Hunting.

In the old squattling days in Australia it was customary to hunt the kangaroo with dogs and horses. The game was chased till you could round one or two up and despatch them with heavy clubs. When a kangaroo is at bay in this

manner it can put up a good fight against the dogs, especially an 'old male', or 'boom' kangaroo, as they are called; and woe betide any dog that gets caught by such a "roo." It will grasp the dog firmly by its short fore-legs, and rip it up with its hind feet. One method adopted by the huntsman was to advance towards the quarry holding a short stick in his left hand pointed at the animal's nose. The kangaroo would stare at the stick as if fascinated, and the hunter had the chance to get in a death-blow with the big club in his right hand. There is more interest and excitement, however, in stalking the kangaroo with the rifle.—Herbert Atherton, 84, Clayton Street, Wigan.

The Biggest Bible.

The biggest Bible in the world is now at Oxford University. When standing on end the volume is over five feet two inches high, and nearly three feet six inches wide. The width of the back is ten inches. When the book is opened it measures about seven feet ten inches across. It is bound in rich, red Levant morocco leather of the best quality, twelve large goat-skins having been used for the binding. The book contains 175 sheets of stout paper-boards, attached by means of linen hinges to strips of similar material, which form the back of the book.—Sydney Clews, 28, Hollis Road, Stoke, Coventry.

Saving a Threshing.

Daniel Webster was frequently punished as a boy for appearing at school with dirty hands. On one occasion it occurred to him, as he was going to school, that his hands would hardly pass muster, so he tried to get one of them clean as he went along. The rubbing up did not improve things much, and on reaching school the master saw the state Webster was in. "Hold out your hand!" said the master. The boy produced the cleaner of the pair. "Daniel," said the master, "if you can find a dirtier hand in all the school than that I will let you off." The answer came at once. "Here it is, sir!" said Daniel, extending his other hand.—Cyvil Stamper, 20, Auckland Street, Gisborough, Yorks.

Contributions are invited from readers of the "GEM" for publication on this page. Anything will do, so long as it is interesting, short, and concise—a good joke, a description of a holiday, a bright idea for increasing the popularity of the "Gem," a good anecdote. "Pars" should not be more than three hundred words long—the shorter the better. They can be sent in on a postcard. Address all contributions to The Editor, The "Gem" Library, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and mark them "Readers' Own Corner."



CHAPTER 1.

Knox's Cunning.

"FOURPENNE!" said Manners. "Ninsepence, and a French ha'penny with a hole in it!" said Monty Lowther, with a broad grin.

"H'm!" said Tom Merry. "I've got one-and-sixpence, so together we've got a fat lot! Let's go down and meet the postman; he may have something for us."

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther heartily.

The Terrible Three had been counting out their money, and realised that the state of their combined exchequer was by no means bounteous.

This was rather unfortunate, for Gordon, Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, were paying St. Jim's a visit on the morrow, which was Wednesday afternoon, for the purpose of a return cricket-match.

Tom Merry and his merry men were fully determined to give the Grammarians the licking of their lives.

Tom Merry and Gordon Gay were rivals, but the best of good fellowship existed between them. And, as beforesaid, a hospitable host, Tom Merry wished to stand the Grammar School Junior Eleven a feed after the match, and provide them with the best spread that funds would allow.

But funds, when they totalled the magnificent sum of two-and-sevenpence—not counting Monty Lowther's French halfpenny—would not allow of much of a spread.

Therefore, Tom Merry was rather anxious to see what the afternoon post would bring forth. Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his affectionate guardian, might possibly have "turned up trumps" with a remittance, and a remittance would come like corn in Egypt, and be as welcome as flowers in May.

The Terrible Three left Study No. 10, and made their way down to the school gates to meet the postman, who was now due.

Several other fellows were there, too, waiting for the post, among them Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the noble swell of St. Jim's, and his chums—Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby.

Baggy Trimble, the fat youth of the Fourth, was also there.

Baggy Trimble lived in a state of eternal expectation of a remittance from Trimble Hall. Sometimes—generally about once a week—a remittance did come, and turned out to be for half-a-crown, or thereabouts.

But hope lived eternal in Baggy Trimble's breast, and he was ever waiting for something to turn up, like the celebrated Mr. Micawber.

"Hallo, Tommy!" grinned Jack Blake, as Tom Merry and his two faithful followers arrived. "Waiting for the postman?"

"You bet!" replied Tom. "We're rather stony, and we simply must stand Gordon Gay & Co. a feed after the match to-morrow. So I'm desperately anxious to see if there's anything for me in the afternoon post!"

Jack Blake & Co. chuckled.

"We'd willingly stand our whack," said Blake; "but we're in the same boat as you are—right down on our beam ends. I'm not expecting much, neither are Dig or Herries. Our only hope lies in Gussy. Perhaps his noble pater will have forked out another fiver."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wote to my patah, expressly requesting a fivah immediately. That beastly tailah at Wayland has put another five shillin's on the pwice of toppahs, and is chargin' an extra shillin' for neckties. It's weally most discouragin' to a fellah who is at all partic' about his clobber, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Theah is nothin' to laugh at, desh boys," said Gussy severely. "A fellah must have new toppahs and neckties, an' when the pwice of those articles goes up, then I cansadah it only weasonable of a fellah's patah to stand the extra. When pwices wise, incomes must wise, too; you know, to keep pace with the increase—othahwise, wheeah would a fellah be?"

"Oh, where and oh where would old Gussy be, without his toppers and neckties?" murmured Monty Lowther. "I say, Gussy, isn't it a shame that toppers are going up?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Gussy feelingly. "It is weally most distweasin'. I weally think I shall get my patah to mention

THE TUCK DOPERS!

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

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

the mattah in the House of Lords——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Don't laugh!" said Monty Lowther severely. "Toppers will go up, won't they, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove, they will, desh boy!" "Look at your topper, for instance!" said Monty Lowther. "That's just going up!"

Thus saying, Monty Lowther gave Gussy's topper an upward punch, which sent it sailing into the air.

"Gwoot Scott! Lowthah, you howwid beast——" gasped Arthur Augustus, glaring after his sailing topper. "You—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the others, as Gussy's topper went up.

"Your topper's just gone up!" chortled the humorous Monty. "And—oh, look, Gussy!—it's coming down again!"

Gussy's topper was now sailing to the ground.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dashed forward and made a grab at his topper. Monty Lowther was standing just there, and as Gussy grabbed at the descending topper Monty inserted his foot between Gussy's legs.

Down went the noble swell of St. Jim's on top of his topper, and an ominous scrunch denoted that the topper had been flattened out.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the chums of the School House, immensely tickled.

"Gwoogh! Oh, desh!" gasped Gussy, sitting up and blinking dazedly around him. "Lowthah, you feashful wuffian!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther. "What did you do that for Gussy?"

"I—I—I—"

Words failed the aristocratic Gussy. He sat there, sprawled upon the gravel path by the school gates, glaring at Monty as though he would have liked to eat him.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. looked on and roared. They saw the humour of the situation.

Just then a heavy step sounded on the gravel, and Gerald Knox, the bully of the Sixth, strode up.

He glared at the prostrate Gussy, and at the chortling juniors.

Knox seemed in a very bad mood that day.

afternoon. At the best of times Knox was surly, but now he seemed positively savage for what reason was not apparent.

"You young hooligans!" he grated. "What's the game?"

"Oh, I was just demonstrating to Gussy how toppers are going up!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Gussy's top went up, and came down again, and so did Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, you wotah!" gasped Gussy. "I'll give you a fearful thwashin' when I get up! Yow-ow! Pway assist me, deah boys!"

Chuckling with amusement over Monty's little joke, Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. sprang to the assistance of their prostrate chum.

They gathered round him in a group and prepared to haul him to his feet.

Suddenly a bicycle appeared in the gateway.

It was Blagg, the village postman, and at his side there hung his canvas bag, containing the letters.

Blagg was getting old, and he was always forgetful.

He saw that group of schoolboys directly in his path, but Blagg, in his surprise, forgot to steer out of the way.

Blagg was not an expert rider. He stared straight at the boys in his path, and consequently he made straight for them.

"Look out!" roared Knox. "You clumsy idiot!"

Crash!

Blagg's cycle struck the boys amidships and clattered amongst them. Blagg went flying from his saddle, and his bag flew from off his shoulders.

Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. were bowled over like ninespins.

Blagg's bicycle rattled down on top of Gussy, and Gussy went to earth again with a wild howl and a bump.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Knox. "Serves you right!"

"He, he, he!" giggled Baggy Trimble. From that wild, surging mass of juniors there arose a medley of howls and groans and grunts.

"Yaroooh!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Gerroff my chest!"

"Oooop!"

Confusion reigned supreme in the region of the school gates. Taggles came out of his little lodge and looked on, chuckling.

Gerald Knox looked round him, and his eyes lighted upon a pile of letters that had been flung from Blagg's bag as it was inverted in the air.

Almost at his feet there lay a letter, and Knox, half-bending, read the writing on the envelope.

It was in the well-known handwriting of Lord Eastwood, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's noble pater, and it was addressed to Gussy himself.

Into Knox's eyes there came a sudden, cunning gleam.

He looked furtively round him.

The boys were still struggling wildly to sort themselves out, Taggles was looking on, laughing heartily at the joke, and Baggy Trimble, too, was devoting all his attention to Blagg and the luckless heroes of the School House.

With a swift movement Knox bent down and picked up the letter. He thrust it into his pocket, and looked round hastily to see if he had been detected.

There was no cause for alarm, however. Nobody had seen Knox pick up D'Arcy's letter and place it in his pocket.

Knox walked hastily away from where THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 645.

he had been standing, and went over to the struggling juniors.

"You clumsy young monkeys!" he rasped. "Get up, or I'll pull you up!"

He bent down and yanked Herries to his feet.

Jack Blake then scrambled up, and one by one the others stood up, panting and gasping, and rubbing their sore places.

Blagg struggled to his feet, hugging a large bump on his forehead.

Gussy flung on the bicycle from him, and struggled unceremoniously to his feet.

Follows came running up from all directions, eager for letters, and wondering what had happened at the gates.

They laughed heartily when they saw. "Groooogh!" moaned Blagg hollowly.

"You young whelps! Why didn't you get out our way?"

"Why the thump didn't you look where you were going?" demanded Jack Blake hoarsely.

"Surely you could have guided past us!"

"Yow-ow!" groaned the village postman. "Look at my letters—all in the dirt!"

"Pick them up!" snapped Knox irritably. "It was mainly your fault, you young aweeps, for creating a disturbance in the gateway. Pick those letters up!"

Tom Merry & Co. hesitated at first, for they resented Knox's tone.

But they thought better of creating a further disturbance, and picked up the letters that had been scattered broadcast.

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, blinking homicidally at Monty Lowther. "You faithful boundah, Lowthah! I shall consider it my painful duty to administrah a fearful thwashin' to you when—"

"Shut up!" snapped Knox bad-temperedly. "Blagg, deliver those letters and cut off!"

"Yessir!" gasped Blagg. "The letters are all mixed now! Lemme see, this one is for Mr. Ratcliff. Here's one for Master Aubrey Racke—"

"Good!" came Aubrey Racke's voice. "Trot it out, old sport!"

By now the postman was surrounded by a whole crowd of St. Jim's boys, eager for letters.

Racke took his letter and opened it. His cronies, Crooke, Melish, and Scrope were there, and their eyes lit up with satisfaction when Racke drew forth a money-order for ten pounds.

"Good!" chuckled the black sheep of the Shell. "We're flush for a few days now!"

Blagg was busy sorting out his letters. Tom Merry & Co., and their chums of the Fourth, waited eagerly.

At last came a letter for Tom Merry, and the captain of the Shell seized it eagerly. It was from Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

He ripped the envelope open and dragged forth a letter, comprising four sheets, closely written, and a postal-order for two pounds.

"Hoorary!" cried Monty Lowther. "We're saved, Tommy!"

"Oh, good!" breathed Tom Merry. "Just in time! Good old Miss Priscilla!"

Jack Blake received a letter from his uncle, but no remittance. Herries and Digby had no letters at all.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waited breathlessly for a letter, but no letter came.

When Blagg had been through all the St. Jim's letters, Gussy's face fell.

"I—I say, Blaggah, deah boy," he said, "are you sure there's no lettah for me?"

"Well, there don't seem to be one, Master D'Arcy," said Blagg, scratching his head. "Though I ave a faint recollection of seein' one at the office. I'll ave another look!"

Blagg had another look, but found no letter for Gussy.

Gussy turned away, looking very disappointed.

"I can't undahstand it," he said morosely. "I'm weally awfully hard up, and I shall have to wish to my fathah for some monay. It's weally too bad of him!"

"Hard luck, Gus!" said Blagg sympathetically. "So you got two quid, Tommy?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Harry Noble got two quid from his uncle, too, and one or two of the others had remittances. I'll put my two quid, and we'll have a whip-race among the team, and I reckon we'll collect enough for quidlock doolah spread in honour of our visitors to-morrow!"

"Hear, hear!"

Gerald Knox, as he walked away, looked covertly at the chums of the School House.

He himself had received a letter from Rylecombe, written in the straggly, well-remembered hand of Joliffe, of the Green Man public-house.

Knox was in the habit of "sporting his oaks" at the Green Man, and indulging in various little pastimes which would have brought him instant dismissal from St. Jim's were they brought to the notice of the Head.

Knox owed Joliffe a little matter of four pounds, being the amount of his losses over a certain bet in connection with last week's Turf handicap. Joliffe was pressing Knox to pay up, and Knox could guess what was in that letter he had just received.

Knox had not paid up, for the simple matter that he could not.

The sight of D'Arcy's letter had been too great a temptation to him.

He knew that very probably that letter contained one of Lord Eastwood's famous fivers, and five pounds was just the sum required to tide him over his difficulty.

The rascally prefect of the Sixth watched Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. move away together, then he went upstairs to his study.

Arriving there, he ripped open Joliffe's letter, and read it with a scowl.

"I've got to pay up by to-morrow evening," he growled. "Well, let's see if there's anything in this other letter."

He tore Gussy's letter open, and gave an exclamation of satisfaction when he withdrew a rustling five-pound note.

The letter accompanying the note he did not even glance at. He crumpled it up, with the envelope, and threw them into the fire.

"Good!" he muttered, under his breath. "Nobody will ever know. The letter was lost—blown away by the wind, anywhere. And I'll go down and pay Joliffe to-morrow night, and shut his confounded mouth, for a time at any rate."

And Knox placed the stolen five-pound note into his pocket-book, consoling his conscience with the thought that Gussy would not miss it, and that its loss would not be discovered for a few days at least.

CHAPTER 2.

