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No. 783
Vol. XXII.

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

October 14th, 1922.



CLARENCE YORK TOMPKINS INTRODUCES HIS UNCLE!

(A Startling Incident in the Grand, Long, Complete School Story Inside.)

"My Readers' Own Corner."

Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.
(If You Do Not Win a Prize This Week—You May Next.)

This Wins Our Tuck Hamper!

Just To Start Him.

The smart young man, his school honours thick upon him, and fired with the intention to teach the world in general, including his father, the principles of business, stood earnestly holding forth in the office of his paternal relative. "You may rely upon me, sir," he said. "I will devote my whole life to the interests of the business. It shall be the aim of my life to keep the family name free from stain." "Good," said the old man gruffly, "that's the spirit. Tell the office boy to give you the metal polish, and go and rub up the name plate on the door." A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to:—F. E. Hope, 2, Cage Lane, Chatham.

THE SURPRISE.

The party was in full swing, and the elders were having a welcome interlude from amusing the children. A lady got up and began to sing. Addressing a rather deaf old man, the lady's husband said: "Don't you think that my wife has a fine voice?" "Eh, what's that you say?" rumbled the old man. "I'm sorry, but that woman is making such a horrible noise that I can't hear a word! Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—Miss Alice Mason, 18, Maxwell Street, Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancs.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON

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THE NEWEST FASHION.

Customer in the draper's shop: "I should like a dress of that material which you say is the very latest Paris fashion, but I am afraid it would fade rapidly." Assistant: "Oh, no, madam, not at all. It has been in our window for the last two years, and, as you see, it has not turned colour." Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—Arthur Finikin, Milton, Platt's Avenue, Belmont, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

UNTRUE.

Baggy Trimble, fat and nimble,
Who scorns to tell a lie.
Who never hears with his fat ears
The talk of passersby.

Who never steals, and never feels
He'd like to take a smack.
For bagging grub, this little tub
Has never had a smack.

Whose boot is never, really never
Outside a door untied,
Who never drops his cap and stops
To hear the talk inside.

This is Baggy, thin and scraggy,
Who's never known to lie.

At games he's it, you'd have a fit
To see his fat form fly.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—G. Pullinger, Beverley, 36, Normanton Road, South Croydon, Surrey.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT.

The Professor: "I am about to perform a very interesting chemical experiment. Should I do anything wrong, the whole class, including myself, might be blown through the roof. Kindly step nearer, so that you can follow me better." Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—H. Solley, General Store, Fern Tree Gully, Victoria, Australia.

MOLES.

You would hardly believe that moles, clumsy little beasts that they are, become perfect demons when they quarrel. No one knows what they quarrel about, but if they once start fighting, one has to die. They will keep up the contest in the presence of any number of spectators, hanging on to one another like bulldozers, and burying their enormously strong jaws and teeth in one another's flesh. They resemble hedgehogs in this matter of a fight to the death. Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—Len Walkerdine, 36, Byron Street, Derby.

THE OLD COLLEAGUE.

Messenger: "Who's the swell you was talkin' to, Jimmie?"

Jimmie: "Oh, him and me's worked together for years. He's the editor of one of my papers." Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—G. Anglin, 238-39, Street, Newport News, Virginia, U.S.A.

HIS DUTY.

Young Bill was enjoying a quiet smoke in the garden when his father appeared upon the scene. "You young scamp!" exclaimed the latter. "So I've just caught you, have I, smoking my cigars!" "Oh, it's all right, dad!" replied the boy. "I heard ma say you were smoking yourself to death, so I am trying to save your life." Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—H. Walker, 16, Pelham Street, Grimsby.

TOUGH.

Conjurer: "My assistant will now guess without aid how many hairs any gentleman present has on his head." A member of the audience: "How many hairs have I?" Assistant: "Two million four hundred thousand and twenty-six." Conjurer: "If the gentleman will take the trouble to count his hairs he will find the number is correct." Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—Miss S. Todd, 37, Barrack Street, Lisburn, Ireland.

MAN.

A man has over two hundred separate bones. The right side of the body exactly corresponds with the left. The limbs are not only in pairs, as two legs and two arms, but there is a likeness in the bones of both arm and leg; in the thigh and arm is a single bone, while in the leg and forearm there are two. The wrist and the ankle are almost exactly the same in formation. The backbone, or spine, consists of a number of bones placed one upon the other—the vertebrae, which means "turning bones" from the Latin, "verto," to turn. In a youth there are thirty-three separate bones, but in an adult these are united. There are twenty-two bones in the skull. Only one of these is movable, the lower jaw. Half-a-crown has been awarded to:—B. G. Stoner, 33, Windsor Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex.

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THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 766.

Trouble for Tompkins!

A Grand Long Complete School Story of the Chums of St. Jim's, telling of a lad's devotion to his uncle who has fallen upon lean days.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Arthur Augustus Chips In.

"ROTTERS!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give me my letter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form frowned over his eyeglass. The post was in, and Arthur Augustus was coming along in the hope of finding a letter from his noble pater, with a long-expected fiver in it. He found a merry crowd gathered about the letter-rack.

Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth was almost dancing with rage. Racke of the Shell held a letter above his head, and Tompkins was grabbing at it in vain. Crooke and Scrope of the Shell, and Mellish and Trimble of the Fourth were gathered round, chortling. Several other fellows were looking on and grinning.

"Give me my letter!" howled Tompkins.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bore down on the group. "Wacke, if that lettah belongs to Tompkins—"

"Mind your own business!" said Racke cheerfully. "You can look at it if you like."

"Weally, Wacke, I have no desiah to look at Tompkins' lettah—"

"It's worth looking at," grinned Crooke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Tompkins helplessly. "Look here, Racke, if you don't gimme my letter, I'll jolly well lick you!"

"Lick away!" chuckled Racke. "You'll have to be carried away in pieces afterwards."

"Weally, Wacke—"

"Look at it!" chuckled Mellish. "I say, Racke, pin it up on the wall of the Common-room. All the fellows would like to see this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glanced at the envelope in Racke's hand. The cad of the Shell was holding it up for all to see. Gussy started a little as he saw the address.

Master Klarence Y. Tompkins,
St. Jim's Skool,
Sussex.

Certainly it was an unusual form of address. Probably no letter had ever been received by a St. Jim's junior before addressed quite in that style.

But Arthur Augustus did not smile.

He turned his celebrated eyeglass upon Racke of the Shell with withering severity.

"Wacke, you uttah wottah, is it poss that you are makin' fun of the snellin' in that address?" he demanded.

"Quite possible!" chortled Racke. "That's the merry joke. Rippin' sort of letter to come to St. Jim's, what? Tompkins won't tell us which of his relations it's from."

"Is it from the Clarences or the Yorks, dear boy?" chuckled Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hapless Tompkins almost wept with rage. Tompkins of the Fourth was not unaccustomed to being made fun of. His high-sounding front names often caused smiles. And Tompkins was a diffident and not very quick-witted youth, and generally a safe subject for ragging. His face was crimson with rage and humiliation, as he made vain attempts to capture the letter from the cad of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was there. Arthur Augustus' favourite role was that of champion of the oppressed. Arthur Augustus allowed his monocle to drop to the end of its cord, and pushed back his spotless cuffs.

"Wacke, you wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give Tompkins his lettah!"

"Rats!"

"I'll give you one second, Wacke, befoah I give you a feaful thwashin'!" shouted Arthur Augustus, in great wrath.

"Keep him off!" grinned Racke. "I'm going to pin this up in the Common-room. It's too good a joke for Tompkins to keep to himself."

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Tompkins.

"Back me up, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, and he rushed at Aubrey Racke.

Crooke and Scrope and the others closed round him at once. The next moment there was a terrific scrimmage raging.

But Arthur Augustus, fiery warrior as he was when his noble wrath was roused, was not a match for four or five fellows. Mellish went staggering and yelling from a heavy drive, and then the rest collared Arthur Augustus and held him.

"Back up, Tompkins!" shouted Gussy.

Clarence York Tompkins was not a fighting-man. He did not lack pluck, but he lacked character and resolution. Even when his champion was struggling in the grasp of Racke & Co. he hesitated. But he overcame his hesitation, and rushed in, hitting. Racke gave a yell as a rather bony fist caught him on the nose.

The next moment Tompkins was on the floor, gasping. Trimble promptly sat on him and kept him there.

"Hallo, what's the row?" sang out the cheery voice of Blake of the Fourth.

Blake and Herries and Digby came up. The chums of Study No. 6 were all interested in Gussy's expected fiver. But they forgot about the expected fiver when they saw what was going on. Without waiting for an answer to his question, Jack Blake rushed into the fray.

"Wescue, deah boys!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Pile in!" yelled Herries.

In about a second the scene was changed. Racke and Scrope and Crooke were knocked right and left, and they sprawled on the floor, howling. Trimble and Mellish ran for it, and were kicked as they ran. Clarence York Tompkins scrambled up breathlessly. His nose was oozing red. He jumped at Aubrey Racke, and grabbed the letter from his hand.