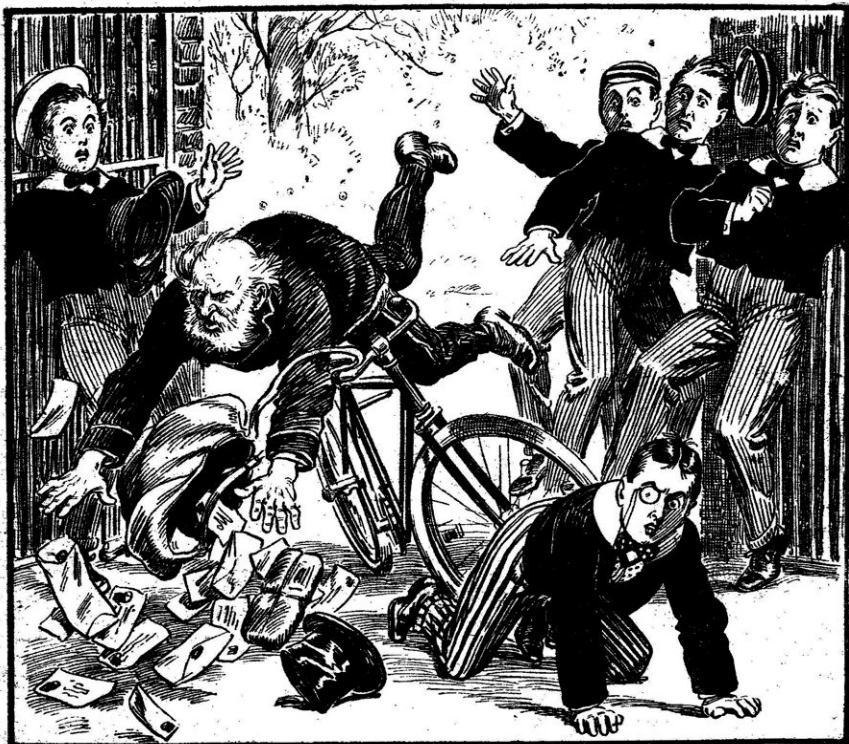
Racke's Cheats.

"COMING, you chaps?"

Tom Merry uttered these words cheerily as he passed down the School House steps half an hour later, with Monty Lowther and Manners.

Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby were there, discussing the important matter of tea.

With hands low, and the cupboard bare, they looked forward to nothing



"Look out!" roared Knox. "You clumsy idiot—" Crash! Blagg's cycle struck the boys amidstships, and clattered amongst them. Blagg went flying from his saddle, and his post bag flew over his shoulder, scattering the contents among the sprawling juniors. (See Chapter 1.)

better than tea in Hall, unless some Good Samaritan invited them out to tea.

"Coming where?" inquired Blake. "Down to the village, to lay in a supply of tuck!" said Tom Merry. "I've made a collection, and have five pounds to blub. There'll be no time to buy the tuck to-morrow, so we may as well get it to-night—and have tea off it to-day as well. Would you care to come and help us? Then we'll all have tea in my study afterwards."

The faces of Jack Blake & Co. cleared, and their eyes shone with enthusiasm. "We'll come—what-ho!" said Blake.

"Won't we, chaps?"

"Like a shot!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Gussy, who had dusted himself down, and sported another topper. "While we are down in the village I'll send a wiah off to my patah, askin' him why he didn't send the fivah as requested by my last lettab, and askin' him to wiah me one at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther looked rather nervously at Gussy, after having recovered from his severe shaking up by the collision with the bicycle, had sought for Monty Lowther to enact summary vengeance.

But Monty had made himself scarce.

Gussy caught Lowther's eye, and he frowned.

"Oh, heah you are, Lowthah, you foahful chump!" he said severely. "I have been lookin' for you, to give you a feahful thwashin', but as Tom Mewwy has invited us to be the guests of your Shell fellows at tea, undah the cires, I shall forgive you, Lowthah!"

"Oh, thanks, Gussy!" said Lowther, in elaborate relief.

"But," said Gussy chidingly, "it must not occur again, you ass!"

"Never!" said Lowther solemnly. "I swear it by the bones of my ancestors, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't wot, Lowthah!" said Gussy, frowning. "Let us pwoceed to the village, deah boys!"

And the dear boys "pwoceeded," grinning hugely.

They passed out of gates, and strolled down the lane leading to Rylcombe, humming cheerfully.

Tom Merry carried a large cricket-bag in which the tuck, when purchased, was to be bestowed.

Reaching the village, they made their way up the old High Street towards the bunshop.

The village bunshop was noted for the goodly viands it sold, both digestible and

indigestible. It specialised in French and Russian pastries, cream horns and custard tarts, and other comestibles that gladden the schoolboy's heart.

Tom Merry & Co. opened the door of the bunshop, and crowded inside.

The front part of the shop was empty, except for the charming little waitress behind the counter.

The bunshop was divided into two parts. Behind the shop was a little parlour, furnished with wicker chairs and small round tables, at which customers could sit and partake of their tea or ices.

This little back parlour was partitioned off from the main shop by means of a curtain, and this curtain was closed when Tom Merry & Co. and the Fourth Form heroes entered.

They stood around the counter, and selected the things they wished to purchase.

"We've got five pounds to spend," said Tom Merry, "so don't stint the orders, boys! Everything we like, Gordon Gay & Co. are sure to like. Let it never be said that St. Jim's did not extend a liberal hand of welcome to visitors and strangers within its gates!"

"Ha, hu, ha!"

Orders were rapped out thick and fast, and the pile of tuck grew and grew.

"My word!" said Monty Lowther, with shining eyes. "This will be a feast fit for the gods to-morrow, eh?"

"Yass, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "My only wewget, dear boy, is that I am unable to contribute. You see, I am quite stoney, until my patash sends along a wemitance!"

"Oh, that's all right, Gussy!" said Tom Merry affably. "Just you do your little bit in the Grammar School match to-morrow, and help give Gordon Gay & Co. a licking before we give them this feed, then you will have deserved well of your country and of St. Jim's!"

In the little parlour adjoining the bunshop four youths were seated, partaking of cordial and pastries.

They were Aubrey Racke, the leader of the rotters' brigade of the Lower School at St. Jim's, and his cronies, Mellish, Scrope, and Crooke.

The black sheep of the Shell, and his disciples were enjoying themselves on the strength of the money-order received that afternoon.

Racke was the son of a wall-profiteer, and his pater kept him always well supplied in cash.

Mellish, Scrope, and Crooke were not quite so fortunate as to have paters with plenty of "cof," but they managed to obtain a share of Racke's wealth.

Racke was a gay dog, and fond of "making a splash." He was standing treat this afternoon, and his associates were enjoying themselves at his expense.

They had been playing a quiet game of nap when they heard the door of the tuckshop open and a crowd of fellows enter.

"Shush-sh!" muttered Racke warningly. "Shove those cards away. It sounds like Tom Merry and his clique." Cards were hastily hid, and Aubrey Racke stood up and crept to the curtain.

Parting it very carefully, he peered into the shop, and there saw Tom Merry and his chums, with Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

"My word!" muttered Racke. "They're going to buy up the blessed shop by the look of things!"

And, indeed, that seemed to be the case.

Racke & Co. looked on from behind the curtain with great interest as Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to give their orders and fill their cricket-bag with good things.

"Quiet!" muttered Racke. "We don't want them to know we're here, if possible. So they are going to stand Gordon Gay & Co. a feed to-morrow, after their confounded match! The fools!"

The young rascals in the back parlour remained very quiet, and watched Tom Merry & Co. complete their purchases.

At length their money was expended, and the cricket-bag crammed to overflowing with all manner of luscious edibles. There was not enough room in the bag for all the good things, and parcels were made of these, to enable the boys to carry them.

Tom Merry settled the account, and he and his chums retired from the bunshop, staggering beneath the weight of the tuck they had purchased.

When the door had shut behind the heroes of the Lower School, Aubrey Racke & Co. sat down again at the table in the little back parlour and chucked.

"Oh, wouldn't I like to spoil their little game, somehow!" said Racke spitefully. "I've got a few scores to settle with both Tom Merry and Gordon Gay."

Why, only yesterday a gang of those Grammar School cads came along Rylcombe Lane when I was sitting on the stile enjoying a fag. Of course, they couldn't mind their own business. They grabbed me, stuffed my fags down my neck, and then chucked me into the ditch. Don't you remember I came back wringing wet, and had to change in the old barn?"

Mellish and Scrope chuckled.

"Yes, rather!" said Scrope, with relish. "You copped out properly, didn't you, Racke?"

Racke ground his teeth.

"I'll gam my own back on 'em!" he said sulkily. "Tom Merry, too, can't mind his own business—hang him! He copped me clipping young Joe Framme's ear this morning, and he clipped my ear instead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorried Crooke, Scrope, and Mellish.

Racke glared.

"Shut your confounded cackling!" he grunted. "I'm going to pay those rotten cads out, and—by Jove!—I've thought of an idea."

Racke's precious satellites looked eagerly at him.

"What is it, Racke?" inquired Mellish.

Racke chuckled.

"We won't raid their tuck," he said.

"I know of a wheeze worth half a dozen of that. We'll get at their tuck and dope it!"

"Eh?"

Crooke, Mellish, and Scrope looked at their leader in surprise.

"Dope it!" said Racke, chucking. "I know of a certain chemical, obtainable at any chemist's, which, when placed in Tom Merry's tuck, will work wonders. It is a colourless liquid, and has no taste, and a little of it goes a long way. When a fellow swallows a little drop of it, no effects are noticeable until half an hour or an hour afterwards. Then he gets most awful tummy-aches, and it screws him up for hours!"

"My hat!"

"Don't you see the wheeze?" said Racke eagerly. "I'll get some of that stuff, and we'll put it on that tuck Tom Merry has just bought. It will be easy for us to get at it after tea. We'll dope their tuck, and to-morrow, after they've eaten it, they'll have a high old time. They'll think they've been poisoned, and there'll be ructions!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke's disciples simply roared at their leader's scheme.

"That will be a fine revenge!" chuckled Aubrey Racke, in great satisfaction. "You've no idea what awful pains that stuff produces. Let's run along to the chemist's and get some now!"

"What-ho!"

The four young rascals emerged from the parlour, Racke settled the bill, and together they made their way into the High Street.

Looking round, they saw Tom Merry & Co. outside the post-office. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just gone inside, in order to wire to Lord Eastwood.

"Come on!" said Racke. "Don't let them spot us unless you can possibly help it!"

The village drug store was not far away, and Racke & Co. reached it without being observed by Tom Merry & Co. Aubrey Racke himself entered the shop, and asked for the liquid he required. The chemist seemed rather surprised that a schoolboy should require it, but made no demur about serving Aubrey Racke.

When Racke emerged from the chemist's, he had in his pocket a large bottle full of his "dope."

"I've bought enough to send the whole of St. Jim's rolling in agony for a week!" grinned the scapegoat of the Shell. "Have those rotters cleared off?"

"Yes," replied Mellish. "When do we dope the tuck?"

"This evening," replied Racke. "Tom Merry is sure to keep the tuck in his room, and it will be an easy matter to get at it, once they are out of the way. I'm a pretty good hand at picking locks, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, chucking hugely over Aubrey Racke's little scheme, the four young rascals ambled up the High Street, purchased some cigarettes, and bent their footsteps back to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

The Dopers.

TEA was over in Study No. 10. Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners had entertained Jack Blake & Co. right sumptuously.

The tuck which they had purchased in Rylcombe was of the best, and what the chums of the School House had requisitioned for tea that day was not a tenth of the whole.

"Toppie!" said Arthur Augustus

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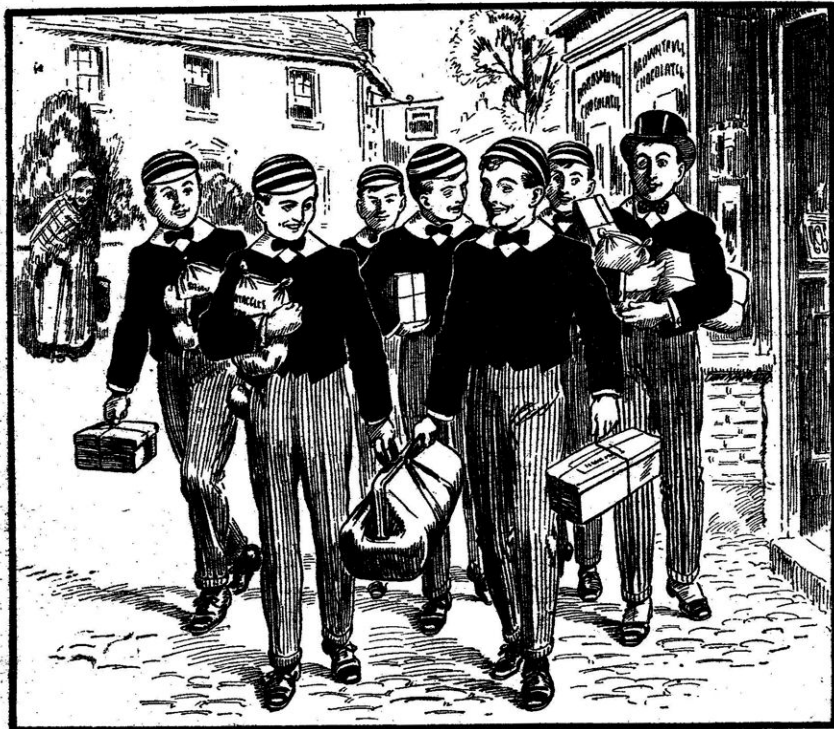
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Tom Merry settled the account, and he and his chums left the bunshop, staggering beneath the weight of the tuck they had purchased. From behind the curtain in the shop Racke & Co. watched them go. (See Chapter 2.)

D'Arcy, as he rose from the table. "We'll have quite a tea-party to-morrow afternoon, hai Jove!"

"Rather!" agreed Jack Blake heartily. "Are you going to keep the tuck in here, Tommy?"

"Yes; in the cupboard," replied Tom Merry. "I'll lock the cupboard door, so it will be quite safe."

"H'm!" said Blake. "It might get raided, you know. Better let us keep it."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Help us stow it in the cupboard, Blake."

Willing hands assisted Tom Merry in the task of piling up the good things on the bottom shelf of the study cupboard.

By the time all the tuck was inside the cupboard the shelf was full to overflowing.

"Good!" said Tom Merry, as he closed and locked the cupboard door. "That will be quite safe, I reckon. Now, our next job is to go over and see Figgins about the match to-morrow. Of course, he'll want an extra New House chap in the team, but it can't be did!"

"No fear!" said Blake, shaking his head.

"So let's go over and explain to him," said Tom Merry. "Those New House bounders will just about have finished tea by now."

So Tom Merry, followed by his faithful henchmen, left Study No. 10 and proceeded downstairs.

They passed out of the School House and bent their steps across the quadrangle to the New House, where the mighty Figgins held sway.

Four stealthy figures were lurking by the School House steps as Tom Merry & Co. passed by.

"They're gone!" muttered Aubrey Racke. "Paying a visit to the New House, I expect. Well, we've plenty of time to work the giddy oracle now, haven't we?"

"Buck up!" said Mellish furtively. "You never know who might not look in at Tom Merry's study and cop us!"

So the four young rascals went indoors and proceeded to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage, the headquarters of the Terrible Three.

Arriving there, Racke cautiously pushed the door open and peered within. The room, of course, was empty.

"Come in here with me, Crooke!" muttered Aubrey Racke. "Mellish and Scrope can keep cave outside."

Mellish and Scrope were not at all unwilling.

Racke had the bottle of "dope" with him, and he and Crooke crept into Tom Merry's study.

"The stuff is in the cupboard, I ex-

pect!" murmured Racke, trying the cupboard door. "Ah! The thing's locked. Never mind; I'll soon see to that!"

Racke withdrew from his pocket a length of wire, bent at the end.

He inserted this into the lock of the cupboard door, and was engaged twisting and turning it for nearly five minutes.

At last there was a click, and Racke pulled the door open.

"Done it!" he chuckled. "Now to do the tuck! My word, here it is!"

"Buck up over the job, Racke. Somebody might come along at any moment," said Crooke hastily.

"Right-ho!" said Racke.

He withdrew the bottle from his pocket, and a fountain-pen filler.

The fountain-pen filler was clean, and Racke, drawing the cork of the bottle, inserted the filler into the bottle and filled it with the "dope."

Crooke handed him down a pork-pie. Racke inserted the filler into the crust of the pie and squirted the dope into the interior.

"That's doped the pie!" chuckled Racke. "Any more?"

"Lots!" chuckled Crooke, and he handed down some more pies.

These pies were similarly treated, and,

when all the pies were doped, Racke paid attention to the tarts and pastries.

A small amount of "dope" was placed into each tart and into each pastry. Then the cakes were treated to a dose of Racke's mysterious liquid. Tiny holes were punctured in the tins of preserves, and the dope inserted by means of the fountain-pen filler.

At last all the tuck in the cupboard was treated with dope, and Racke and Crooke stacked up the good things so as to leave them just as they had found them.

"That's that job jobbed!" chuckled the black sheep of the Shell, as he re-corked the bottle of dope, and placed the fountain-pen filler back into his pocket. "Those cads will never know I've been at their tuck, and they won't know it's been tampered with until after they've eaten it. Then they'll suffer with all sorts of aches and pains, and will think they've been poisoned. Ha, ha, ha!"

Then came Mellish's voice from the study doorway.

"Cave! Here comes Baggy Trimble! If he sees us here he's sure to split to Tom Merry. Clear out—quick!"

Racke followed Crooke to the door. Mellish and Scrope met them.

"Get out of sight before Trimble rounds the corner," said Mellish swiftly. "Here's Gore's room, and nobody is in. Hop in here!"

The door of Study No. 9 was opened, and the four young rascals darted hastily inside.

Next moment a heavy step sounded on the passage, and Baggy Trimble, the fat boy of the Fourth, rolled into view.

Upon Baggy's face there was a crafty look, and an eager gleam shone in his eye.

Baggy Trimble looked stealthily up and down the passage, but saw nobody.

Then he stepped up to the door of Study No. 10 and tapped.

He received no reply, of course. Then he opened the door and peeped within.

"Oh, good!" he muttered. "They're all out. I—I wonder where Tom Merry has hidden that tuck. I'm hungry!"

Baggy rolled into the study, and closed the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER 4.

Rough on Baggy.

BAGGY TRIMBLE'S eyes gleamed when he saw the study cupboard door open.

"My word!" he murmured. "Surely Tom Merry hasn't put the tuck in there, and left the door unlocked! I— Oh, my word! There's the tuck!"

Baggy's eyes sought the interior of the cupboard, and he gasped with delight when he beheld that gorgeous array of tuck on the cupboard shelf.

"Whe!" exclaimed the fat boy of the Fourth, going down almost reverently upon his hands and knees. "What a ripping selection of tuck! My aunt! Fancy Tom Merry being so careless as to leave the door of the cupboard unlocked!"

The mouth of Baggy Trimble fairly watered as he inspected the array of good things before him.

"I—I'm hungry," he muttered to himself peevishly. "I don't get enough to eat at this school, and—and I could do with a snack. I'll sample some of Tom Merry's tuck. If he misses it—well, it serves him right for being so beastly careless!"

Thus saying, Baggy Trimble stretched out a fat hand and grasped a rabbit-pie. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 645.

It did not take Baggy Trimble long to make himself acquainted with the contents of that pie.

He used a knife and fork from the cupboard, and wired away at the pie with great enjoyment.

His jaws went like clockwork, and the pie disappeared with startling rapidity.

A few moments later he took down a bottle of currant wine, uncorked it, and proceeded to imbibe the contents.

In a very short space of time the bottle was emptied.

Baggy Trimble was warning to his work.

"I'll try that Madeira cake!" he murmured, and suited his actions to his words.

The cake was soon demolished, and Baggy, like Alexander of old, looked round for fresh worlds to conquer.

His eye had just alighted upon a gooseberry-tart, when a sharp, shooting pain within him caused him to start violently.

"Ow!" muttered Baggy Trimble, an expression of alarm upon his face. "What was that?"

Again Baggy was conscious of a stabbing pain in the region of his Little Mary, this time more pronounced than before.

"Yow-ow!" moaned Baggy, clapping a hand to his waistcoat, and going pale. "I—I've got a pain— Groooogh!"

This last remark was wrested from Baggy's lips as he felt a giant stab somewhere beneath his waistcoat.

Baggy Trimble rolled over upon the study-carpet and groaned in agony.

Turbulence and strife seemed to be in progress within his tummy. It felt for all the world as if legions of relentless foes were stabbing him with knives, and wreaking chaos within him.

Yar-ooogh! Yow-ooogh! Oooogh!" wailed Baggy Trimble, writhing upon the carpet in agony. "Help! Fire! Murder! I've been poisoned! Yar-ooogh!"

Baggy Trimble was now suffering agonies of torture. Dire disturbance within him caused him to shriek in torment, and he raised his voice in an anthem of distress.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

Suddenly the study door burst open, and three startled faces looked within.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther gazed at the writhing figure upon their study-carpet in amazement and wonder.

"My only sainted topper!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Trimble!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-oooh!" moaned Trimble. "Hellup!"

Tom Merry and his chums strode into the study and glared down at Baggy.

"What's the matter?" demanded Tom Merry. "What are you making that horrid noise for, Trimble?"

"Yar-ooogh!" wailed Trimble. "I've been p-p-poisoned! It's all your fault, Tom Merry! Wo-oogh!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked around them in wonderment.

They gasped when they saw their cupboard door wide open, and the remains of Baggy's stolen feast near by.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, looking first at the cupboard and then at the prostrate Trimble.

"The young burglar! He's opened our cupboard door and wolfed our tuck!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, a grim expression crossing his features.

"Trimble, you young rascal!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" moaned Trimble, writhing convulsively. "I'm d-d-dying! Call a d-d-doctor—quick! Wow-ow-ow-ow!"

The expression of execrating torture upon Baggy Trimble's face was truly heartrending to behold. Tom Merry,

Manners, and Lowther gazed at him, and they could see that Baggy was not "spoofing," as at first they had suspected.

"What's the matter, Trimble?" demanded Tom Merry in perplexity. "Have you got the stomach-ache?"

"Yow-ow!" moaned Trimble, lifting two haggard eyes to gaze upon Tom Merry. "It's like a thousand stomach-aches rolled into one! Yowp! Your grub is poisoned, Tom Merry! If I die, my death will lay at your door! Groooogh!"

Tom Merry looked wildly at his chums.

"He—he says our tuck is poisoned!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "It's impossible, Tommy! Why; we've had a lot of it for tea to-day!"

"Of course!" replied Manners. "I expect that fat tuck has over-gorged himself until he's given himself a bilious attack!"

Then Jack Blake, Herries, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in, and gazed at the writhing Baggy in amazement.

"Gerrugh!" moaned Baggy, clasping his waistcoat tightly. "Hellup! I've been poisoned, Blake, by these rotters! Yow-ow! Their tuck is poisoned!"

"Boosh!" snapped Jack Blake curtly. "You've been over-gorging, you fat cormorant! You jolly well deserve to suffer for your greediness, and we have no pity for you. Let's yank him upstairs to the dormitory—chaps, and lay him on his bed to get over it."

"He—he seems to be in a jolly bad way," said Tom Merry slowly. "Catch hold of him."

In spite of Trimble's groans and protests, the chums of the Fourth dragged him from Tom Merry's study and upstairs to the dormitory.

They laid him upon his bed and left him there, groaning and writhing.

"He'll soon get over it," said Blake, as he rejoined the Terrible Three downstairs. "I have no sympathy for a greedy tuck like Trimble. Fancy saying our tuck was poisoned, the chump!"

"He's smashed the lock of my study cupboard," said Tom Merry, frowning.

"The grub's not safe in my cupboard now. Would you chaps mind keeping it for me?"

"What-ho!" said Blake readily. "I reckon Trimble won't be in a hurry to steal that grub again. We'll shove it in our study cupboard, and lock it up."

So the tuck was removed from Tom Merry's study cupboard and conveyed to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, where Jack Blake & Co. had their quarters.

It was stowed in the cupboard, and the cupboard door locked.

Half an hour later a limp, forlorn youth descended the stairs from the dormitory, and sought his study in the Fourth Form passage.

It was Baggy Trimble, and his sufferings had by now abated.

Baggy had had a most uncomfortable time, and he inwardly vowed never to raid Tom Merry's study again.

CHAPTER 5.

Sold!

FAG! Gerald Knox strode down the Sixth Form passage, uttering this cry in loud tones.

Wally D'Arcy of the Third, who happened to be at the end of the passage when he heard Knox's cry, promptly made himself scarce.

Knox was the most disliked prefect at St. Jim's, especially among the fags, and flogging for Knox was considered to be an ordeal, not an honour.

"Fag!" bawled Knox, bad-temperedly.

Knox received no reply.
Knox was holding a little party in his study that evening.
He was entertaining Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger of the Fifth.

Knox's party was ostensibly a tea-party, but afterwards cards would be produced, and cigarettes; and the black sheep of the Senior School would spend their evening playing nap.

Knox ground his teeth as he received no response to his call for a fag.

"That young aweeps!" he muttered. "They can hear me, right enough! Fag!"

At that moment the door of Kildare's study opened, and Percy Mellish of the Fourth appeared.

He looked nervously at Knox, as the prefect glared at him.

"Ah, Mellish!" exclaimed Knox.

"You'll do," he snapped Mellish sulkily.

"I'm not your fag, Knox, and you know jolly well you're not allowed to fag Fourth-Formers!"

Knox sneered.

"I'll fag you, Mellish, if I choose!" he said. "I want you to go down to the tuckshop and buy me some provisions for tea!"

"I—I won't!" said Mellish rebelliously. "If you don't let me go, Knox, I'll call Kildare!"

"Oh, will you?" said Knox, leering at Mellish. "Who was up in the box-room this afternoon, smoking fags—eh?"

Mellish started.

He and Scrope and Aubrey Racke had enjoyed a quiet smoke in the box-room early that afternoon, and had fondly imagined that nobody knew.

Evidently Knox must have spied upon them.

"I—I—I—" stammered the cad of the Fourth, in confusion.

"Yes, I know it was you!" sneered Knox. "I didn't say anything to Mr. Latham, because it didn't suit my purpose. But it will suit my purpose, Mellish, unless you do as you are told!"

Mellish looked malevolently at the prefect. Although they were fellows of the same kidney, no love was lost between them.

"You—you rotter!" he panted. "I'll go!"

"Good!" grinned Knox. "I knew you would! Take this five-pound note, and get a quid's-worth of tuck from Dame Taggles'. Mind, I want a full quid's-worth—no thieving it down in the quad! And back up, Mellish, or you'll get a thrashing when you get back!"

Mellish took the five-pound note sulkily, and walked away.

Knox gave a sneering laugh, and returned to his room.

"The cad!" muttered Mellish, glaring spitefully after the prefect. "I wonder where he got this fiver from? I suppose he's had a run of luck on the cards, or on the gee-gees. The spying rotter! I'd make him sit up, if I could!"

Then into Mellish's eyes there came a sudden cunning gleam.

"Well, he may," he murmured. "I wonder if I could? It would just serve the cad right if—only it could be worked!"

Mellish hastened his footsteps downstairs, and made his way up the Shell passage.

At the door of Study No. 5 he halted, and tapped.

The cynical voice of Aubrey Racke bade him enter.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Racke, as Mellish entered. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," replied Mellish. "Knox has sent me out to change a five-pound note for him. Can you do it, Racke?"

"No, I can't," said Racke sulkily. "I'd do nothing to oblige that cad. Try your door, Mellish!"

"Look here, be a sport, Racke!" said Mellish. "There's nobody else in the House who can change it, and it means me running down to the tuckshop if you won't. You might as well—to oblige me, Racke!"

"To oblige you!" grinned Racke. "Well, I like that, Mellish! Anyhow, I'll do it to oblige myself. A fiver is more convenient to carry about than five Bradburys; besides, it looks better when you want change. I'll do it, Mellish!"

Racke withdrew a fat pocket-book from his breast-pocket, and extracted five pound notes. These he handed to Mellish in exchange for the fiver.

"Thanks, old chap!" grinned Mellish, opening the door. "So-long!"

He hastened up the Shell passage, turning into the Fourth Form passage at the end of the corridor.

Mellish went up to the door of Study No. 6 and knocked.

His heart beat wildly as he waited for a reply.

But no reply came, and Mellish chuckled with satisfaction.

He opened the door, and sped quickly inside.

"I expect they're in Tom Merry's study, jawing cricket!" he murmured.

"I wonder if I've a key to fit their cupboard door?"

He withdrew from his pocket a large bunch of keys—keys which he had made a habit of collecting from time to time.

He tried them one after another at Jack Blake's study cupboard, and, he gave a grunt of satisfaction when at last the lock clicked open, and he was able to open the cupboard door.

There, on the floor of the cupboard, was stacked a huge pile of tuck—tuck that had been doped by Aubrey Racke that afternoon.

"Good!" chuckled Mellish, under his breath. "I'll give old Knox a quid's-worth of this; and keep the quid! I'll get my revenge on the cad, and at the same time be a quid in pocket! He, he, he!"

Mellish selected various items from that ample assortment of tuck in the cupboard, until he had extracted exactly a pound's-worth.

Then he made the remainder of Tom Merry's tuck look as presentable as possible, made a parcel of the things he had raided, unlocked the cupboard, and crept softly from the study.