"Thanks, you fellows!" he gasped.

And he cut off with the letter. Evidently he wanted to keep the peculiar address from the public eye, so far as possible.

"Now, what's the merry row about?" asked Blake cheerily. "Looking for trouble again, as usual, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ow, ow! Wow!" came from Racke of the Shell, as he sat up dazedly and dabbed his prominent nose. "Ow! Wow!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Crooke. "Ow! It was only a lark! Wow!"

"You don't look so larkly as you did!" remarked Blake.

"Don't hurry away, Crooke—stay and have some more!"

"Ow!"

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Crooke hurried away without accepting the invitation. Racke and Scrope followed him, scowling savagely. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dusted his rather dishevelled attire.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boys!" he said. "The wottahs were makin' fun of Tompkins, you know—"

"Well, he's rather a funny merchant, isn't he?" remarked Blake.

"Have you been getting into a scrape on his account, you ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake!"

"If only you'd refuse to be one—" sighed Blake.

"Wats! Tompkins has weceived a lettah with the addvess vewy ill-spelt, and those cad's were waggin' him about it," said Arthur Augustus. "I werged it as bein' in the worst of taste. If Tompkins has an uneducated wvelation, it is a mattah for sympathy, and not for wotten jokes."

"Hear, hear!" yawned Blake. "Has the fiver come?"

"There does not appeah to be a lettah for me," said Arthur Augustus. "The patah has not played up."

Blake groaned.

"Did you tell him we were practically famished in Study No. 6?" he asked.

"Wats! Pewwaps it will come to-mowwow," said Arthur Augustus hopefully. "We shall have to have tea in Hall to-day, deah boy, unless we can stick Tom Mewwy."

"We'll try Tom Merry first," said Blake decidedly. "As for your pater, Gussy, I'm surprised at him. I never believed in the idea of abolishing the House of Lords. But if the nobility are going to play it low down on us like this—"

"Weally, Blake!"

"Let's try Tom Merry," said Dig. "If he's drawn blank, what about Tompkins?"

"Tompkins!" repeated Blake.

"Tompkins is supposed to have a rich uncle," said Dig. "He's just had a letter. Well, Gussy has fought his battles for him, so if Tompkins is in funds, we're entitled to stick him for a tea. I suppose even Tompkins has some gratitude in his composition somewhere."

"Something in that," agreed Blake thoughtfully. "We don't often honour Tompkins with our notice; but, after all, he's not a bad chap in his own way. Perhaps we ought to recognise his existance, sometimes. If Tom Merry lets us down we'll apply to Tompkins, and see if there's anything going."

"Weally, Blake!"

"You dry up, Gussy!" said Blake severely. "After the way your pater has let the study down, the less you say the better. Come on! Let's call on Tom Merry before they've finished tea—if any."

And Study No. 6 proceeded to Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage, what time Clarence York Tompkins was reading his letter in his own quarters, with a face that grew longer and longer as he read.

CHAPTER 2.

Monty Lowther is Too Funny!

TOM MERRY ran his hands through his pockets slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. Manners and Lowther followed his example, with the same thoughtful care. Each member of the Terrible Three apparently hoped that a rigid search would reveal coins that were not there. If they nourished that hope they were disappointed. Tom Merry produced a penny, Lowther three-halfpence. Manners, the wealthiest of the trio on this occasion, laid threepence on the table.

"That's the lot!" said Manners.

"Fivepence-halfpenny!" said Lowther. "Looks like a feed for three—I don't think!"

"Can't be helped," said Tom cheerily. "Tea in Hall won't hurt us for once, and there's still time."

"Rotten!" growled Lowther.

"The giddy limit!" grunted Manners.

"Why grouse?" said Tom. "Lucky we're not late for Hall. Come on! Any port in a storm!"

There was a bump at the door of No. 10 in the Shell, and it flew open. Three Fourth-Formers presented themselves in the doorway, and behind them gleamed the eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Trot in, old tops!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "That is, if you've come to ask us to tea. If not, don't worry."

"Weally, Lowthah!"

Jack Blake looked at the little collection of coppers on the table, and then turned his glance upon the Terrible Three in great disgust.

"You fellows stony, too?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Monty Lowther airily. "We've got fivepence-ha'penny!"

"Oh, rotten! Then it's either Hall or Tompkins!" grunted Blake.

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"Hall for us," said Tom Merry. "And we shall have to get a move on, too!"

"Hold on!" said Lowther. "What's that about Tompkins? Is Tompkins standing a spread?"

"Oh, bother Tompkins!" said Manners. "We're not going to sponge on the fags."

"My dear chap," said Monty Lowther, "if Tompkins is standing a spread, Tompkins can scarcely be regarded as a common or garden fag. There are some good points about Tompkins."

"Blessed if I've ever noticed them!" said Manners.

"Well, first of all, there's his front names," said Lowther.

"It's not every Tompkins who is also Clarence York. Moreover, Tompkins is said to have a rich uncle in Australia, or South Africa, or somewhere. Once upon a time his uncle stood him a new bike. It pays to remember things like this in times of adversity. Tompkins, of course, is miles beneath the notice of important fellows like ourselves. But at times it is up to the great to take notice of the infinitely little. At such a time as this—tea-time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tompkins is not a bad sort," continued Lowther. "He is rather soft, and a bit of a spooney, and can't say 'Bo' to a goose. But a fellow who may at any moment receive a whacking remittance from a rich uncle cannot be said to be all bad."

"Bai Jove! I weally considah—"

"Tompkins will be no end bucked if we rescue him for once from the oblivion which is his natural state," said Lowther. "It will be a kind act. It may also produce tea. Let's all go and call on Tompkins."

"Rot!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're not chummy with Tompkins," grunted Manners.

"True! But if Tompkins is standing a tea, the necessary amount of chumminess can be turned on at short notice."

"Bai Jove! I wefuse—"

"Follow your Uncle Montague!" said Lowther.

And the humorist of the Shell started for the Fourth Form passage. Tom Merry and Manners followed, with Study No. 6. Seven juniors arrived at the door of Tompkins' study in the Fourth, No. 4, which was shared by Clarence York with Mulvaney minor. Monty Lowther tapped at the door, and opened it.

Clarence York Tompkins was alone in the study. He was sitting by the window, reading a letter, evidently the latter which had been rescued from Aubrey Racke.

There was a shadow of trouble on his face. He coloured, and put down the letter quickly as the crowd of juniors swarmed into the doorway. Tompkins rose to his feet in surprise. He was quite unaccustomed to receiving a crowd of visitors in his quarters. He blinked at Tom Merry & Co., and blinked still more as Monty Lowther made him a deep bow, almost touching the study carpet with his nose.

"I—I say! What's this game?" asked Clarence York.

"Weally, Lowthah!" came from the rear.

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake!"

"What do you fellows want?" inquired Tompkins uneasily, half-suspecting a rag.

"Tea!" said Lowther.

"Eh?"

"According to rumours that have been heard in the School House, and even as far as the New House," said Monty Lowther, with great gravity, "you, Clarence York Tompkins, are the happy possessor of an uncle."

For some reason Tompkins flushed crimson.

"What about it?" he faltered.

"An uncle in Australia!" said Lowther.

"Ye-e-es."

"Good! That uncle is said to have a proper sense of avuncular duties, and he has sometimes sent you tips?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Excellent old gentleman!" said Monty Lowther. "Now, may a chap inquire respectfully whether you have heard from your uncle lately, Tompkins?"

Tompkins' flush deepened.

"Yes," he muttered.

"That letter was from him?" asked Blake.