Fortune favoured the cad of the Fourth, for he did not meet a single fellow in the Fourth Form passage.

Fellows passed him on his way up to Knox's study; but, of course, they could not suspect that the parcel which Mellish carried contained raided goods.

CHAPTER 6.

Sorrows of Seniors.

"THIS is top-hole!" said Cutts, his mouth full of cream-bun.

"Yes, rather!" said St. Leger. "Pass the jam, please, Knox! Young Mellish knows how to choose grub!"

Knox chuckled, and passed the jam.

He was well satisfied with the tuck that Mellish had bought him. Tea was in full progress, and the four seniors were making vast inroads into the good things.

They had excellent appetites, and soon the plentiful supply of edibles on the table began to diminish.

By the time Knox and his guests from the Fifth had finished their tea, not much remained uneaten.

"Jolly good spread, Knox!" said Cutts heartily, as he helped the others clear away. "Now for a little game of nap—eh?"

"Sure!" grinned Knox, producing the cards. "I'm out to win a bit from you

fellows this evening—make you pay for the tea, you know! I've got some good fags, too!"

"Good man!" said Gilmore. "Trot them out, Knox!"

The cigarettes were "trotted" out, and the four rascally seniors settled down to play nap.

"Tanner a time, to start!" said Knox, as he dealt the cards. "We've an hour to play before bed-time!"

"Oh, good!"

Cigarettes were lit, and Gerald Knox & Co. settled down to a game of nap.

As the game proceeded, Knox began to feel very pleased with himself, for he was winning all along the line.

"Play up!" he chuckled, raking in another contribution to his bank. "Make it a shilling, Cutts?"

"Not yet!" growled Cutts. "I—Ow!"

The others looked at Cutts in astonishment as the Fifth-Former gave vent to that sudden exclamation.

"What's the matter, Cutts?" demanded Gilmore. "Got a pain?"

"Yes!" gasped Cutts, his face going ashen pale! "Yow-ow! Ow! I do f-f-feeel bad!"

"You've been eating something that didn't agree with you!" said Knox flippantly. "Cheer up! You'll soon be all right, and—Yow-ow!"

Knox caught his breath, and gave a yell of pain as something seemed to jab at him beneath his waistcoat.

Gilmore and St. Leger shifted uncomfortably in their seats.

They began to feel uneasy, and a feeling of foreboding crept up within them—a feeling that suddenly resolved itself into something more definite.

"Yah! Gerrugh!" howled Gilmore, leaping from his chair, and clapping his waistcoat. "Oh, help!"

"Yaroooooh!" screeched St. Leger, leaning forward on the table, and rocking his head to and fro in agony. "Yow! Call a doctor! We've been poisoned!"

"Yerrrugh!"

"Grooooooh!"

"Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Yoooooo!"

Four voices were raised in agony; four faces went deathly white, four hands were clasped tightly to four waistcoats, and the four wearers thereof writhed and squirmed in the throes of physical torture.

"Oh dear!" moaned Knox, who seemed to be afflicted with Bolshevism in the interior. "Call the Head—quick! That young villain Mellish has poisoned us! Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Ow! This is awful!" sobbed St. Leger, his face contorting itself in a most weird and wonderful manner. "I—I feel as though I shall die—die! Ooooooh!"

Cutts and Gilmore collapsed upon the study carpet, and rolled over and over in the midst of their agonies.

"Help!" bellowed Knox, in as strong a voice as he was capable. "Help!"

Then came the sound of opening doors, and of voices without raised in tones of alarm.

"Help!" hooted Knox, in anguish. "In here, quick!"

The door was burst open, and the first to enter was Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's.

Behind him came Rusden and Darrel and North and Baker.

They stared at the suffering seniors in consternation.

"Knox!" ejaculated Kildare. "What the dickens is the matter?"

Knox & Co. surveyed their fellow seniors with haggard looks.

"Yow-ow!" moaned St. Leger, his face

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pale with suffering. "We—we've been eating poisoned grub! Ow! Call a doctor!"

"What!" exclaimed Kildare, in amazement. "You've been eating poisoned tuck? Impossible!"

A chorus of hollow groans arose from the writhing seniors in the study.

One glance was sufficient to convince them that Knox & Co. were in the throes of excruciating agonies.

Knox's face was twisted up into a contortion of misery, and the manner in which he writhed and squirmed was truly alarming to behold.

"My hat!" exclaimed Darrel seriously. "Something's wrong, Kildare. We'd better get them to the san'y!"

Kildare nodded.

"Help them up!" he said shortly. Kildare, Darrel, North, and Rushden supported the groaning quartette, and led them carefully downstairs.

The crowd of juniors fell back in surprise and consternation as the procession passed, and there were not a few faces amongst them which showed signs of satisfaction.

Knox, Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger were not popular at St. Jim's, and to see them in the throes was not an unpleasant sight to many fellows who had in the past suffered at the seniors' hands.

With great care and caution Kildare and his three fellow prefects led the sufferers over to the sanatorium.

Miss Marie met them at the door, and looked pityingly upon Knox & Co.

"Poor fellows!" she said softly. "They had better get straight to bed in Ward 3."

So into Ward 3 were Knox, Cutts, St. Leger, and Gilmore led.

Gently did Kildare and his colleagues unress them and help them into bed.

They lay between the sheets, groaning and moaning in a most heartrending manner.

"Cheer up!" said Kildare heartily, as he and the others prepared to leave. "You'll be all right in the morning!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from the four beds.

Bidding Miss Marie good-night, Kildare, North, Rushden, and Darrel departed.

Knox, Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger were left in bed in Ward 3, groaning away as if their very last moments had arrived.

Miss Marie prepared some physic for them, and ten minutes later she brought it in to them in four glasses.

"Here you are," she said cheerfully, with one of her sweet smiles. "Drink this, and you are sure to feel ever so much better."

She gently assisted Knox to sit up, and held out the physic for him to take.

Knox gulped it down, and as he did so the expression on his face was really remarkable. The medicine was not exactly palatable, and Knox shuddered.

"Groooogh!" he spluttered. "Oh dear!"

Gilmore came next, and he took his physic with a gurgle and a discord of grunts.

Then St. Leger and Cutts took their medicine, and they screwed their faces up into all manner of gruesome contortions, for they did not find the physic nice.

"Gerrugh!"

"Oh crumbs! Yah!"

"Yerrugh!"

"There!" said Miss Marie softly. "You will feel better soon, and the doctor will be here in ten minutes to see to you."

She tripped gently from the ward, and left the four seniors alone.

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CHAPTER 7.

A Discovery.

"BAGGY TRIMBLE!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He gazed in amazement at the telegram he had just received.

It was next morning, and lessons were just over.

Blake, Herries, and Digby, who were in Study No. 6 with Gussy when the telegram arrived, looked inquiringly at their chum.

"What's wrong, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"G'wreat Scott!" ejaculated Gussy, blinking through his monocle at the missive. "Oh dear!"

"You clump!" shrieked Jack Blake impatiently. "What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Good gwacious!" gasped D'Arcy, turning to his chums. "This wish is f'rom my patah. He says that he sent me a f'vah on Monday, and it should have aw'wived by yesterday's post!"

"Great pip!" exclaimed Blake, in great consternation. "You don't say so, Gussy!"

"Wead that, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, handing the telegram to Blake.

Blake, Herries, and Digby eagerly read what the telegram contained.

"Five-pound note sent Monday. No. 000752. Should have arrived yesterday—EASTWOOD."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Jack Blake, handing the telegram back to his noble chum. "You didn't get that fiver, Gussy!"

"No, wathah not, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, in distress. "Wheah-can it have disappahed to? It's either lost, stolen, or—"

"Strayed!" said Blake, with a sudden gleam of inspiration. "Don't you remember, Gussy, when Blagg bowled us all over in the gateway, that his letters were knocked out of the bag and scattered all over the ground? Perhaps your letter was blown away, or—or picked up by somebody and not given to you!"

"Oh, cwumbs!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in dismay. "Surely you don't think somebody is unscrupulous enough as to steal my f'vah, Blake!"

"There are plenty of unscrupulous people in this school!" growled Blake. "For instance, somebody burgied our cupboard last night, and walked off with about a quid's-worth of tuck!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'd like to know the rotter who did it!" said Blake grimly. "It wasn't Baggy Trimble, for I've asked him, and—well, he's proved he hasn't had it. Nobody seems to have had it, and yet it's gone."

"There can't be much left, at that rate!" said Digby. "And Gordon Gay & Co. are coming this afternoon!"

"Yes," said Blake. "Tom Merry had better know about it. We'll go along and see him."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thrust his pater's telegram into his pocket, and followed his three chums from the study.

They looked in at Tom Merry's den in the Shell passage, but found it empty. So they proceeded down to the quadrangle, and Blake espied the Terrible Three beneath the old elm in the cloisters.

The chums of the Fourth went over to Tom Merry & Co., and Blake acquainted them with the news that his cupboard had been raided, and a quantity of tuck stolen.

"Oh, cwumbs!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Somebody's got designs on our tuck, and no mistake. Who could it have been, I wonder?"

"Goodness knows!" growled Blake. "The only likely fellow is Trimble, and I've asked him. He swears he wouldn't touch any more of that tuck for ten quid, because it's poisoned, the ass!"

"Poisoned!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a sudden start. "My hat, I wonder if Knox had that grub last night? Baggy Trimble, after scoffing some of our tuck, was ill, and said it was poisoned, and Knox was ill last night, after eating some tuck he swore was poisoned. And some of our tuck was missing, too. I wonder if there is any connection?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Monty Lowther swiftly. "I reckon you've hit the right nail on the head, Tommy! Knox must have raided Blake's study and pinched our tuck. And—there must be something wrong with it, somehow!"

"But it's impossible!" interjected Manners. "We sampled some of it for tea on Tuesday, didn't we?"

"Ye-es," said Tom Merry. "But somebody might have doped it afterwards, you know. The lock of our study cupboard was busted, you remember, and Trimble swears he didn't do it. He told me only last night that he found the door already open!"

"Gee-aw-hiz!" exclaimed Blake. "There's a rotter at work somewhere in this school, Tommy. Why, Gussy's had a fiver pinched!"

"What!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy showed Tom Merry & Co. the telegram he had received from his father. The Terrible Three gave vent to low whistles of consternation when they read it.

"So that letter containing the fiver is missing!" exclaimed Tom Merry, his brows puckering in perplexity. "I wonder where it has gone to? As you say, Blake, it may have got blown away when it fell out of Blagg's bag. And, on the other hand, it may have been picked up and—stolen!"

Jack Blake & Co. nodded morosely. "Let me see," pursued Tom Merry thoughtfully, "who was there besides us? Baggy Trimble—"

"He's a likely one!" said Monty Lowther. "We'll search him, shall we, you chaps? We have the number of the note!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, that will be a great help in tracing the fiver," he said. "Baggy Trimble might have had it—it's the sort of thing he's quite capable of doing. Then—my hat—there was Knox."

"Knox!" exclaimed Blake. "By gad, yes! He was there, and he might have seen—"

The chums of the Lower School looked seriously at each other.

They knew that Knox was unscrupulous, and addicted to those little habits of gambling and betting which so often placed him in need of money.

Even as they stood there, debating the matter in their minds, the harsh voice of Gerald Knox smote upon their ears, coming from somewhere behind the trees.

"You young rotter! Come here!"

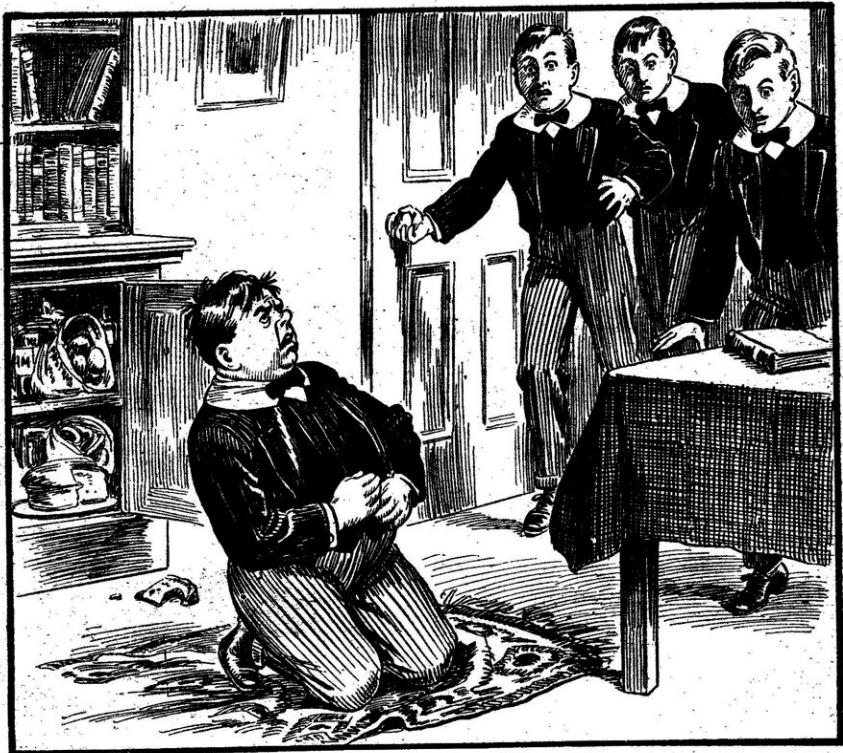
"Yah!" came the voice of Mellish in breathless tones. "I'll tell the Head, Knox!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked swiftly at each other.

"It's Knox, and he's chasing Mellish!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I wonder—"

At that moment there came the sound of tramping feet, and Percy Mellish, of the Fourth, dashed into view, followed closely by Gerald Knox. Knox & Co. had quite recovered from their unpleasant experience of yesterday, and now Knox was out on the war-path.

"Rescue, Blake!" shrieked Mellish, panting from his exertions and gazing



"Wow-ow-ow-ow!" The study door burst open, and three startled faces looked in. Baggy Trimble was kneeling on the carpet holding his waistcoat, and his podgy face twisted in pain. "Yar-oooooooooh!" he wailed. "I'm p-p-poisoned!" (See Chapter 4.)

wildly at the chums of the Lower School. "Yaroooooh!"

"This last remark came from Mellish as Knox's heavy hand descended upon him, and he was whirled backwards in an iron grasp.

"Now, you young sweep," grated Knox in furious accents, "I've got you! I'll flay you within an inch of your life!" "Yaroooooh! Yah! Ow!" wailed Mellish, as Knox's fists began to pummel him. "Tom Merry—Blake!—Rescue!"

Tom Merry strode up to Knox and dragged at his arm.

Knox ceased to belabour the squirming Mellish, and glared malevolently at Tom.

"Steady on, Knox!" exclaimed Tom Merry angrily. "What's Mellish done?"