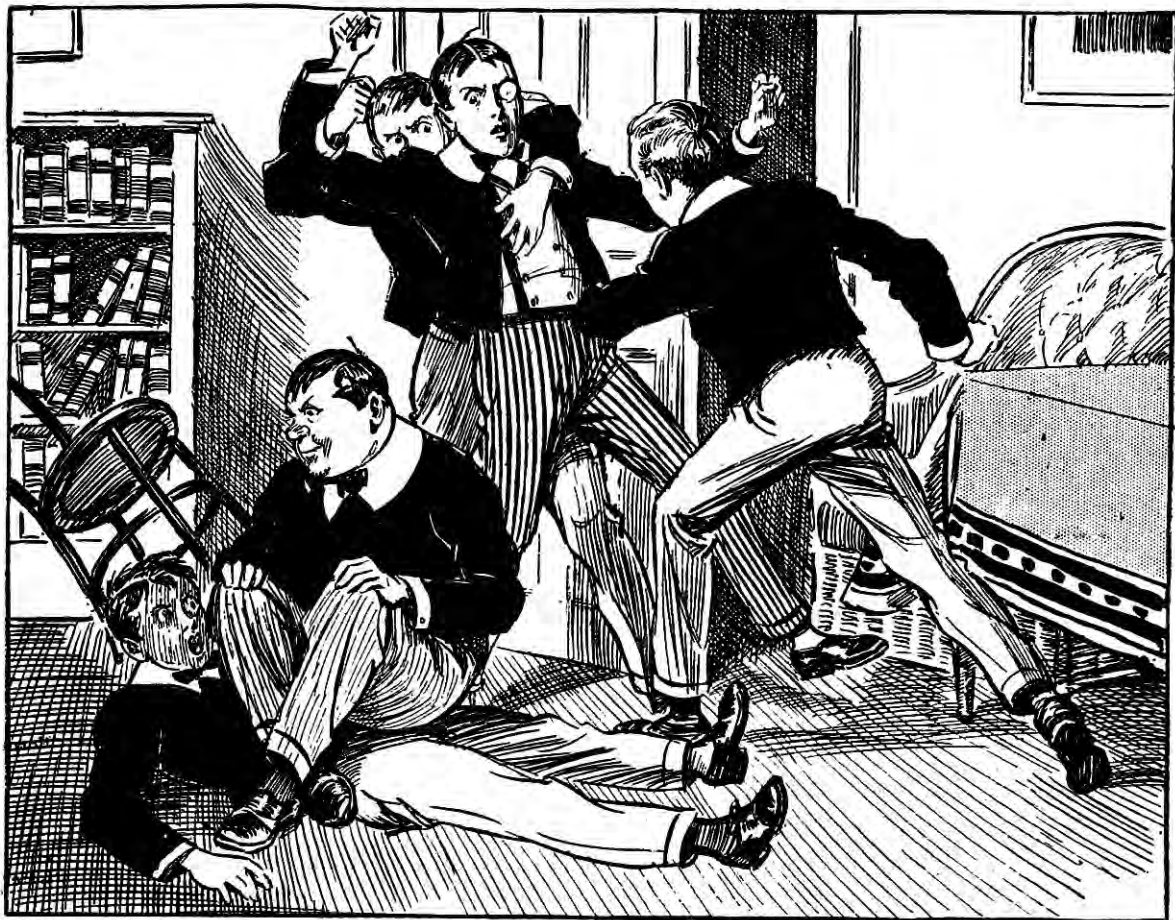
"Ye-e-es."

"Good egg!" said Lowther. "Now, Tompkins, you have probably never noticed that we—little us, the great chiefs of the School House—have always regarded you with great friendship and admiration?"

"No—n-no," stammered Tompkins.

"I feared not," said Lowther regretfully. "We have never made it plain. We've forgotten to mention it. We've allowed it to slip our minds. Now we are going to make up for lost time. You're sure you've had a letter from your Australian uncle?"

"Ye-e-es."



"Back me up, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Clarence York Tompkins rushed upon Racke & Co. The next moment there was a terrific scimmage raging. Mellish went staggering and yelling from a heavy drive, but the rest collared D'Arcy and held him back. Tompkins was borne to the floor gasping, and Trimble promptly sat on him and kept him there. (See page 3.)

"That settles it. Tompkins, old chap, I love you like a brother—a long-lost twin brother! Come to my arms!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you uttah ass——"

"Trickle in, dear men," said Lowther, looking round at his followers. "Tompkins is delighted to see so many close and chummy friends at his festive board!"

"Lowthah, I pwotest against your pullin' poor old Tompkins' leg in this vidualous way!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The chap can't help bein' wathah an ass, and it is not wight."

Tompkins blinked at the crowd of grinning juniors.

"I—I—I— You see, you fellows," he stammered, "I—I've had a letter from my Uncle York. I jolly well wish I could ask you to a spread. You see, this is the first letter uncle has written to me. I—I've had some tips from him, but they came through my people. And—and there's beasty bad news in this letter."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther in utter disgust.

The juniors all became grave at once. They all rather liked Tompkins in a way, regarding him as what Blake called a harmless ass. Lowther could have kicked himself. He had been working off his first-class humour on a fellow who had just received bad news—quite an unhappy position for a humorist who was also a kind-hearted and good-natured fellow.

"Bai Jove! I'm awf'ly sowwy to heah it, Tompkins," said Arthur Augustus. "We had bettah wetiah, you fellows."

"Sorry, old son," said Tom Merry. "Don't mind Lowther. He was born a funny ass, and can't help it. Nobody ill, I hope?"

"Oh, no; not so bad as that," said Tompkins. "My poor old uncle——" There was a catch in his voice.

"Bai Jove! I twust it is nothin' vewy sewjous, Tompkins."

"It was true about my having a rich uncle," said Tompkins, flushing. "He sent my people lots of things from Australia. But—but—he's in England again now, and—and he's written to tell me that—that—that something's happened,

and he's landed with the clothes he stands up in—just as he went twenty years ago."

"What rotten luck!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! I'm awf'ly sowwy."

"Beastly!" said Blake.

"We had bettah wetiah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"Thank you vewy much for confidin' in us, Tompkins. Of course, we shall not mention this."

"He, he, he!" came suddenly from the passage.

Tom Merry jumped to the door just in time to see Baggy Trimble disappearing in the direction of the stairs.

"Gweat Scott! That wottah Twimble——"

"It doesn't matter," said Tompkins miserably. "It would be out pretty soon, anyhow. I don't suppose I shall be able to stay on at St. Jim's after this term. Uncle stood most of the exes. Not that I'm thinking much about that. Only—the poor old chap, you know, coming down to poverty in his old age; he's done a lot for me, and I sha'n't be able to help him. I'm not old enough; and if I were, I'm such a duffer. I know I'm a duffer without the fellows telling me." There was a choke in poor Tompkins' throat. "I'd work my fingers off, if I could, to make up for what the old chap has done for me; but there's nothing doing. I—I——"

"Tompkins, old chap," said Tom Merry softly, "you're one of the best—one of the very best. And you're not a duffer; anything but that. If there's anything any of us can do, you've only to say the word."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co. retired rather hastily from the study, realising that poor Tompkins would prefer to be left alone just then. In the passage they looked at one another seriously.

"I—I feel like kicking myself," mumbled Monty Lowther. "Poor old Tompkins! We can't help him, unless we lend him our fivepence-ha'penny!" added Monty Lowther, with a gleam of humour.

"Fathead!" said Manners.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Blake looked at his watch.

"Just in time for tea in Hall, if we rush!" he exclaimed. And the juniors rushed.

CHAPTER 3. Racke's Little Joke!

"H A, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the junior Common-room as the Terrible Three entered that apartment after prep that evening.

"Some merry joke on!" said Manners.

"Racke & Co!" growled Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three walked in. There was a paper pinned on the wall of the Common-room, and Racke & Co. were gathered round it. A number of other fellows were looking on, some laughing, some looking puzzled.

"What's on?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Seems to be a little joke of Racke's," said Cardew of the Fourth, with a yawn. "Can't see the joke myself."

"Blessed if I can, either," said Levison. "Racke's written a letter in bad spelling, and stuck it up on the wall. Why, goodness knows!"

"Can't see that it's funny," remarked Clive. "Racke seems to see no end of fun in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from Racke & Co.

The Terrible Three walked over to the yelling group. Where the joke came in was a mystery to them, as to the other fellows; but as it was a joke of Racke's, they took it for granted that there was something caddish in it.

It was a sheet of notepaper that was pinned on the wall—evidently a letter, written in a straggling hand, and with a system of spelling that was worthy of Baggy Trimble himself:

"My dear boy,—I am afrade the newes I have for you will give you a shok. I will tell you more about it when I cum down to the skool and see you on Wensday. I ope you will not be ashamed to see your uncle rather shabbey. I've landed with the cloes I stand up in, same as I emmygrated twenty years ago, and—"

That was all that could be seen—the rest being on the other side of the sheet, if there was any more. Racke and Crooke and Scrope, Mellish and Trimble seemed to be almost in convulsions over it.

Tom Merry's brow grew black.

From what Tompkins had said in his study Tom could guess that this was a copy of the letter from the Fourth-Former's uncle. The other fellows present, knowing nothing of Tompkins' affairs, naturally did not connect the letter with Tompkins at all; but it was plain enough to the Terrible Three. Evidently poor Tompkins' letter had been purloined and copied—unless this was the original!

Study No. 6 strolled into the Common-room and joined the group. They looked at the letter; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his eyeglass, and looked at it again. The same thought that had occurred to Tom Merry occurred to them at once.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "It is possible—"

"Bai Jove! Even Wacke wouldn't be such a howwid cad—"

Tom strode towards Aubrey Racke, with a blaze in his eyes. "Racke! You—you reptile! Have you stolen that letter from Tompkins?"

Racke looked at him coolly.

"Tompkins!" he repeated. "Does it belong to Tompkins? I picked it up in the passage, and stuck it up here for the fellows to see, so that it could be claimed by the owner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tompkins!" said Levison of the Fourth. "It couldn't belong to a St. Jim's chap, could it? What rot!"

"Tom Merry seems to think so!" grinned Crooke. "Somebody had better ask Tompkins. It may be from his rich uncle that we've heard about!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly rich, when he's only got the clobber he stands up in!" yelled Trimble. "He, he, he!"

"Spot the spelling!" chortled Mellish. "Weren't there any board schools in Tompkins' uncle's young days?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utter cad, Racke!" said Tom.

"My dear chap, what are you getting your wool off about?" asked Aubrey Racke. "If you think that letter belongs to Tompkins, well and good. I don't say so. You say so."

"Tom Merry says so!" chuckled Scrope. "Nice for Tompkins! Rather a rotten thing to say about a chap, Tom Merry."

"Hallo, here comes Tompkins!" said Herries in a low voice.

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There was a hush in the Common-room as Tompkins of the Fourth came in. Tompkins was looking worried and troubled and red.

All the fellows looked at him. Under the belief that the queer letter on the wall was some joke of Racke's, the juniors had nearly all looked at it and read it to see what the joke was. They realised now that they had been tricked into reading a private letter and a letter that the recipient most certainly would have wished to keep very private. But Racke's statement that he had picked up the letter, and had pinned it up for the owner to recognise and claim, could not be disproved, though no one believed it.

Tompkins came into the room, and his flush deepened as he caught so many eyes fixed upon him.

"I—I say," stammered Tompkins, "I—I've lost a letter!"

"He, he, he!" from Trimble.

"Lost it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, it's been taken," said Tompkins. "I put it in the desk in my study, so I couldn't have lost it, could I? Some chap has been to my study and taken that letter. It's very private."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Poor Tompkins' statement that the letter was "very private" made some of the other fellows grin, as well as Racke & Co. There was nothing very private about that unfortunate letter now.

Tom Merry's eyes glinted.

"Is that your letter, Tompkins?" he asked very quietly, pointing to the sheet on the wall.

Tompkins stared at it, and the flush died out of his face, leaving him very pale. With trembling fingers he removed the pinned letter from the wall. There was silence now.

"It's a shame!" said Tompkins in a choking voice. "That letter was taken from my desk—it was a dirty trick. It's a shame!"

"It was a rotten shame," said Tom Merry, "and Racke's going to pay for it!" He turned on the cad of the Shell.

"Put up your hands, Racke, you cad!"

Racke backed away.

"I didn't take the letter," he said sullenly. "I picked it up in the passage, just as I said."

"That's a lie!" said Blake.

"One of your crowd took it, and you pinned it up here, knowing that it was Tompkins' letter," said the captain of the Shell quietly. "You're going to pay for it, you cringing rotter! Put up your hands!"

Racke scowled.

"If Tompkins has got anything to complain of, he can say so!" he said sullenly. "No bizney of yours, Tom Merry!"

"Tompkins isn't a match for you, and that's why you've played that dirty trick," said Tom. "I'm waiting for you, Racke! You'd better put up your hands, you're for it, anyhow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

A hand dropped on Tom Merry's arm and drew him back. He turned to see Clarence York Tompkins.

"Leave him to me!" said the Fourth-Former quietly.

Tompkins was still a little pale, but his eyes were gleaming. There was a grim resolution in his face that the St. Jim's juniors had never noticed there before.

"My dear old chap," said Tom uneasily, "you're not big enough for Racke."

"I'm not a funk, Tom Merry!"

"I know you're not, kid—nothing of the kind. But—"

"I'm going to thrash Racke, or else be knocked to pieces," said Tompkins between his teeth. "Leave me alone!"

Tom Merry unwillingly stepped back. Clarence York was determined, and there was nothing more to be said.

Racke burst into a mocking laugh.

"I'm ready!" he said.

"Bai Jove, it's not faih, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally wish you would leave Wacke to me, Tompkins, deah boy!"

Tompkins did not seem to hear. He threw off his jacket and advanced upon Aubrey Racke with the light of battle in his eyes. And Jack Blake thoughtfully closed the door of the Common-room. Masters and prefects were not wanted in the junior quarters just then.

CHAPTER 4.

Clarence York on the War-path!

TOM MERRY & CO. gathered round in a ring. There was keen interest in the combat on all sides. Clarence York Tompkins was always looked upon as a duffer, and considered of no account whatever by fellows who took the trouble to consider his existence at all. To see him coming out in this way was amazing. And Tompkins' determined look was not without its effect on Racke. The cad of the Shell was no hero, and, though he was older, bigger, and certainly stronger than Tompkins, he did not like the look in Clarence York's eye.



Tompkins' face paled as the old man spoke. "I—I'm your nephew," he gasped, "if—if you're Mr. York!" "I'm old Sam York!" agreed the gentleman, holding out a rather large hand to the junior. "Glad to see you, boy! Shake!" Tompkins shook hands with his uncle, and gave a squeak under the grip of the gentleman from Australia. (See page 14.)

Excepting for Racke's pals, all the sympathy was on Tompkins' side in the crowd. And even Racke's friends had no objection to seeing him licked. Indeed, they would have been rather pleased to see their dear Aubrey's swank taken down a peg or two.

Kangaroo of the Shell took out his watch to keep time. Tompkins hardly waited for the word before he rushed on Racke.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Gore of the Shell, and there was a laugh.

"Terrific combat between a duffer and a funk!" murmured Cardew of the Fourth. "Two to one on Tompkins, Levison!"

"Fathead!" "My mistake!" said Cardew gracefully. "I forgot you don't bet—that you left all those naughty ways behind you at Greyfriars. But it's two to one on the Tompkins bird all the same. See the thirst of slaughter in his merry eye." Levison laughed.

"He's only got to stick to Racke for a couple of rounds and the festive Aubrey will show the white feather," smiled Cardew. "See how Aubrey's pitchin' in. He knows that if he's given time he'll develop funk, and he wants to get finished quick."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Bai Jove! I weally think you are wight, Cardew!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with a grin. Cardew bowed.

"After which there is no possible doubt on the subject," he observed. "Of that there is no possible doubt, no possible probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever."

"Oh wats!" "Back up, Tompkins!" sang out Blake. "Yass, watah! Go it, deah boy!" "Pile in, Clarence York!"

Clarence York was piling in, but he had all his work cut out to hold his own against his bigger and heavier antagonist. Tom Merry looked on with a knitted brow. Tompkins was no match physically for Racke, and he had never been supposed to be much in the way of a fighting-man. Gladly enough Tom would have taken the task of thrashing Racke off his hands.

Racke was fighting hard and savagely, and the Fourth-Former was getting some heavy punishment. The call of time at the end of the first round came none too soon for Tompkins.

He staggered almost breathlessly to Tom Merry's knee and sat down, pumping in breath.

Racke drew back to his corner with a vaunting air. Crooke clapped him on the shoulder.

"Your win, old bean!" he said.

"I fancy so!" grinned Racke.

Tom Merry supported Tompkins, while Manners fanned him with a fire-shovel. Tompkins gasped and gasped. Tom Merry whispered advice to him during the one-minute rest. Tom was an old stager at this kind of game, and Tompkins listened to his sage advice attentively and gratefully.

"Time!" sang out Kangaroo.

"Go it, Tompkins!"

Clarence York came up gamely to the scratch. Bearing Tom Merry's advice in mind, he stalled Racke off as well as he could during the second round, seeking to wear Aubrey down a little. As a matter of fact, Racke already had bellows to mend. Too many cigarettes in the study told on Racke when he had to exert himself. At the end of the second round he was puffing and blowing much more than Clarence York Tompkins.

"Time!"

"Racke's havin' his doubts now!" murmured Cardew.

"Look out for the yellow streak in the next round, dear boys!"

Cardew was right.

In the third round Racke pushed the fighting hard, but he was short of wind, and had to slacken off. And when he slackened Tompkins pushed on in his turn. Tompkins was not an athlete, but, at least, there was nothing wrong with his wind owing to smoking. The harder he pushed the more Racke hesitated and retreated, till, at the end of the round, Racke was driven round the ring, dodging the attack.

In the fourth round Tompkins looked confident, and it was clear to all eyes that Racke's only aim was to escape punishment. His blows were unsteady, and his defence faltering. His nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes was puffy, and Racke never could bear pain. In a state of mingled fury and funk, Racke was growing flurried, and the more he dodged and faltered the more Tompkins pressed him, and the harder grew his punishment.

"Time!"

Racke staggered to his corner. There was an ironical grin on Crooke's face now. Racke knew what it meant. His second no longer expected him to be a winner. Racke had given up expecting it himself.

"Time!"

"Bravo! Well hit, Tompkins!"

At the very beginning of the fifth round Tompkins got in a drive from the shoulder, and Racke went spinning. He crashed on the floor with a gasping howl.

"Wight on the jolly old wicket, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in great delight.

"Hurrah!"

"Count!" yelled Hammond of the Fourth.