"What's the young cad done?" hooted Knox. "He—he doped my grub for me last night! I sent him out for a quid's-worth of grub, and the young rotter doped it, and made us all ill! Why, I'll—I'll wring his confounded neck for him!"

"Help!" shrieked Mellish, as Knox's fist descended again. "Tom Merry, I didn't! Listen to me—Yaroooooh!"

"Cluck it, Knox!" said Tom Merry curtly, dragging at Knox's arm. "Let Mellish speak up. Now, Mellish, what game did you get up to last night?"

"He doped my grub!" hissed Knox passionately. "He did it purposely, to—"

"I didn't!" screeched Mellish, his pale face flushing. "I—I didn't dope the tuck at all! Racke did it! Knox bullied me into fagging for him, so instead of buying the grub at the tuckshop I took it from Blake's study. And—and Racke had already doped the tuck, and that's why Knox was bad afterwards. I had nothing to do with it, really!"

Tom Merry looked scornfully at the cowering sneak of the Fourth.

"So it was you who raided Blake's study last night!" he said. "And Racke doped our grub! What did he do that for, Mellish?"

"So as to get his own back on you and Gordon Gay this afternoon," quailed Mellish. "It was Racke's idea all through, I tell you! I had nothing to do with it!"

"You young liar!" grated Knox. "You knew jolly well that the grub was doped before you gave it to me. And you didn't spend the pound after all—you stole the grub! Where's my fiver?"

"Racke's got it!" wailed Mellish. "I tell you it's all Racke's fault! I—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Tom Merry scornfully. "You knew that the grub

was doped before you handed it over to Knox! You and Racke were in the swim together. You deserve all you jolly well get from Knox, and we sha'n't interfere. We'll attend to Racke."

"What-ho!" exclaimed Jack Blake, with relish.

Mellish uttered a shriek of alarm as Knox's hand closed over his shoulder again.

"Now, you young sweep," hissed Knox, "you've got to pay for that trick you played on me last night! Take that—and that—and that!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Yaroooooh!" screeched Mellish, as Knox's blows descended. "Tom Merry—Blake—help!"

"Rats!" snorted Blake. "You've got to pay the piper now, Mellish! Come on, Tommy! We'll find Racke, and settle with him!"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, darted a scornful look at Mellish, and strode away with his chums.

They left Knox to punish Mellish, and Knox administered the punishment thoroughly.

The seven School House juniors ascended the stairs and strode along the Shell passage.

At the door of Study No. 5 they halted, and Blake flung the door open without ceremony.

A cloud of tobacco-smoke met their nostrils and Racke and Scrope, who were sitting at the table, hastily hid their cigarettes.

"You—yes—What do you want?" demanded Racke savagely. "Shut that door, Blake! Do you want the prefects to smell the smoke?"

"Serve you jolly well right if they did!" growled Blake, closing the door. "We've come to talk to you, Racke!"

Racke flung his cigarette into the grate and looked uneasily at the chums of the School House.

Scrope's face went paler than usual, and he trembled with inward qualms.

Tom Merry's face was grim as he surveyed Aubrey Racke.

"You rotten cad, Racke!" he exclaimed. "You doped our tuck—"

"Liar!" said Racke savagely. "Who told you that, Tom Merry?"

"Never mind who told me; we know you doped our grub!" said the captain of the Shell quietly. "If it hadn't been for Mellish raiding it last night we shouldn't have discovered your rotten trick. So you got the quid that Mellish swindled Knox out of?"

"I didn't!" howled Aubrey Racke furiously. "The rotten little sneak came in here last night with a fiver he said Knox had asked him to change. I gave him five pound-notes in exchange for that fiver! Didn't I Scrope?"

"Yes!" replied Scrope readily. "Oh!" said Tom Merry slowly. "Here, Racke, let me have a look at that fiver, will you?"

"Shan't!" snapped Racke insolently. "That's my fiver, Tom Merry! Mind your own business!"

"This is my business, as it happens!" replied Tom Merry grimly. "Look here, Racke, I want to see the number of that five-pound note. Hand it over!"

"I—I won't!" shrieked Racke. "Get out of my study, you cads!"

Tom Merry motioned to his chums. "Nab him!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Upon the word the heroes of the School House fell upon Racke, and bore him backwards across the table.

"Scrope!" panted Racke. "Yah! Yow! Help!"

But Scrope, deeming discretion the better part of valour, remained cowering by the window.

Aubrey Racke, in the grasp of Tom Merry and his chums, was helpless.

He lay on the table, and writhed and threatened; but all his writhings and threatenings were useless.

Tom Merry felt in Racke's pocket, and withdrew the pocket-book.

He opened the book, and drew forth a crisp, rustling five-pound note.

"The number of this note," he said, looking at the serial number. "is 000752. What's the number of your missing note, Gussy?"

D'Arcy consulted his pater's telegram. "000752," he read.

Tom Merry gave an exclamation of satisfaction, and his chums beamed delightedly.

"There you are, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, handing D'Arcy the note. "There's the fiver that your pater sent you! Knox must have got hold of it somehow, and this cad changed it."

"You thieves!" shrieked Racke. "I didn't know Knox had stolen the fiver! That's mine! I changed it for him!"

"Perhaps so," said Tom Merry quietly. "But Gussy is going to hang on to that fiver. Look here, Racke, you've played a rotten trick on us, and spoiled nearly five quids' worth of tuck."

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It's only right that you should pay for it. Mellish owes you a quid, and Knox owes you four quid—see?"

"I—I—I—"

"You've got to get your money from Knox and Mellish," said Tom Merry, "and that will atone for the fiver we've just taken from you. But as regards the tuck you've ruined for us. We ought to demand five pounds from you for that, and if you collect that money from Knox and Mellish you've got to hand it over—see?"

"I—I shall never get it from Knox; you know that, Tom Merry!" moaned Racke miserably. "He'll deny having pinched the fiver. And I've no proof that he did, unless you—"

"We're not going to sneak!" put in Tom Merry curtly. "In fact, I think it would be better for us to ask Knox for it, and take you with us."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

"Yes, that's what we will do," said Tom Merry. "Come on, Racke, we'll go up and see Knox now! You and I and Gussy will interview him, and see what he says."

Racke protested, but Tom Merry & Co. were adamant.

"If you don't come," said Tom Merry, "we'll drag you there! And if a master sees us he'll want to know the ins and outs of the matter. And it won't go well with you, Racke, if Mr. Railton finds out that you doped five quids' worth of tuck and made it useless!"

Racke looked bitterly at Tom Merry & Co.

"All right," he muttered thickly. "I—I'll come."

CHAPTER 8.

All Square.

"COME in!" growled Knox, in response to the tap that sounded at his door.

He gave a start when he saw who his visitors were.

Tom Merry and Gussy walked in, almost dragging Racke with them.

"Merry!" exclaimed Knox, and his sallow face went ashen pale when he saw D'Arcy. "What do you want?"

"We want an explanation, bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his monocle and looking sternly at the prefect. "How came my fiver in your possession, Knox?"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Knox uneasily. "My fivah!" said Gussy. "You gave it to Mellish to change, you know."

Knox's visage took on a sickly hue, and it was some moments before he spoke.

He realised that to bluff would avail him nothing. He must make a clean breast of the affair, but give it as good a tone as possible.

"I—I'm sorry, D'Arcy," he said. "I—I found your letter in the cloisters yesterday evening, trodden on, and the envelope torn. Of course, I picked it up, and saw what it contained."

"Well?" said Gussy grimly.

"Er—er—well," stammered Knox, flushing. "I—was rather hard up, and—required some money very urgently. So I thought I—I'd borrow the five pounds, and give it to you back anonymously when—I had it."

"I see," put in Tom Merry grimly. "You didn't think of asking D'Arcy first?"

"No-no," replied Knox confusedly. "You see, I—I didn't like to. But, of course, I knew that it would be missed, and I really intended paying it back as soon as possible."

"Bai Jove, Knox, that was a vewy curious course to pursue!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "I might

have thought you intended stealing it, bai Jove!"

Knox squirmed.

"As a matter of fact, I did believe you had stolen it, Knox," went on Gussy relentlessly. "If you had asked me in a propah mannah, and told me for what purpose you requiaded a loan, I should very likely have lent it to you."

"I—I—I—," stammered Knox. "I'm sorry I acted hastily, D'Arcy. I've written home for some more money, and shall have it by the end of the week. You shall have it then."

"I've already got it, thank you!" said D'Arcy. "I scoured the fivah frowm Wakke, who changed it for Mellish last night."

"So I owe it to Racke!" muttered Knox. "I—I'll pay!"

"No; you'll pay me!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Racke owes me five quid, so if you give it to me, instead of Racke, it will be all right—eh, Racke?"

"Yes—hang you!" muttered Racke.

"So that's settled!" said Tom Merry. "We only came in just to make matters clear, Knox. You had five pounds yesterday, and you've spent 'em. You owe them to me, for Racke relinquishes all claim on that fiver—don't you, Racke?"

"Yes!" growled Racke savagely.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "And Gussy's got his fiver back, so everything is all right. Thanks, Knox! Before we go, let me remind you that to borrow money before asking permission might be interpreted by some people as stealing. Of course, you did not intend to steal it; but the Head might not think the same as we do. I should advise you to think over these little things, Knox, before you borrow fivers again."

"Get out!" hissed Knox, his face depicting all manner of conflicting emotions.

"Come on, Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry. "Don't forget you owe me five pounds, Knox!"

And Tom Merry, Gussy, and Aubrey Racke left Knox's study, leaving the prefect in a very unenviable state of mind.

"Well, Racke," said Tom Merry, as they proceeded towards the Shell passage, "are you satisfied that you've handed that fiver over to Gussy in exchange for the five quids' worth of tuck you spoilt?"

"Ye-es!" muttered Racke tensely.

"All serene, then!" said Tom Merry. "And, I say, Racke, that tuck belongs to you, of course. You'd better come along to Blake's study and fetch it."

"Hang you!" snarled Racke, walking away as they reached the corner of the corridor. "Confound you, Tom Merry! You've got the better of me this time—all through that cad Mellish! Keep the rotten tuck, and bury it for all I care! Yah!"

And Aubrey Racke walked away, chasing at the misfortunes that had overtaken him and his neat little schemes for getting the better of Tom Merry and his chums.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his monocle thoughtfully as they made their way along to Study No. 10.

"I—I say, Tommy," he said, "what about that sovereign that Mellish kept last night?"

"Oh, wait till we see Mellish—Why, here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the full-length figure of Percy Mellish shambled up the passage.

Mellish stopped as he stood confronted by Tom Merry and D'Arcy.

He looked very much the worse for wear, and it appeared that he had suffered rather badly at the hands of Gerald Knox.

"Ah, Mellish!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "What about that quid you got by false pretences last night?"

Mellish groaned, and dragged a pound note from his pocket.

"Take it!" he muttered. "And be hanged with you, Tom Merry! I'm done with this business. I'm fed up! Groooogh!"

And leaving Tom Merry with the pound note, Percy Mellish crawled away, inwardly sorrowing upon his lot.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" breathed Tom Merry, looking at the pound note. "I wonder where this comes in, Gussy? We're square with Racke, and you are square with Knox—really, this quid seems to have sprung from nowhere! Can you puzzle out who it belongs to?"

Gussy thought awhile.

"I—I suppose it belongs to Knox!" he said. "He only got four pounds change out of the fiver!"

"But he had the tuck!" said Tom Merry. "Oh, I see! It belongs to me, for Knox really had a quid's worth of my tuck!"

"So Wacke only weally owe you four pounds," said Gussy thoughtfully.

"No; five!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "He ruined five quids' worth of tuck, and he's agreed to pay the five pounds for it! That's square enough!"

"H'm!" said Gussy, shaking his head. "It seems we've got that pound for nothin', Tom Mewwy!"

"We're a quid in pocket for our trouble," said Tom Merry. "Well, it will go to the good of the cause. We shall have to buy some more tuck for tea this afternoon, that's all. And this quid shall go towards it."

"Yaas, and take the west out of my

fiveah, deah boy," said Gussy graciously. "You can't buy any moah with youah own money—until Knox squares up, can you deah boy?"

"Hardly!" grinned Tom Merry, as the dinner-bell rang. "Thanks, Gussy! You're a sport! We'll entertain Gordon Gay & Co. in fine style this afternoon—eh, wath?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And, feeling highly satisfied with themselves, Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went downstairs to dinner.

The Grammar School match that afternoon was a huge success—for the heroes of St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. managed to beat the Grammarians by 15 runs, after a hard tussle.

But Gordon Gay & Co. were consoled afterwards by the magnificent spread that awaited them in Study No. 10.

Dick Julian had been entrusted with the task of buying the tuck and getting tea ready, and Julian proved himself more than equal to the task.

Gordon Gay & Co., although rather rueful at not having scored a victory, thoroughly enjoyed the feast provided them by their hosts, and heartily voted it a ripping spread.

Tom Merry & Co. related to them the story of the doped tuck, and the heroes of the Grammar School laughed loud and long.

The doped tuck, which was of no use to anybody, was made into a parcel, and Gordon Gay & Co. on their way back to the Grammar School, dropped it into the shining waters of the Ryll.

On the following Saturday Gerald

Knox visited Tom Merry in Study No. 10 and gave him the five pounds he owed: Of the stolen fiver Knox had spent one pound on tuck, and the other four he had given to Jolliffe, so he was fully satisfied that he owed five pounds. Indeed, he thanked his lucky stars that Tom Merry and D'Arcy were sports enough not to take the matter further.

As for Aubrey Racke, he heartily wished he had not doped five pounds' worth of tuck which afterwards he had had to pay for.

But he was the son of a war profiteer, and could afford it. The only persons who had benefited by the doped tuck were Baggy Trimble, Knox, Cuts, Gilmore, and St. Leger. Racke derived some consolation from this; but he considered it an expensive joke, and one which he would not try again in a hurry.

Tom Merry & Co., of course, were more than satisfied over the affair.

When Knox squared up the five pounds he owed Tom Merry, Tom paid back Gussy the money he had advanced out of his recovered fiver, and the remainder was expended upon a high tea in Study No. 6, attended by Jack Blake & Co., Tom Merry, Manners, Lowther, and Piggins & Co. of the New House.

And, as Monty Lowther remarked, much was due to Aubrey Racke, for, in a rather unusual way, Gussy's missing fiver had been located and recovered mainly through the activities of the Tuck Dopers.

THE END.

(Another grand story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!" By Martin Clifford. Order your copy EARLY.)

GEMS.

A PROFESSIONAL MAN.

"Yes," said a talkative man in a railway-carriage, "there's nothing like laying your bed-room doors and windows open at night. Great advantage I've found it many a time."

"Ah," replied the other man, "I suppose you are a medical man, and speak from experience?"