"One—two—three—four—five," counted the Kangaroo, with his eye on his watch—"six—seven—eight—"

"Get up, Racke!"

"Funk!"

"You're not licked yet."

"Cold feet! Yah!"

Racke did not heed. Kangaroo of the Shell continued to count till Aubrey Racke was counted out. He had counted ten; but he might as well have counted fifty, for it was obvious that Racke did not intend to get up and continue the fight.

"Well, of all the rotten, malingering funks!" growled Jack Blake, in great disgust.

Racke groaned. He could have gone on had his courage not failed him; but he had suffered rather severely. His face, never handsome, looked anything but handsome now. His nose was bulbous and streaming with crimson, one of his eyes was darkening.

Crooke helped him to his feet, grinning. Racke staggered to a chair.

"You've had enough, Racke?" said Tompkins, rather breathlessly.

"Yes, hang you!" snarled Racke.

"My principal is satisfied," said Crooke, with a grin.

"He's no hog. He knows when he's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your turn now, Crooke!" said Tompkins, and the grin died quite suddenly from Crooke's face.

"Wha-a-at?" he ejaculated.

"I'm going to lick every one of you rotten cads that had a hand in stealing my letter!" gasped Tompkins.

"Bai Jove! Jollay good ideah, deah boy."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said Crooke uneasily. "I—I never touched your blessed letter, and I don't care a rap whether you've got one uncle or a dozen in the workhouse."

Mellish and Trimble strolled towards the door. Talbot of the Shell was standing with his back to it, and he did not move. There was no escape for Racke's followers.

"I'm ready, Crooke!" said Tompkins.

Evidently Tompkins of the Fourth was on the warpath with a vengeance. The fight with Racke had told on him, but he was game. Crooke looked anything but game. Scrope whispered in his ear.

"Take him on, you ass! He hasn't a round left in him."

Crooke nodded slowly. Certainly it did not need much pluck on his part to tackle the almost exhausted Tompkins.

"I'm ready!" he said savagely.

"Come on!"

Tom Merry, with a laugh, jerked Clarence York Tompkins back.

"You've done enough, old chap," he said. "Enough's as good as a feast! You can leave the other rotters to your pals."

"I don't know that I've got any pals!" mumbled poor Tompkins.

"You have, old infant—lots! Little me to begin with," said Tom cheerily. "Crooke, you're my game!"

"I've got no quarrel with you, Tom Merry!" snarled Crooke, in great alarm.

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"That's all right. We'll quarrel fast enough when I start punching you," said the captain of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lowther, will you deal with Scrope?"

"With pleasure!" said Monty.

"Blake, would it bother you too much to thrash Mellish?"

"Not at all; I shall enjoy it. I hope Mellish will!" added Blake grimly.

"You can deal with Trimble, Manners."

"Any old thing!" said Manners.

"I—I say—" howled Baggy Trimble, in wild alarm.

"Talbot, you beast, lemme open that door. I—I've got to go to tea with the Head! He—he's asked me specially."

"The Head can wait!" said Talbot, with a laugh. "You've got an engagement with Manners first."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There were four fellows who were keenly averse to fighting, and four fellows who were quite determined on it. The second four had their way. For the next ten minutes Crooke and Scrope, Mellish and Trimble, had the time of their lives.

By the time Tom Merry & Co. had finished with them Racke & Co. repented from the very bottom of their hearts their rag on Clarence York Tompkins. But repentance came too late to be of any service to them.

Racke sat and groaned while the scrapping went on, perhaps deriving a little solace from seeing his comrades thrashed as soundly as himself. When the scrap was over Talbot opened the door, and five dishevelled, dusty, groaning, and gasping juniors were duly kicked out into the passage, to crawl away to their studies and groan there as long as they liked. And then quite a crowd of friendly fellows led Clarence York Tompkins away to bathe his nose and his eye—which needed it.

CHAPTER 5. Trouble for Tompkins!

CLARENCE YORK TOMPKINS was observed to wear a worried brow the next day.

He was still showing signs of his fight with Racke, but the scars of honourable combat did not worry him. Indeed, Tompkins, having come out of his shell, as it were, in that emphatic way, was already a person of more consideration among his schoolfellows. That circumstance alone would have consoled him for his damages if there had been nothing else to worry him. But there was deep trouble on the mind of the unlucky Tompkins.

His personal affairs were the talk of the Lower School now, owing to Racke & Co. Everybody who cared to know knew that Tompkins' rich uncle, upon whom he had been partly dependent, had lost his money, and was hard up—in the workhouse, according to Racke. And that uncle, who wrote in an uneducated hand, and spelt shockingly, was coming to St. Jim's on Wednesday to see his nephew, and the juniors wondered what kind of a "merchant" he would turn out to be. In the letter, which nearly everybody had read or heard about, he had said that he would be "shabby." And some of the fellows could not help thinking that it would have been more considerate of Mr. York to keep away. If he could do nothing more for his nephew, at least he might have avoided disgracing him at his school, for obviously he was not a relative whom any fellow could have been proud to show off in the quad.

Tompkins, who generally glided through an unnoticed existence amid general indifference, was now talked of more than any other fellow in his House. Celebrity would have gratified poor Tompkins at any other time, and on any other occasion. Now he writhed with the knowledge of it. His uncle had been kind and generous to him, and Tompkins had a simple, grateful nature. It would not have occurred to his honest mind to be ashamed of a relative whose money he was not ashamed to take. But he knew how many other fellows would look upon a man who wrote and spelt as Mr. York did. And the publicity his affairs had received was a torture to him. Racke & Co., embittered by the severe punishment of their caddish joke, would not lose the opportunity to display their lofty scorn of the rough-and-ready gentleman. It was, indeed, very probable that Mr. York's visit would be marked by some unpleasant incident. If the matter had remained unknown to anyone but Tompkins himself, he might have received his uncle's visit quietly, and the unpolished gentleman might have come and gone almost unnoticed. Now it was certain that the eyes of all the Lower School would be turned upon him curiously, and that all his little peculiarities would be noted and commented on, with laughter, in the studies and the Common-room.

Tompkins was worried and troubled; and he did not receive much help or sympathy from his study-mate, Mulvaney minor. He was more or less pally with Mulvaney minor, as they shared the same study; but Tompkins had never had what could exactly be called a chum. Hardly anybody disliked him—most of the fellows rather liked him, when they

CHAPTER 6.

Up to Gussy.

noticed him at all; but nobody cared specially for the society of the diffident, unassertive junior.

"Sure, what are you looking like a boiled owl about, fat-head?" Micky Mulvaney asked, when he came in to tea a day or two later, and found Tompkins with a gloomy brow in Study No. 4.

"My—my uncle's coming on Wednesday," said Tompkins miserably.

Mulvaney chuckled.

"The giddy rich uncle who's gone stony broke?" he asked. "Ye-es."

"And sure he won't be sending you any more tips!" said Mulvaney minor, with a touch of sympathy. "That's bad. Sure, I'll thray and pay ye the seven-and-six I owe yez, Tompkins, one of these days."

"Never mind about the seven-and-six," said Tompkins hastily. "But I—I'm worried about it, old chap."

"Yis?" said Mulvaney. "What is there for tea?"

"Are you doing anything next Wednesday?" asked Tompkins.

"I'm going out with Reilly on my bike. You come?"

"I can't, as my uncle's coming."

"Sure, and you can't, either," assented Mulvaney. "Well, I dare say the ould jittleman won't stop long."

"I'd like to have a friend with me on Wednesday."

"Ask somebody you know, then."

"I—I suppose you—wouldn't—" Tompkins faltered.

"Faith, haven't I just said I'm going out with Reilly?" said Mulvaney minor, staring at him. "You're not asking me to stay in, bedad, because your shabby old uncle's coming?"

"No, no!" said Tompkins hastily.

"Because I couldn't, you see," said Mulvaney cheerfully.

"Now, what is there for tea?"

And the subject was dismissed.

Clarence York Tompkins did not seek for any more sympathy in his own study.

He could not help looking, as he felt, dismal. Racke & Co. made it a point to grin and whisper when they saw him—though the unexpected prowess Tompkins had displayed in the Common-room kept them from anything more demonstrative than grinning and whispering. One evening when Tompkins came into the Common-room with his usual dismal look, Baggy Trimble followed him in, with his fat face screwed up into an expression of such woebegone melancholy, in imitation of Tompkins, that there was a general chortle.

Tompkins flushed crimson when he discovered the cause of the merriment. After that he tried to keep a more cheerful countenance. Tom Merry & Co. made it a point to be as kind and friendly as they could, but they had, of course, their own occupations, which did not bring them into contact with that extremely insignificant member of the Fourth Form, Clarence York Tompkins. They went out of their way to speak cheery, friendly words to him; but Tompkins, who hid an unsuspected sensitiveness under his diffident exterior, felt that he was being taken compassion on, and rather avoided their kindness, than sought it.

And Wednesday was drawing nearer, when the hitherto unknown uncle was to arrive. Racke had already nicknamed him the Bushranger—a name that made the juniors chuckle.

On Wednesday morning, Clarence York Tompkins, taking his courage in both hands as it were, spoke to Tom Merry in the Form-room passage after classes were dismissed. He felt sorely the need of a good friend to stand by him that day, if only to see him through should Racke & Co. attempt any unpleasant trickery.

"Busy this afternoon, Merry?" he asked, with an attempt at a brisk cheerfulness of manner.

Tom gave him a smile and a nod.

"Yes, kid. It's the House match, you know."

"The—the House match!" stammered Tompkins. In his troubled frame of mind, Clarence York had forgotten that there was a football match fixed for that Wednesday afternoon.

"Yes, we're playing Figgins & Co. of the New House, you know," said the captain of the Shell. "Your uncle's coming to-day?"

"Ye-es."

"Bring him down to Little Side, if he'll come, to see the match," said Tom. "It might entertain him, you know."

"Thanks!" faltered Tompkins.

Tom Merry nodded cheerily, and passed on to rejoin Manners & Lowther. And Clarence York turned dismally away, his last hope crushed. Tom Merry & Co. would be playing football that afternoon, and would be too busily occupied to be able to spare a thought for Tompkins.

Clarence York had to face his trial alone.

"W EALLY, Blake—"

"Rats!"

"If you say wate to me, Blake—"

"Fathead!"

"I wufese to be chawactewised as a fathead, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "And I wepeat that I shall have to stand out of the House match this aftahnnoon."

"You're jolly well not standing out," said Blake. "Study No. 6 are bound to show up in the footer. What the thump do you want to stand out for, you image? Don't you feel fit?"

"I wufese to be called an image, Blake!"

"Don't you feel fit?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, fathead—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, what's the merry trouble?" asked a cheery voice, as Tom Merry joined Study No. 6 in the quad. "Little boys shouldn't rag, you know."

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Blake crossly. "That howling ass is talking about standing out of the House match! I'm not going to let him!"

"I'm awf'ly sowwy, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, if you think you simply couldn't possibly beat Figgins & Co. without my assistance—"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"My dear ass, we could!" he said. "In fact, if you stand out, you may be doing quite a good thing for the School House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard that wemark as uttably asinine, Tom Mewwy, and I wufese to weply to it. If you think you could fill my place—"

"Easily," said Tom cheerfully. "Take a rest if you like, old top. I'll put in Clive—he's keen on a chance."

"Yaas, Clive is wathah a good man," assented Arthur Augustus. "I'm awf'ly sowwy to miss the footah, but I feel that it is up to me, you know."

"He wants to cut footer to go over to Wayland and buy a new topper, or a new dinky necktie," gasped Blake.

"Nothin' of the sort, Blake."

"Then what is it, ass? Are you going down to Rylcombe to make sheep's eyes at the girl in the bunshop?" roared Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard that wemark as bein' in the vewy worst of taste, Blake."

"Look here—" roared Blake.

"Pway do not wear at me, Blake! I have wemarked fwequently that it thwows me into a fluttah when a fellow woars at me!"

Jack Blake breathed hard. He was very near at that moment to planting his knuckles full upon the aristocratic nose of his noble chum.

"What do you want to stand out of the footer for?" he hissed.

"I don't want to, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus calmly. "But I considah that it is up to me. Tompkins—"

"Bless Tompkins! What does Tompkins matter?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, what about Tompkins?" asked Digby. "Tompkins hasn't anything to do with the footer, except when he's playing it like a cat on hot bricks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am goin' to wally wound Tompkins this aftahnnoon," explained Arthur Augustus. "His uncle is comin', and poor old Tompkins is lookin' wathah down, you know."

"A giddy uncle like that is enough to make any fellow look down," remarked George Herries. "The old codger might really have let Tompkins alone here. What the thump is he coming for?"

"Pewwaps it would have been more considewate of Mr. York not to come," assented Arthur Augustus. "That, how-evah, does not altah the fact that he is comin'. I feah that Wacke of the Shell will be playin' some wotten twick, and poor old Tompkins is weally not able to stand up for himself, you know. I shall wufese to allow Tompkins' uncle to be made fun of, even if he is some wemarkable old boundah, as appeahs pwob."

"Tompkins isn't a pal of yours!" grunted Blake.

"Not exactly, deah boy; but I wegard him as a fiend," said Arthur Augustus; "and it is up to the stwong to look aftah the weak, you know; and it is the duty of bwainy chaps to help duffahs out of their little twoubles."

"It may be," assented Blake. "But how does that apply to you?"

"As a bwainy chap—"

"Oh, my only summer hat!"

(Continued on page 12.)

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The ST JIM'S NEWS

Edited by TOM MERRY.

Standing the Racket!

By R. R. Cardew.

TOM MERRY has asked me to write up the account of the tennis match that Grundy played against Wilkins, and as I was ass enough to promise to do it at the time, I suppose I shall have to tackle the job, though I'm not at all keen on exerting myself to that extent.

I concluded, from Grundy's behaviour when Clive and Kerr were playing, that he must be rather a whale at the game. He was sitting level with the net and watching the play with an expression of contempt on his face. Every time one of the players failed to make a return, he snorted with disdain. He proffered much advice, too, in a loud voice.

"Hit it, man!" he would roar. "It isn't a bomb! It won't go off! Good heavens! Fancy missing that! Why, a kid of five could have hit it! Stand up to 'em, man! Don't get right back there! You ought to have volleyed that!"

So it went on all through the match, although I could see Wilkins and Gunn urging him to restrain his voice.

"Oh, shucks!" he said. "Call this tennis! Wait till these chaps finish, I'll show you how to play then!"

"Eh?" said Wilkins. "You're not going to play?"

"Of course I am!" snapped his leader. "You wait and see me."

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Gunn. "Who's going to take you on?"

"Anybody who likes," said Grundy. "Now, then, who'll play me when these blessed pat-balls have finished?"

Perhaps it was that everybody's attention was on the game, or else they feared the prowess of the mighty George Alfred. At any rate, none of the bystanders seemed inclined to accept the challenge.

"H'm!" he grunted. "All got the wind up, I suppose! All right, then; it'll have to be one of you."

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged glances of dismay.

"One of us?" gasped the former apprehensively.

"Certainly! I'd take the two of you on so as to level matters up a bit; but there aren't enough racquets."

Thirty seconds afterwards Gunn fell off the bench on which he had been sitting. He rose, holding his right wrist, and twisting his mouth as though in pain.

"What's the matter?" inquired Grundy. "Hurt yourself?"

"A little," replied Gunn. He caught my glance, and favoured me with a slight wink. I could just about estimate the extent of Gunn's injury—and the cause.

"Clumsy ass!" snorted Grundy. "I was going to play you. Now it'll have to be Wilkins."

The member of the Co. upon which this signal honour had fallen appeared to be little appreciative of it.

When the court became vacant Grundy at once went forward, dragging the reluctant Wilkins with him, and commandeered the racquets. He happened to get Gussy's, and viewed it with considerable disgust.

"Rotten bat this!" he said scornfully. "Cheap and nasty! Not properly balanced! Beastly strings! Suppose I shall have to put up with it!"

Gussy's face was a study. I happened to know that he had paid three guineas for that racquet, which was the first quality

production of one of the best firms of makers.

Grundy strode on to the court. "I'll bat this end," he said. "And I'll take the first innings. Play!"

He threw a ball up into the air and smote it with the racquet. It whizzed across the court, and landed into the net. He grunted, looked viciously at the racquet, as though that was to blame, and served again. This time the ball went over the net, and right across the base-line.

"My point!" said Grundy, in a satisfied tone. "I knew you wouldn't hit it!"

"What?" gasped Wilkins. "Why, it was a fault!"

"A fault!" echoed Grundy. "Whose fault?"

"You served a fault," I explained gently. "Rot!" snapped Grundy. "He's trying to get out of it. What's a fault, anyway? I'll give him another chance!"

"Not from here, old bean," I said. "You've served a double."

He gave me a mystified look, and it transpired that the great George Alfred knew nothing of faults—in fact, he was quite ignorant of the rules of the game. He thought that as long as one hit the ball, and hit it hard enough, that was all that was necessary.

Under my direction he took his place and served to the opposite court. He put his beef into the swipe, and the ball fairly whistled across. Wilkins was directly in the line of flight, and as there was no time for him to dodge, the ball smote him under the chin.

"Ow! Oooowp!" gasped Wilkins, sitting on the ground and staring about him.

When he realised what had happened he rose and made a rush at his leader, clutching my racquet viciously, and the spectators were treated to an exhibition of a novel kind of tennis. By the time we had separated them, poor old Gussy's racquet was a thing of the past, and mine was not in much better plight. We had to scout

round the village and borrow some more before any of the other fellows could play. But we took jolly good care that Grundy was kept away from them.

Voices of the Night!