"No," said the man, as he lifted his bag and prepared to alight at the station they were just entering; "I'm not a medical man; in fact, between ourselves, in strict confidence, I'm a burglar."

He opened the carriage door and vanished.

FOR HIS FRIEND'S SAKE!

Two men were out shooting, when suddenly a policeman came upon them, and asked to see their licences. One man promptly rushed away, and the policeman chased him for about a mile, and, catching him, again demanded the licence, which was promptly produced.

"What on earth did you make me run all this way for, if you've got a licence?" asked the police-officer.

"Cause my mate hadn't one!" was the reply.

NOT PLAYING THE GAME.

Two men out fishing one day waged war who would have the biggest catch. The day being hot, one of the men fell asleep, and, losing his balance, fell into the river. "Nay, Bill, we'll have none of that!" shouted his companion. "The bet's off! No diving for them!"

TUT-TUT!

The golf course was bordered on the one side by a railway and on the other side by the ocean. Jock Tamson and Sandy Cairncross—both newcomers to the game, and indeed to the village—were playing off a long-desired match. The former had just driven the ball over the metals, amongst some bracken on the opposite side, and, after a fruitless search, Sandy wanted Jock to admit that the ball was lost. As this meant losing a hole, Jock refused, and, slyly dropping another from his pocket, sang out:

"Hey, Sandy, I've found it;" "You're a liar," cried Sandy hotly, "for I've got it in my pouch!"

THE CANNY SCOT.

For once the American had discovered something British that was better than anything "across the pond." His discovery was a fine collie dog, and he at once tried to induce its owner, an old shepherd, to sell it.

"Would ye be takin' him to America?" asked the old Scot.

"Waal, I guess so," drawled the American.

"I thought as muckle," replied the old shepherd. "I couldna part wi' Jock."

But while they sat and chatted, an English tourist came up and offered to buy the collie, for a sum which he named. This was much smaller than that which the American had offered, but, nevertheless, the shepherd accepted the offer.

As soon as the tourist had gone, with the dog on the leash, an outburst of questions assailed the old Scot.

"You told me you wouldn't sell him!" said the Yankee indignantly.

"No!" replied the Scot, with a wink. "Jock will be back in a day or two. But he couldna swim the Atlantic!"

HE KEPT HIS WORD—AND THE SHILLING.

A rather simple-looking boy stopped outside a blacksmith's shop, and gazed about him. The blacksmith, not liking the lad's curiosity, suddenly pushed a white-hot iron under his nose.

"Give me a shilling, and I'll lick it!" said the lad calmly, without moving.

The blacksmith stared, but handed out the coin, with a grim smile. But the smile turned off when the lad licked the shilling and walked off.

NOT GREEDY.

One day a little girl was sent round collecting money for the Sunday-school treat.

Soon she came to the mayor's house, and asked for a subscription. She was asked to go into the house, and the mayor put on the table threepence, a sixpence, and a shilling, with a five-pound note on the top.

Then he asked her what she would have.

"Mother told me not to be greedy, so I will have the threepence and the piece of paper on top to wrap it up in."

MIXED.

"Malone," said the officer to his servant, "here's a shilling to get me some tobacco, and here's another to get me some cigarettes."

Taking the two shillings in his hand, the servant ran off. But in a few minutes he returned, fumbling with the coins in his hand, apparently in great distress.

"Well, what's the matter?" demanded the officer.

"Shure, sor," answered the servant, "O've got the shillings mixed up, and I don't know which is for the tabackey and which is for the cigarettes!"

Another of Michael Poole's Popular School Stories.



A Splendid Complete Story of the Chums of St. Katie's. By MICHAEL POOLE.

CHAPTER I.

Dobbin Takes a Group.

"H ALF a sheet of foolscap, gentlemen! Three points to a line. Your name in the top right-hand corner. Ready? No. 1. Give the name of the President of the Swiss Republic—the French for 'under lock and key'—who wrote the line, 'And on the mere wailing died away.' Ready? No. 2."

Jolly Roger was having a little brain-brightening exercise. Every question he asked was quite simple. The answer to each one was included in the work which the Transitus had prepared on the previous evening.

Only Roger twisted them up so queerly. The line from Tennyson came in quite casually in the English composition, while the French phrase was tucked away in the trans. they'd prepared.

Nor did he give them time to sit and ponder over the answers. You either knew the answer instantly, or the chance had passed.

They had, at various times, protested against the system. Roger hadn't gone off at the deep end, or indulged in much hot air about the fact that he was the master of the Form, and they would have to obey him. He listened patiently and smilingly, and encouraged them to talk. Not until they had expended all their energy did he answer them, quietly and calmly.

All that they said was perfectly true. He agreed with them most thoroughly. The system was unfair and unreasonable, but it would remove the rust from their intellects, and it would teach them to be patient in adversity. It would also compel them to work. In any case, it was going on. That was all.

On this particular Friday morning THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 645.

both Curtis and Dexter abandoned all hope of keeping pace with Roger. Yesterday afternoon and evening they had had a high old time. It had been a day of real adventure, ending up with a swift motor-car run with Jolly Roger himself.

Roger had assured them that officially he should forget the whole affair. He would make no further reference to it. But he knew they hadn't been to prep, and that therefore they couldn't answer one-tenth of the questions he put.

By the end of the tenth question the Kid's half-sheet of foolscap looked like a jig-saw puzzle. At normal times, even when he hadn't made a special effort with his preparation work, he generally managed a fairly decent paper. This morning's effort was easily the worst he had done for weeks and weeks.

"Pass the papers to the end of each row," Roger commanded. "Please collect them for me, Dobbin."

The papers were duly brought to Roger's desk, and he put them on one side. For the next three-quarters of an hour life was less strenuous.

The following hour was spent away from their Form-room. Mr. Gladridge, the mathematical expert, had the pleasure of showing the Transitus some of the charms of the higher forms of algebra. Old Glad-Rags was a holiday after Roger.

Then they returned to Roger. On the way to the Form-room Curtis chatted with Dexter.

"How did you go on in the test-paper, Kid?" he asked. "Mine was hopeless. Absolute wash-out! But what can Roger say? He knows we never had a chance to prepare anything last night."

"I don't know," the Kid answered dubiously. "I mistrust Jolly Roger. There was an evil gleam in his eye as he glanced at me once or twice during

the first hour. It may be that he has a little surprise concealed in his sleeve for us, my noble Kangaroo. We shall see."

The Kid's forebodings were completely confirmed within the first five minutes.

"I have gone through the test-papers you kindly did for me earlier in the morning," Jolly Roger began. "On the whole, they justify my suspicion that many of you possess quite useful quantities of grey matter. The rust is being removed rapidly. I foresee the day when some of you will rise up and call me blessed. Grubb, Bunting, Harrop! You have ten correct out of a possible ten. It is excellent! I am glad!"

He called out other names, and spoke kind words to them. But slowly the praise dwindled till he became critical. To three or four fellows he pointed out once again the necessity for concentration, and spoke words of wisdom concerning the methods they should employ.

Then his mouth lost its smile. His lips went into a hard, straight line, and the cold, icy glitter came into his eyes.

"Dexter! Curtis!" He rapped the names out fiercely, and held up two half-sheets of foolscap.

"Is this your idea of a joke?" he demanded. "Are you trying to play some new trick upon me? Answer me, Dexter!"

"No, sir," said Dexter plaintively. "Did you prepare the work I set you, Dexter? I want no excuses. I require a straight answer, sir! Did you prepare this work?"

"No, sir," said Dexter. "Ah," said Roger, "ah! Curtis! What have you to say, sir? Did you, or did you not, prepare the work set?"

"I didn't prepare it, sir," Curtis said apologetically.

"Ah!" Roger gasped, and drew in his breath slowly. "I see! You had other

amusements, I have no doubt. Let me assure you, Curtis, that the rules of this Form are like the laws of the Medes and Persians. Dexter knows that. I have nothing to say to you. Doubtless you will appreciate my point of view in due course. You will both spend the hours between two o'clock and four in this very Form-room this afternoon. Further, on the next two occasions upon which I set a test-paper, you will each obtain eight marks out of a possible ten. Bright answers completely correct. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Dexter and Curtis. "Very good," said Roger, and slowly tore their test-papers into two, four, eight, sections, as though they offended him. "One mark each." Disgraceful! An insult to the Form! You spend the afternoon in the Form-room. R-r-r-h! I am letting you off very lightly. But beware, Dexter! Have a care, Curtis! Ah!"

The Kid felt he wanted to laugh. Curtis felt a pathetic interest in the business. When you come to think of it, Roger's behaviour was quite interesting. He knew perfectly well they hadn't prepared the lessons, because he knew they had been on a giddy gambol in Warren-den. Yet he'd told them that he would forget that—and he had!

He had forgotten it so completely that he was jumping on them for not preparing their work. He was an artful fellow, was Roger!

That afternoon Dickie Dexter and Jimmy Curtis sat in the Transitus Form-room alone. At two minutes past two Roger had looked in, smiled at them, told them to put in two solid hours, and informed them that they might leave at four o'clock—if they were satisfied that they had thoroughly learnt their work.

He himself was going away from the school for the afternoon. There were times when he felt the need of a little change, and to-day was one of them.

"He's a queer mutt, is Roger," Curtis remarked at two-fifteen. "But he's not a bad sort. Mean to say—"

"Shut up!" said the Kid. "I'm going to get through with this job."

"Right-ho!" agreed the Kangaroo cheerfully.

You couldn't upset Curtis, and he turned to the books in front of him again. For half an hour the pair behaved as though half a dozen masters were watching them intently.

Now, both Curtis and Dexter were bright lads. At the end of three-quarters of an hour they had imbibed quite a lot of knowledge, and could have done Roger's test-paper of this morning without making a single error.

Dexter closed his books, and wandered to the window. Far away, he could see white-clothed figures standing or running about on the pleasant green fields. Almost he fancied he could see old Dobbin on the prowl with his camera. He was quite sure it was Bill Strong at the wicket.

"My hat!" he sighed. "And we're cooped up in here! Breathing poisoned air! Spending the spring-time of our little lives in four walls! It's not much good enough!"

"It isn't!"

Curtis had wandered up behind him, and the spectacle of the distant playing-fields made its appeal to him. They forgot their joy-rides of yesterday—forgot that they had been let off very lightly by Jolly Roger.

The only thing that counted was the fact that everyone else in the Transitus was free, while they were doomed to remain indoors till four o'clock.

"I've learnt all that rot!" Curtis said

presently. "Jolly Roger isn't here. What's to prevent us taking a stroll?"

"Nothing," said the Kid, and that settled the matter.

They left their books on the desk and wandered forth. Five minutes later they were on the playing-fields.

"Hallo, Kid!" Dobbin greeted him cheerfully. "Just going to take a group. Last plate I've got. Get next to Buckle! Stand by the Bronto, Curtis!"

They fell in with the photographer's desire. A pleasant little group had been staged for Dobbin's last plate. In the background was the pavilion, in the foreground half-a-dozen bright lads of the Transitus, variously attired, but mostly in cricket flannels.

"That's right! Look this way, Kid! Shove a smile on, Curtis!" Dobbin cried, then gently pressed the bulb.

His last plate had been exposed, and Dobbin sat down to enter up the details as all good photographers do. Plate, subject, stop, speed, weather conditions and precise time of exposure were all duly recorded, while the Kid and the Kangaroo wandered further afield.

At ten minutes to four they returned to the Form-room and put their books away. There was no sign of Mr. Roger Blunt, and precisely at four o'clock they wandered forth once more. They had paid the penalty of their misdeeds—and it hadn't been such a bad afternoon, after all! And they were quite prepared to face Jolly Roger with clear consciences, for they knew the work he had set them to do.

They hadn't any secret sorrows worrying them, and when Roger's eagle eye rested on them they met his gaze quite calmly. They were good boys, and they knew it.

CHAPTER 2.

Curtis Meets Margery Frayne.

"VERY interesting!" said Roger. "An excellent set of prints, Dobbin! When did you say you took these?"

"Friday afternoon, sir," said Dobbin. "Are you quite sure?" asked Roger, and took out a magnifying glass to examine one of the prints more carefully. "I see the pavilion clock says ten-past three in this photograph."

Dobbin had taken out his exposure-book.

"Yes, sir," he said. "They were all taken on Friday. Special Rapid plates. F.1. one-fifteenth-second. The first was at two thirty-five and the sixth at three-ten. Bright sunshine, sir."

He was talking technically, of course, because Jolly Roger was really interested in his camera work, and frequently he would keep a print of Dobbin's to add to his collection. Ever since Dobbin's amazing scoop Roger had discussed photography with him.

"I'll keep this print, if you don't mind, Dobbin," Roger said, and held up the photograph of the group. "Thanks, very much!"

He was smiling jocosely, and Dobbin wondered why he was so pleased about just an ordinary snap of a few fellows, but Roger didn't explain.

Dexter and Curtis had made good in the matter of preparation work, Roger had devoted five minutes to a quick test of what they had done during the afternoon's detention, and he was entirely satisfied. In the next two test-papers he set the Form the pet lambs did brilliantly.

Very just towards the close of morning school on Tuesday Roger strolled round to where Dexter sat.

"I should like to see you for a few moments at 12.30, Dexter," he told the Kid, then wandered along to Curtis and delivered the same command.

They were puzzled, and for the life of them could think of nothing wrong in their careers of the past two or three days. Roger very quickly undeceived them.

"Ah, Curtis!" he began genially. "You put in two hours' detention for me last Friday afternoon?"

"Yes, sir!" Curtis replied questioningly.

"And you really did put in two hours, Curtis?" Roger went on. "You remained in the Form-room the whole of that time?"

For a moment Curtis stared. He had really forgotten all about Friday; life was too swift to make a note of every trivial detail.

Then he recollected, and his face flushed.

"No, sir, I didn't," he said, quite frankly. "I went out to the playing-fields—after I'd done my preparation work, sir."

"Ah, yes," said Roger. "And Dexter accompanied you?"

It was not quite a fair question, and Roger knew it. But he was interested.

"I—that is, sir, I went out myself—"

Curtis began, and tried to think of some way out of the difficulty. Dexter saved him the trouble.

"I went out, sir," the Kid interrupted. "I persuaded Curtis to come with me. It was all my fault, sir."

Roger sighed wearily.

"Dexter," he said gently, "I have before pointed out to you that your confessions bore me. It shows a kindly spirit, but it lacks originality. I feel sure that Curtis does not appreciate the suggestion that you control his mind for free. You both went out—of your own free will. My instructions were that you should remain in the Form-room from two until four, and they were utterly disregarded. No one has told me that you went out; no one has even suggested that I should ask you. But I knew that you did. Have you any excuse to offer?"

"No, sir," said Curtis and Dexter together.