UNAPPRECIATED VOCALISM.

By Monty Lowther.

THERE was some little excitement in the quadrangle at midnight about a week ago. The matron's cat was the cause of the trouble, but the excitement lasted even after the author of the mischief had vanished from the scene.

Thomas has no sense of the fitness of things. As the juniors have occasionally had cause to remark, the middle of the quad in the middle of the night is not the correct combination of time and place to hold voice trials. Thomas evidently thinks otherwise—if, indeed, he troubles to think at all about the matter, which is extremely improbable.

On the night in question, Gore was the first of the Shell dormitory to be awakened by the vocal activities of pussy. Gore is somewhat hasty in both temper and action. He listened to the wailings for about three minutes, and as at the end of that time they had not diminished in volume nor increased in melodiousness, he sprang out of bed to take a hand in affairs.

He managed to put his right foot squarely on to a tinsack that some careless individual had left about, and the circumstance went no way towards improving his temper. For a second one might have supposed that he had been suddenly fired with an ambition to emulate the efforts of the feline vocalist. Indeed, some sarcastic-minded individual, who was not aware of the tinsack, suggested to Gore that if he had got nothing better to do than to get up in the middle of the night and hold an esteddfod with a prowling cat, he might at least go out on to the tiles, and do it in fair and open competition instead of wakening hard-working chaps who wanted a bit of sleep.

Gore, who had just been about to put on his slippers, suddenly thought of another use for them; but, unfortunately, in the darkness, his aim was erratic, and he only succeeded in awakening Skimpole, who had hitherto been sleeping peacefully through the disturbance, and hearing some unpleasant remarks concerning himself from Bernard Glyn.

Treating the remonstrances of his victims with silent contempt, Gore limped to the nearest window, treading carefully in case the tinsack should prove to belong to a family, and leaned out.

Thomas, who was unconscious of the stir that he had caused, was still holding forth in the quad, and the disgusted Gore yelled "Sent, you brute!" in his loudest voice several times, without in the least discouraging the feline vocalist. It is possible that Thomas regarded it as some form of applause.

Gore drew back into the dormitory. "Gimme a boot, somebody!" he said grimly. There were spirited protests from both Skimpole and Glyn.

"It's all right!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "He's going to throw it out of the window this time!"

"I don't care where he's going to throw it!" said Glyn, scrambling out of the sheets. "If he touches a boot in this dormitory I'm going up to the box-room! A slipper's bad enough, and I'm taking no more risks!"

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Gore grabbed a boot, and the owner—Harry Noble—promptly got out of bed and took it away from him. Noble pointed out that he might possibly want to get up the next morning, and, in that case, his boots were likely to be useful to him. Somebody suggested that Gore should throw a pillow. Gore hailed the suggestion with approval, and waited for somebody to provide the pillow. When it was explained to him that he was expected to use his own pillow, he said things about the fellow who made the suggestion that nearly led to a fight.

In the end Lennox proffered his pillow, for the sake of peace and harmony—in the dormitory, that is, as there was already a little too much "harmony" of a sort out of it—and Gore threw it out of the window into the darkness.

The next instant a wail of agony came to the ears of the juniors. A loud wail it was, too—louder than any to which Thomas had given vent, and it was certainly not the product of Thomas' vocal chords. Unmistakably, it was the voice of a human being.

"I knew it!" said Glyn in a voice of pessimistic satisfaction, speaking from under his bed, where he had taken refuge. "He's hit somebody else, you see! A fine thing if you'd have let him throw a boot!"

"Shut up!" said Gore fiercely. "I wonder who it was? Some silly ass prowling about, I suppose!"

"Probably the Head!" suggested Glyn, who was in a gloomy mood.

"By Jove, I hope not!" said Gore uneasily. And, as a matter of fact, it was not. It was Racke, who was returning from one of

his nocturnal expeditions, having been down to the village to foregather with some of the shining lights of the Grammar School.

The pillow had caught him on the side of the head, bowling him over, and certainly, as Glyn had said, it was a jolly good job for him that the missile had not been a boot.

The anxious juniors, by careful listening, became aware of the identity of the victim, and, under Tom Merry's direction, they knotted their towels, and awaited his return to the dormitory, when they acquainted him in unmistakable fashion with their opinions upon the subject of his nocturnal wanderings.

Whether Racke's sudden yell had startled him, or whether he heard the swish of the pillow and realised how nearly Fate had overtaken him, is uncertain, but for the rest of the night the voice of Thomas was still in the land.

Miss Fawcett's Visit.

POOR OLD TOM!

TOM MERRY recently received a visit from his guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, who arrived accompanied by her medical adviser, whom she had brought for the purpose of submitting Tom to a medical examination in order that Miss Fawcett's mind might be reassured as to his state of health. Needless to say, Tom passed the test with flying colours; but Miss Fawcett remained doubtful, and insisted that the school doctor be summoned to a consultation.

Together the two medicos prodded and poked Tom, listened to his breathing, heard his heart beating, made him walk and run and jump and hop, and generally turned him inside-out. They finally agreed that he was in splendid condition, and not in the least likely to go into a decline.

Miss Fawcett then had a lengthy interview with the matron, who assured her that every care was taken to ensure that the boys were maintained in a healthy condition, and she particularly satisfied herself that due provision was made for the proper airing of all clean clothing.

The Terrible Three entertained her to tea in Study No. 10, but to Tom's disgust his guardian would not permit him to indulge in anything beyond plain bread-and-butter, insisting that his digestive organs were too delicate to permit of his consuming cream buns, puddings, jam, cake, or anything of the kind.

To her great delight, both Monty Lowther and Manners gravely agreed with her upon this matter, but in view of the fact that their own share of the dainties in question compensated for their leader's abstinence, one might have assumed, as did Tom Merry, that their approval of Miss Fawcett's principles was due to an ulterior motive that might find terse expression in the phrase, "The less you eat, the more there will be for us."

However, two Treasury-notes pressed into his hand just before the elderly lady took her departure, did much to soothe Tom's feelings, and enabled him to make up on a satisfactory and highly enjoyable manner for his enforced abstinence.

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This week we publish the sixth and last set of picture-puzzles.

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You may send as many COMPLETE SETS as you please, but each set must be accompanied by a separate coupon.

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NEXT WEEK!

"TROUBLE FOR TOMPKINS."*(Continued from page 9.)*

"I am going to back Tompkins up," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I wegard it as a duty. The poor chap will feel awfully down, you know, with his extremely remarkable uncle hangin' on to him. He will wequiah the assistance of a fellow of tact and judgment to see him through."

"And you're going to chuck the footer for that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, you're an ass!" said Blake. "A thumping ass! Still, you're a good little ass, Gussy, and I won't lick you."

"I uttably wefuse, Blake, to be described as a good little ass!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's indignantly. "And as for lickin' me, I wathah considah that that is a task vewy fah beyond your powahs, deah boy!"

"Why, you ass!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Haven't I told you a hundred times that I could lick you with one hand tied, and with my eyes shut?"

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus. "I don't mind in the least, deah boy. Why shouldn't I let you wun on, old chap, if you find it amusin'?"

Jack Blake's face was a study at that moment. There was a chortle from the other juniors.

"Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Blake.

"Gussy's right!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's awfully decent of you to back up poor old Tompkins in this way, Gussy, old chap. I'd do it myself, only I can't be spared from the footer."

"No difficulty about that," said Blake at once. "I'd skipper the team with pleasure."

"I'm sure you would, old fellow. But we want to win, you know," said Tom Merry affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three strolled away before Blake could think of a sufficiently crushing rejoinder. Arthur Augustus went thoughtfully into the School House, while the other fellows proceeded to the football-ground. It was not without an effort that Gussy had made up his noble mind to cut the football match and stand by the hapless Tompkins. He wanted to play in the House match very keenly, and, in spite of Tom Merry's assurances, he was not at all sure that his place could be adequately filled.

But he felt that it was up to him; and when duty called there was no choice in the matter for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He proceeded to Study No. 4 in the Fourth, to look for Clarence York Tompkins. He found that youth seated in the study armchair, plunged into the deepest pessimism, to judge by his looks. Micky Mulvaney, whistling cheerfully, was putting on his trouser-clips, preparatory to going out on his bike with Reilly of the Fourth. He was too busy to have any attention to bestow on his doleful study-mate. Mulvaney had always been more or less friendly with Tompkins; but possibly the cessation of the avuncular tips had made some difference. Poor Tompkins was not a very attractive fellow at the best of times, and probably the avuncular tips had constituted his only attraction in Micky's eyes.

"Well, ta-ta, old man!" said Mulvaney minor, and he marched out of the study as D'Arcy came in, and his shrill whistle died away down the Fourth Form passage towards the stairs.

Tompkins looked at D'Arcy glumly.

"Cheewio, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly.

"Aren't you playing football?" asked Tompkins.