"Then what am I to do?" demanded Roger grimly. "I take the most lenient possible view with regard to the ingenious gambling trick you engineered; I help you out of the very awkward corner you found yourselves in over that wild escapade at Warren-den—and this is my reward!"

He paused. For two seconds his eagle eyes saw right through Curtis. The Kangaroo felt that he was reading exactly what was in his mind, though at the moment he didn't quite know what he was thinking himself.

Then for two seconds Dickie Dexter felt himself pierced by Jolly Roger's glittering optical adornments. The Kid felt himself growing very, very small, and began to wish—

"What would you do if you were in my position, Curtis?" It came as a relief to hear his voice again. The Kangaroo felt that the sooner this business was over the better it would be.

"Punish us, sir?" he suggested mildly.

"I have no doubt!" said Roger.

"I appreciate the fact that you deserve it. But I am not here solely for the purpose of meting out justice. I am here to improve your minds and reform your characters. I want you to know that I am a little disappointed with your recent performances, and I trust that in the future you will make some efforts towards justifying my belief that you are worth the care and time I devote to you. That is all! You may go!"

Slowly, and with a queer sense of elusiveness, they went from the room. Somehow, they felt crushed. They wan-

dered along together down the corridors, but didn't speak, because there wasn't really anything to talk about.

They went down to dinner, and in due course returned to Study No. 10 without discussing the matter beyond a casual remark.

"Queer sort of chap, Roger!" the Kangaroo said. "But he's jolly decent, you know!"

"He's a brick!" said the Kid. "Rotten for a chap like that to be in charge of a crowd like the Trans! He's too good for them!"

"Of course!" Curtis agreed sincerely, and said nothing more until they were in the study.

"What's your giddy little game just lately, Kid?" Bill Strong asked. "You and the Kangaroo go moovin' off on your own, cutting cricket, and getting into frightful rows. What's the latest trouble? Roger had you on the carpet again?"

"We're not on the carpet, Bill," said the Kid sorrowfully. "Nevertheless, we feel that we have neglected the cricket-fields of late. Take us with you this afternoon, Bill, and teach us the way to make fifties. I'll be a credit to you!"

So that afternoon Dexter and Curtis took a turn at the wicket. As a cricketer Dexter didn't shine. His lack of inches and his desire to swipe, combined with his persistent efforts to carry on a conversation with the wicket-keeper, weakened his defence. As a bowler he was too apt to experiment, and as a fielder—No! The less said about his fielding the better!

Curtis was different. He gave you the impression that he was a lazy sort of fellow who wanted to get bowled by the next ball, but not this one. He rather annoyed some of the crack bowlers, because his attitude suggested that he wouldn't trouble to hit the ball only it was such a simple thing to do.

It was quite a pleasant afternoon for the Kangaroo, but the Kid was bored to tears. Moreover, Jolly Roger wasn't there to witness his display of energy, and old Dobbin had mysteriously disappeared with his camera on the hunt for possible pictures.

The Kid was really glad when the afternoon came to an end. Dobbin didn't come in until they'd practically finished their modest tea, but was wearing a broad smile, and simply beaming through his gig-lamps. Evidently he'd taken some wonderful view this afternoon, which would make the photographic society sit up!

"Got some good snaps this afternoon, Dobbie?" the Kid inquired, without the faintest note of interest in his voice.

"Snaps!" Dobbie echoed scornfully, for, being a real photographer, he hated the word. "I haven't made any exposures this afternoon at all. Been enjoying myself in other ways. Who'd you think I've been with, Kid? In Marshall's Woods?"

"Not—not Margery?" demanded Dexter. And jumped to his feet.

"That's right!" said Dobbie cheerfully. "She asked about you. We've been to the old place. She's home for three months. School closed for something or other. We had a jolly old talk together!"

"Will she be there to-morrow?" the Kid demanded. And almost before Dobbin nodded he was making full arrangements.

"We'll all go!" he decided. "You'll like Margery, Curtis. She—Oh, she's one of the best! In?" she, Bill!"

"She is," said Strong. "But I can't come to-morrow, Kid. There's a First practice game."

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"You'd better cut me out, too, Kid," said Curtis. "Girls! I finished with 'em long ago! They don't interest me!"

He said it sorrowfully, and shook his head sadly. They could see that the very mention of the name brought painful memories to his mind.

"Look here, Kangy," said the Kid. "You don't know Margery. She's different. She's—Well, if you feel like it, you've got to come with me to-morrow! I'll do you good. Anyhow, you ought to know Margery!"

The Kangaroo protested for some time, but in the end the Kid won. Just for once the Kangaroo would break his vows never to speak to a girl again, and would make the acquaintance of Margery Frayne.

On the following afternoon the three—Dexter, Dobbin, and Curtis—made their way to Marshall's Woods, which adjoined the estate of Mr. Walter Frayne—Margery's father.

They made for a particular spot by the edge of the pool. Last year Strong, Dobbin, and Dexter had constructed a little shelter from which they could look out over the pond, while they ate biscuits, or anything else which happened to be in the menu for the afternoon. At times Margery joined them in their "den," and the memory of long summer afternoons spent in adding to her collection of butterflies, or fishing for minnows and dace, or occasionally taking out the old boat from the Frayne's shelter on the opposite side, was very pleasant to both the Kid and Dobbin.

Margery was already in the den, but she came out the moment she heard their footsteps.

"My giddy aunt!" the Kid cried out, in amazement. "But, you've grown, Margery!"

"Well, cheer up, Dickiebird!" Margery said gladly. "So will you, one day, if you're good! Aren't you glad to see me?"

She had changed a little since last Dickie Dexter had seen her. Her hair was done in two long plaits, instead of hanging loose, and her clothes were different. But she was still the same old Margery!

Within three minutes she was talking to Curtis as though she had known him all her life, and his views about girls were undergoing another swift change.

"Let's go into the den again!" Margery commanded presently. "I've brought heaps of things down. Dobbie said you'd come this afternoon, Dickie! Aren't these scrumptious chocs? Nancy gave them me. She's fed up with—Sh!"

They had all crawled under the bushes at the head of the den, and now they were beginning to make themselves quite comfortable, when Margery handed round the chocolates. When she said "Sh!" they listened intently.

They could hear the rustling of the grass and the bracken, and a girl's voice came to them quite clearly, though they did not catch her words.

Margery was peering cautiously round the corner of the den, then turned to hold up a warning finger.

"Yes, of course. I understand! Ah!" a man's voice said, quite near them. And Dickie Dexter promptly crawled forward and peered intently over Margery's shoulders, while Curtis looked at Dobbin in surprise. "The life of a Housemaster's wife is not . . . I ought never to have mentioned . . . But I do understand, Nancy! Ah, the view is charming, isn't it?"

For fully ten seconds nothing happened after that. Margery and Dexter continued to keep their strained positions. Dobbin and Curtis still stared at each other in amazement. From outside there came no sound whatever.

"Shall we return the same way?" the man's voice asked.

"And they caught the sound of rustling once more.

A few seconds later Dexter fell back into the den again, and Margery also turned round.

"My hat!" said the Kid. "You heard him, Dobbie? Recognise the voice? Jolly Roger and Margery's sister! My giddy aunt! Now we know what old Roger's important engagements are! Oh, my children—my children! Let me weep!"

"It was Mr. Blunt," said Margery calmly. "He's a master at your school, isn't he? He often comes to our house, and he's frightfully keen on Nancy! He's really an awfully nice man away from the school! But, of course, you'll know, he's a brute—a most fearful brute—to boys! You're under Mr. Steed, aren't you? I'm glad you're not under Mr. Blunt! He dearly kills all the boys he has to teach! He does, really! Do they talk about him much at Katie's?"

CHAPTER 3.

Jolly Roger to the Rescue.

MARGERY told them quite a lot of things about Mr. Roger Blunt before any of them really had a chance to say anything.

Mr. Blunt had been specially brought to St. Katie's for the purpose of taming "notorious," but taming and cowering certain rebellious youths.

"He's got the kind of iron in the velvet glove, you know," Margery said wisely.

"That," said Dickie Dexter at last, "is all rot and piffle, Margery! We're in Roger's Form. He's taming us! Look at us!"

"You are!" gasped Margery. "Oh, tell me, Dickie! Nancy's frightfully interested! You see—Well, you heard them? He's tremendously keen! But Nancy never, never will; because, you see, if he's like that with boys—mean the iron-hand-and-velvet-glove game—it would be pretty rotten for her, wouldn't it?"

The Kid and Dobbie began to explain. It was rot, piffle, childish chatter, and infant's nonsense. They weren't going to have Roger run down in that fashion! Jolly Roger was really one of the best, except on the question of work. But a brute! It made them smile!

"You ought to have told me that before," Margery said at last. "How did I know? And now—Oh, but it's too late now! I know it's too late!"

Through it all Curtis never said a word. He was thinking, and going on thinking! And he looked frightfully serious about it.

He was still thinking when the argument quietened down, and Margery got up and went out of the den.

Dickie Dexter followed.

"Oh, my hat!" Dickie said, a minute or two later. "They're still there! Sitting on the seat just across the pool!"

Curtis jumped to his feet and scrambled up to the door like a frightened rabbit. From their circle of vantage he could see across the pool, where, on the left, a rough seat had been made near the water's edge. At this precise moment Mr. Roger Blunt and Miss Nancy Frayne were sitting there.

So far as the concealed watchers could judge they weren't talking much. Roger seemed to be drawing lines on the ground with his stick, and Miss Frayne was just staring across the water.

"We'll have to keep out of his way," the Kid was saying. "Better cut away before—"

"Will they stay there long?" Curtis

demanded. "Where is the bathhouse? Yes, I see it. Listen to me, Kid! Dobbin, I may need your help! Don't interrupt me! We feel this more than you can understand. Margery. Jolly Roger has been very kind to us—more kind than I have words to express."

"My hat!" said the Kid. "The human gramophone will now per—"

"Shut up!" said Curtis, still speaking in the same sort of man-who-must-be-obeyed tone. "We have a chance to do Roger a good turn. It must be seized instantly. I understand women. In Australia— But I'll tell you some other time. Listen to me, and do exactly as I tell you!"

He talked to them as though they were years younger, but even Margery felt that this was the sort of man who really did things.

He plunged into the bracken and disappeared. Not for another five minutes did they see a sign of him. Then they saw a figure clambering round the corner of the little bathhouse, and knew that Curtis was really dead keen on this job.

"I believe he's right!" Margery said. "Ten't Curtis a fine fellow, Dickie! You must be so proud of having a chum from Australia! They're so—so many, aren't they?"

"They're all right," Dexter admitted. "But this giddy stunt is a bit too far-fetched!"

"We shall see," said Margery. And then they all watched as the little boat came slowly out on to the waters of the pool.

To their left they could see that Jolly Roger and Miss Nancy Frayne were also aware that someone was taking liberties with the Fraynes' boat. From that distance Roger could not identify the figure standing in the bow, but he judged that he would have been more at home in a punt than a frail rowing-boat.

He was using only one oar, and was manipulating this sometimes as a punt-pole and sometimes as a canoe-paddle. Clumsily and erratically the craft wobbled uneasily towards the bank where Roger stood.

Curtis was playing the first part of his game very well. It requires an expert to play the fool really thoroughly in a rowing-boat, and the Kangaroo was a pretty all-round expert in most games. At all events, he could swim and he could row quite as well as he could play cricket.

Yet he became more and more foolish as the boat meandered across the centre of the pool. When it was about thirty or thirty-five yards from where Roger was standing he made a savage jab with the oar at the water—and lost his balance!

Falling, he managed to give the boat a friendly jerk on its way, and then went a header, clumsily, and with much splashing.

"By Jove!" said Roger on the bank, and dropped a little nearer the side.

"Help! help! Gr-r-r-oop!" wailed the voice of the figure, as it bobbed up for a moment, arms clutched frantically but uselessly. Then down it went again.

"He can't swim!" Roger said swiftly, but apologetically, to Miss Frayne, and he jumped lightly forward, waded out a few steps, and then gave a decent exhibition of the double over-arm stroke in his best suit.

Curtis must have gone down and come up about half a dozen times by the time Roger reached him. Even then Jolly Roger had no clear idea who it was, though he guessed it was a boy from Katie's.

He seized him, trod water for a few moments, then drifted on to his back, his hands supporting the drowning one just under the arms.

It isn't an easy job to bring a man in,

fully clothed, but Roger found it a good deal easier than he had expected. The rescued fellow, indeed, almost supported himself, and once or twice Roger could feel him kicking out quite sensibly, and guessed that his hands were pressing downwards in scientific fashion.

Their progress to the shore was, in fact, quite an exhibition performance—the sort of thing you see the experts do at the baths, which makes life-saving seem quite simple.

Yet, as soon as they touched ground again the rescued one collapsed, and Roger had to carry him ashore, where he laid him down gently. Miss Frayne came near, but scarcely dared to speak.

"Is he—?" she asked at last, as Roger stood upright again.

"Oh, he's alive all right!" said Roger, and they even make an attempt to start artificial respiration. "It's Curtis—one of the boys in my Form."

Miss Frayne looked at Roger, but at that moment Curtis began to groan.

"Oh, o-h-h-h!" he wailed. "I—I want Mr. Blunt! Send Mr. Blunt!"

It was quite clear and distinct, but Roger never moved. Miss Frayne bent down quickly.

"My poor boy!" she whispered. "What is it? You are quite safe!"

"Oh," moaned Curtis, "I want Mr. Blunt, my Form-master. He was always so kind, so gentle. Oh, tell Mr. Blunt! He's the only friend—"

"Yes, yes," said Miss Frayne, and looked on towards Roger Blunt.

But he had turned away. This performance had suddenly awakened new life in him, or perhaps the water had cooled his brain. His eyes roamed round the landscape, and caught a glimpse of heads moving among the bracken.

Instantly he waved his hand, beckoning to those who owned the heads to come swiftly.

"Roger's looking for us!" Dickie Dexter said. "The Kangaroo hasn't got up yet. Your sister's by him, Margery. My hat! I hope he hasn't— But we'd better go!"

They raced away, not troubling to keep in hiding, and presently reached the spot where Nancy Frayne still knelt on the ground, while Jolly Roger regarded the gasping Curtis with puzzled amusement.

Curtis sat upright just as they reached him. His head wobbled about dazedly until his eyes rested on Roger.

"Ah, Mr. Blunt!" he said pathetically, and struggled to stand up. "You saved my life! You saved me from a watery grave, sir!"

Now, had the Kid been playing the part of the rescued he would have done it artistically. Curtis could beat the Kid in games, but when it came to lifelike representations of the grateful, "saved-from-the-deep" it really wasn't a very brilliant effort.

Even Miss Nancy Frayne felt there was something wrong somewhere. She looked at Roger, and thought she saw the iron hand coming out of the velvet glove; she looked at Curtis, and thought he looked very pathetic, but—well, a bit too big and strong somehow. He seemed to have got over the shock very rapidly.

She caught sight of Dickie Dexter, and had an idea that he was trying to signal to Curtis. Why? Then she saw her younger sister's face, and realised that Margery was slowly suffocating from smothered laughter.

Curtis suddenly collapsed again and sank gently to the ground. He realised from the Kid's signals that he was recovering consciousness and health too swiftly.

"No, no, Curtis!" Roger spoke, quietly, almost indulgently, then turned to Miss Frayne.

"I really haven't the faintest idea what their latest joke is," he said apologetically. "That boy Curtis is an excellent swimmer and oarsman. I have seen the reports of him from his last school. He and this bright boy here"—indicating Dexter—"are my pet lambs. They regard me as a mild amusement. I cannot explain whether this is for your benefit or for mine—or for your sister's."

"Now, Curtis"—he returned to his well-known manner—"we'll have the truth—the full and complete truth! You got the boat out, and pretended to be very inept; you fell into the water, and pretended to be drowning. You did all this with the sole object of deceiving me and luring me into the water to get a soaking. So much we know! What was the object of it all, Curtis?"

Curtis looked at Roger, and Roger looked at Curtis, but the Kangaroo didn't speak.

"You admit that it was merely a joke—that you intended to deceive me?" Roger asked very quietly.

"Yes, sir," The Kangaroo couldn't say anything else, with Roger's eyes fixed on him.

"Very well, Curtis! I had better get back to the school and change. I'll see you later. I shall be there myself very soon."

So far neither Nancy Frayne nor Margery had spoken. They had stood a little on one side; but now Margery ran forward and put one hand on Roger's soaked garments.

"Oh, but listen, Mr. Blunt, please!" she begged. "Don't you understand? I told them—Nancy knows about this—that we heard you were very cruel to all the boys under you, and that you ill-treated them. We have been told that, haven't we, Nancy?"

"I don't know!" Nancy's face flushed. "You are talking rather foolishly, aren't you, Margery?"

"No, I'm not! You know it's true!" Margery flashed back. "And I told them; and they said it was all rot and piffle, and that Mr. Blunt's one of the very best that ever was. And Curtis said that if you thought he wasn't, then it would ruin Mr. Blunt's life, and all your happiness was at stake. He's been in Australia, and he knows all about things like that! So he said the only thing was to prove to you that Mr. Blunt was a hero, and was loved by all his boys!"

"Ah!" Roger gasped a little, and looked as though he were about to speak, but checked himself.

"Curtis said that if he fell in the pool Mr. Blunt was bound to rescue him, and there wasn't the slightest danger because he's a good swimmer, and so is Mr. Blunt," Margery went on rapidly. "And then, when he lay unconscious on the bank after being rescued, he'd just moan and moan for Mr. Blunt, and say how he was his only friend, and that he couldn't die without sending him a last message. Then you'd know that Mr. Blunt was a good sort, and a real hero, and you would—well, Curtis said it would be all right, anyway, and he didn't care if he got into a row, so long as he could do old Roger—I mean, Mr. Blunt—a good turn. He said that, and that's the truth. And I don't care what you say, Nancy, because it's your life-happiness that's at stake!"

Miss Nancy Frayne looked at Mr. Roger Blunt. For once, Roger didn't seem quite so sure of himself. After all, it's rather hard to look dignified in a soaking suit, and with water still trickling down your face.

"Thank you, Margery!" he said at last. "I'm sure— Of course, there was bound to be some reason. Ah! I think

perhaps we had better return to the school—change our garments. Yes."

He might have said something more, but Nancy Frayne now spoke.

"Father is expecting you, Mr. Blunt," she said quickly. "You could easily change at the house— heaps of clothes— much more convenient. Run ahead, Margery, and tell them. The boys ought to run back to school. It's very good of Curtis. I must see him again soon; but I'm afraid he'll catch cold. Good-bye, boys!"

Somehow, it was Nancy Frayne who stage-managed the last scene. Margery bade everyone good-bye; Curtis, Dexter, and Dobbin bade Miss Nancy Frayne good-bye. And, still dripping, Mr. Roger Blunt strolled slowly with Miss Frayne towards the big house far back among the trees.

There isn't really any end to this story, because it's going on and on. But two days later Curtis returned to Study No. 10 a little later than the rest.

He was smiling gladly, and even with a faint touch of superiority on his face.

"What did I tell you, Kid?" he asked condescendingly. That giddy respecter I did the other day. It didn't pan out exactly as I meant it, but the idea was all right, and it worked, just as I said it would! I tell you, in Australia— Anyhow, I've just seen Jolly Roger. Talked to me like a fond father, and never fixed me with his glittering optics at all! Quite a jolly old talk it was!"

"But what did he say?" demanded the Kid.

"Lots of things," answered the Kangaroo. "But it wasn't so much what he said, as what he'd like to have said. Trust me for putting two and two together! Just make a note of my words. Jolly Roger, boss Housemaster, and Margery's sister—keepin' an eye on your welfare. Not a word yet! But we did it, Kid; and Jolly Roger thinks we've done him a good turn. He'll treat us kindly in future. But we'll keep it dark for the present. It's a funny world!"

"Funny?" said Bill Strong. "My hat! And that's why Roger can't come to cricket every afternoon—and you call it funny! Help!"

THE END.

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Every boy and girl who wants to get on in the world should try for the £100 grant which is offered by the Editor of CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER for the best attempt at painting a simple picture. 100 other prizes. For further particulars see this week's

CHILDREN'S
NEWSPAPER

Out on Friday.

A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA!

By "COOEE."

"HOW would you like to be a sheep-farmer, eh, Jack?" asked Mr. Thornton, as he held out his hand in farewell to Mrs. Belton.

"Very much, uncle," replied the boy. "Oh, but Jack has plenty of time yet in which to decide!" said Mrs. Belton, as she touched the lad's arm. "And you must not think of going until you have had supper. My husband will be very sorry that he missed you; but you will not be dull, for this evening the minister is riding over to spend a few hours with Alice and me and the baby."

She drew the little girl to her, and motioned her guests to enter the comfortable house with its dark wood paneling and air of prosperity.

"It is just like being at home," said Jack, half to himself; but Mr. Thornton caught the words.

"So it is home, dear boy," he said heartily. "Australia always strikes an Englishman like that."

Jack was much interested in a picture hanging in the hall of the farm. This picture showed the Laughing Jackass of Queensland (Dacelo Leachii). The interesting bird was in the act of snapping up a mouse, and obviously it was enjoying the delicacy in anticipation, for it held the rodent in its bill and seemed lost in pleasant dreamings.

"He is not the real laughing jackass, you know, Jack," said Mr. Thornton. "That fellow there always seems to me to be wrongly named. He can hardly be said to laugh. You can see the difference between him and the real kind whom you have seen at the Zoological Gardens at home. Why, that chap's smile—you cannot call it a laugh—is so unpleasant that if the folks heard it in London they would say the man was right who likened it to a blend of a policeman's rattle and a locomotive whistle is sounding a night call in a goods yard."

There was much to interest Jack that evening, for the minister, Mr. Warburton, a big, brown-bearded man, talked of his adventures in the South Sea Islands, where he had been a missionary for years. Mr. Warburton had been pretty well all over Australia, too. He spoke of the Barrier Reef, and the wonders of Northern Territory and Port Darwin.

"It amazes me sometimes," he said, "the way some folks speak of Australia. It's the most wonderful country in the world, and after a bit, when we get the irrigation question a shade further advanced, we shall be able to grow enough food to supply all the nations if they want it."

Mr. Warburton rode part of the way home with Jack and his uncle through the purple night. As they gained the stockade they turned and waved to their kind hostess, who was standing at the entrance of the farmhouse, from which came the soft glow of the lamps. Beyond, the sky was still almost light, and faint, tenderly-marked colourings pencilled the route of the vanished sun.

The First Snake!

THE next morning Jack had just sat down to breakfast, with his aunt and uncle, when a servant put his head in at the door, and said a big black snake had gone under the house. "All right," said Mr. Thornton, "put a saucer of milk for the snake, near where it entered, but a little way back from the house, and when we finish breakfast we'll come out and talk to his lordship."

Jack was very excited, for he had not yet seen a snake, but his uncle advised him to take plenty of time over his meal.

"It is a great mistake," he said, "to be afraid of snakes. They are afraid of us, and will generally get out of our way as quickly as they can. There are about sixty-five different kinds of snakes in Australia, and two-thirds of them are poisonous."

"Yes," said Mrs. Thornton, "but the very sight of a snake makes some people so nervous, that they never can tell the harmless snakes from the others."

"In our part," said Mr. Thornton, "the poisonous ones are the brown snake, the black snake, and the tiger snake. The most dangerous of them all is the tiger snake, but, very often, he is just as much frightened of you as you are of him, and will get away as fast as he can. And after all the snakes help the farmer by eating rats, mice, and other pests."

When they had finished breakfast, Mr. Thornton told Jack he better get his gun ready in case he would have to shoot the snake. The three of them then went out on the verandah and sat quietly, not far from the saucer of milk. Snakes are very fond of milk, and can often be brought from their hiding places by putting some quite near.

In a few minutes, out glided a great black snake, and made for the saucer.

"Shall I shoot him, uncle?" whispered Jack, in great excitement.

"No," said Mr. Thornton, "wait there a minute, and you may see some fun. If the snake makes to go away you can shoot him close to the head."

Mr. Thornton then went into the house, and presently came back with Tim the fox-terrier, who, the moment he saw the snake, went for him like a shot, and gave him a sharp bite well up to the head.

The snake hissed angrily, raised his head, and tried to get at Tim, but the dog was too quick, and kept running round and round at a safe distance, all the time watching his chance to get another bite at his enemy.

Once or twice the long black slippery thing almost touched Tim with his tail, and tried to wind itself round the dog, but Tim was too clever.

The fight continued for some time, both dog and snake being thoroughly roused, but, at last, with a bound as quick as lightning, Tim closed in, got the snake by the neck, gave him a few savage shakes as if he had been a rat, and all was over. He had broken the snake's back.

"Well, Jack," said his uncle, "you never saw a fight like that in England. Isn't Tim a plucky dog? It's not the first one he's killed. Some day, however, the snake will get him. Let's measure this fellow." He was exactly seven feet three inches long.

"This is a fair-sized one for his sort, he's a carpet snake, is sometimes sixteen feet long. This is one of the harmless variety."

(More about the New Chum's Australian experiences next week.)

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

Note:—Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: Editor, The "Gem," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Next Week's Attractions:

A GRAND NUMBER

will make its appearance on Wednesday next. To begin with, there will be a Splendid Long Complete Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled,

"AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!"

By Martin Clifford.

This talented author has excelled himself with a vengeance in this magnificent story, which deals with the mysterious disappearance of the whole of the St. Jim's junior cricket eleven on the eve of the important match with Greyfriars.

How the alarming situation is relieved by Harry Noble, the Kangaroo, we must leave Martin Clifford to tell in his own masterly way in

"AUSTRALIA TO THE RESCUE!"

To follow this will be another of Michael Poole's unique tales of the popular chums of St. Katie's,

"KANGAROO'S MENAGERIE!"

featuring Curt's, the boy from Australia, who is one of the most popular characters in these fine school yarns.

To these readers I will confide my opinion that

"KANGAROO'S MENAGERIE!"

is one of the very best.

A third feature is another of the interesting series entitled,

"A NEW CHUM IN AUSTRALIA!"

By "Cooee."

dealing with further life and adventures in that far-off dominion. According to the evidence of my postbag, it appears that these snappy little contributions are very popular, and I am going to try and give a little more space to them in subsequent issues.

To complete the make-up of this interesting and enjoyable number, there is also

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

a feature which has proved an instant success with my chums. Half-a-crown for every paragraph published is the rule, so don't delay in sending your "par" along.

THE CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

It has been decided to discontinue the Correspondence Column. I have arrived at this decision with regret, but it was inevitable in view of the complaints I received every day respecting the bad faith of many advertisers. In numerous cases money has been sent for back numbers, and the recipient of the papers has omitted to forward the sum agreed upon. The Correspondence Column was not run in order that supporters of the Companion Papers might be victimised in this shameful style, and the only way to stop such abuses is to shut down the feature.

A FAITHFUL SUPPORTER OF THE "GEM."

The following letter has reached me from Miss Molly White-Jones, of Bellmour Hall, Rangleys:

"Dear sir,—Years ago I used to take in the dear old Gem, and I loved it. Then, when I grew up, I am ashamed to admit I gave it up; but now I am going to take it every week again, and renew acquaintance with the dear boys of St. Jim's. During the time I used to be a reader I purchased through an advertisement in the Gem some bird's eggs, and now I cannot find the address of the man I bought them from. All I can remember is that he lived in Northumberland, and part of the address was Hawk—something or other. I wonder if you could help me? Please, I should be so grateful if you would."

I hope the correspondent concerned will see this request.

FARM WORK.

A few seasons ago there was a rush to the land by a lot of fellows, who took up the flax work for the Government. There is not likely to be a recurrence of the opportunity—that is, as regards

flax, but farm-work is always obtainable, and I expect a great many of my chums are contemplating a holiday of the sort this season. Jobs on farms up and down the country can, of course, only be obtained by application. A few weeks on a farm really make about the best and most interesting sort of holiday. There is more in the business than a spell by the sea. On a farm everything provides interest. I wish there were a means of putting farmers who want some help into touch with town fellows who would simply jump at the chance of a bout of country life. I believe there is a real appreciation for a farm lurking in everybody, except, perhaps, the fussy, over-dressed town chap who cannot enjoy things unless he has clean pavements to walk on.

CRABBINNESS.

It is a miserable experience to have to live with a fellow who suffers all the time from irritability. Of course, we all know there is an excuse for such a quality, but with some folks it seems to master them entirely. We all know the kind of chap who walks up and down the world with a grievance, fancied or otherwise. He wears it plastered all over him, and he is only happy, and then miserable in a kind of way, when he is telling some unwary person why it was he failed to become Head Cook to the Bank of England, or Bottlewasher-in-Chief at the Mint. But it does not pay. That is looking at things rather low down, I will admit. For if crabbinness paid, then let us all be as poor as the church mouse of the venerable legend.

It is all to the credit of the world that it is usually tolerant of the touchy man: "Oh, it is only his manner, you know! You mustn't take any notice of what he says, for he doesn't really mean it!"

That is all very well in its way, as the boy said when they gave him a bagful of sausage-rolls for lunch, but the remark does not seem to meet the case quite well enough.

And the funny part of it is—for there is a touch of humour even in such cases—that the victims to such awkward tempers know they are being disagreeable, and sometimes smile to themselves at the thought that their tempers are so unspeakably vile.

Your Editor

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