"Not this time," said D'Arcy. "I'm givin' young Clive a chance in my place. I twust it will turn out all wight for the School House. The fact is, Tompkins, deah boy, I am goin' to bothah you this aftahnoon, if you will put up with my company."

Tompkins' face brightened. Of all the fellows at St. Jim's, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the one he would have chosen to stand by him during that painful afternoon. It seemed too good to be true that the swell of the Fourth had come of his own accord to offer his valuable society.

"My—my uncle's coming, you know!" faltered Tompkins.

"Yaas. It has occurred to me that you might like to have a fiend with you to help you to entertain your respected relative."

"Yes, rather. But—"

"It will be a pleasuah to me, Tompkins, if I can be of any service."

"You're awfully good, D'Arcy," said Tompkins gratefully. "But—I'd better speak out—my—my uncle isn't—isn't—"

He hesitated, and coloured painfully. "You—you see, he isn't like other chaps' uncles. From—from the way he's written to me, I—I—I'm afraid he—he's what Racke would call an outsider. Not—not the kind of man you'd care to meet, you know. I—I think he drops his h's, and—and all that."

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Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon Tompkins.

"Tompkins, deah boy, I twust you are not a snob," he said.

"I—I—"

"Is it possible," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner, "that you are ashamed of your elderly welative, Tompkins, because the vewy worthy old gentleman suffahs undah some disadvantages?"

Tompkins gasped.

"I—I'm thinking of the fellows!" he mumbled. "They—they'll look down on him. You—you know they will, D'Arcy."

"Not a fellow with a pwopahly-constituted mind, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gently. "If your uncle is shabby, and if he dwops his aspiwates, it is a misfortune, and not a fault. Poverty is not a cwime, Tompkins, though, of course, it is a howwid inconvenience. Fwom what you have said wegardin' your uncle, I wegard him as a gentleman entitled to vewy great respect."

Tompkins looked at the swell of St. Jim's with a lump in his throat. The bitter sneers of Racke & Co. had not failed to have their effect on poor Clarence York. As the day of his uncle's visit drew nearer and nearer, Tompkins had been haunted by dread of the coming ordeal; it had grown to be almost a nightmare to him. The kind support and encouragement of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was exactly what the poor fellow needed. Gussy was the right man in the right place.

"You're an awfully good chap, D'Arcy!" he said at last.

"I—I suppose there's something in being a nobleman's son, after all."

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"As a mattah of fact, deah boy, I do not quite see what the countwy would do without the nobility," he assented. "I feah vewy much that it would go to the jollay old bow-wows, you know. But that is neither heah nor theah. Are you goin' to meet your uncle at the station?"

"Yes. Will you—will you come with me, D'Arcy?"

"I was just goin' to pwopose it, deah boy."

Tompkins jumped up with alacrity. He seemed quite a new Tompkins now. From the bottom of his heart he was thankful that Mulvaney minor had been going out with Reilly that afternoon. With a bright and cheerful face Clarence York Tompkins left the study with Arthur Augustus, and they walked out of the School House together.

There was a shout from the direction of the football-ground.

"Play up, School House!"

"Go it, New House!"

Arthur Augustus did not even glance towards the football-field. With a cheery smile on his aristocratic face, he walked down to the gates with Clarence York Tompkins.

CHAPTER 7.**"Uncle!"**

THERE he is!"

Two Shell fellows were lounging outside the school gates when Tompkins came out with the swell of St. Jim's. Racke and Crooke grinned at the sight of Clarence York. Evidently they were waiting for him.

Apparently the rest of the black sheep had taken warning by the lesson Tom Merry & Co. had kindly bestowed on them. At all events, they were not to be seen. But Racke and Crooke were there, and their looks showed that they meant mischief.

"Off to meet uncle—what?" asked Racke.

"Yes!" snapped Tompkins.

"Good!"

Arthur Augustus gave the cads of the Shell a haughty glance and started up the road with Tompkins. Racke and Crooke followed on, grinning and chuckling. Obviously it was their intention to follow Tompkins to the station and to be present at his meeting with his remarkable uncle. But that programme, which would have been easy enough to carry out had Tompkins been alone, was not so feasible now. Arthur Augustus glanced back at a little distance, and a gleam came into his noble eye at the sight of the two Shell fellows on the track.

"Those wottahs are followin' up, Tompkins!" he remarked.

Tompkins nodded glumly.

"They are up to some wotten twick, deah boy!"

"I suppose so."

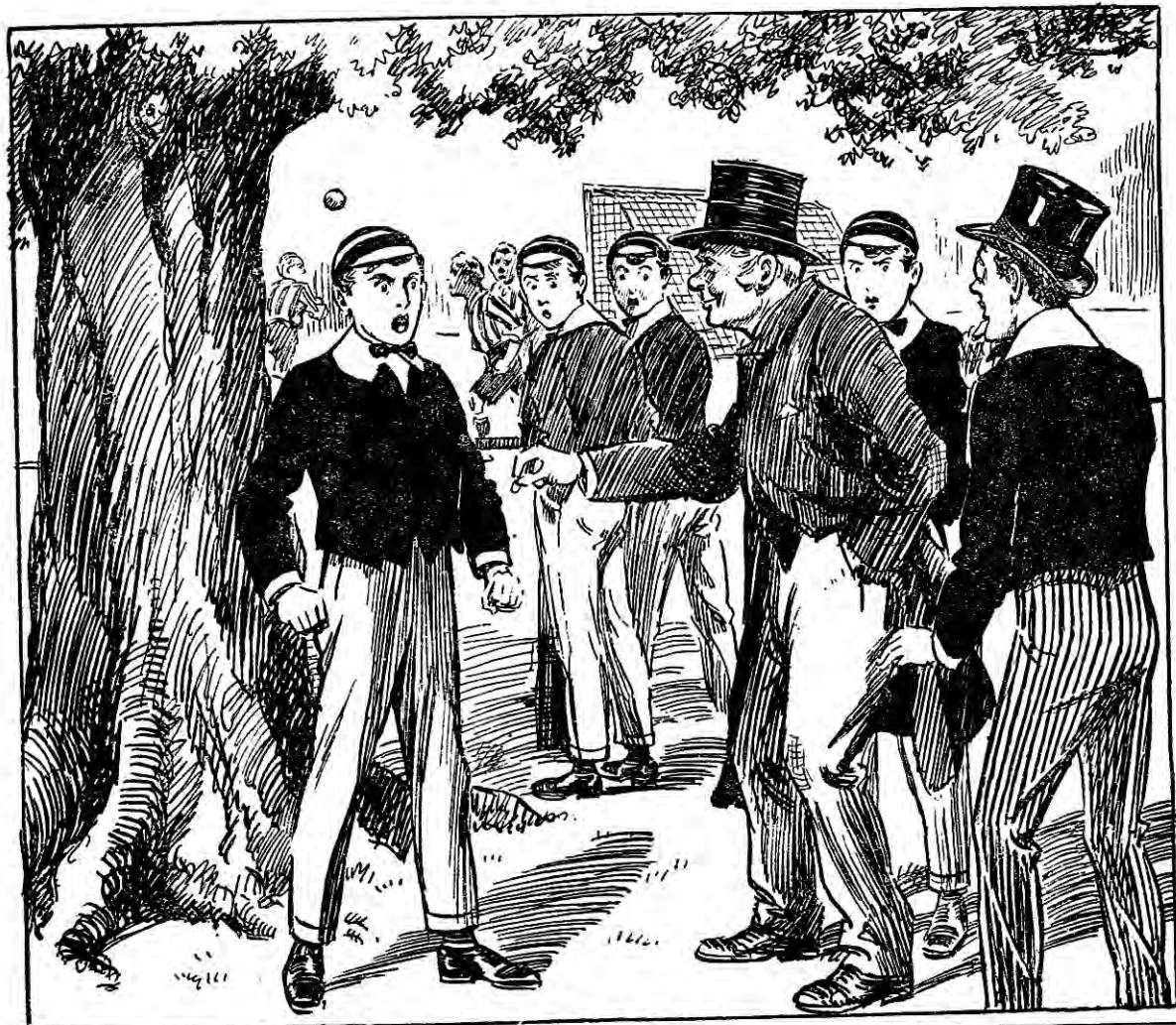
"We are goin' to stop them."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tompkins. That drastic measure had not even occurred to his diffident mind.

Arthur Augustus halted and turned. Tompkins followed his example. With the support of the noble Gussy, he was prepared for deeds of derring-do.

Racke & Co. came on, but they stopped as they found their way barred.

"Will you fellows oblige me by goin' back to the school?" inquired Arthur Augustus, with elaborate politeness.



"It's a pleasure to see you, Mr. York," said Cardew. "We've heard a lot about Tompkins' uncle lately, and we've all been looking forward to seeing you. Now that we see you, sir, we're delighted to see that you're just what we expected." "Well, that's very nice of you to say so, young shaver!" said Mr. York heartily. "Ere, take this 'er twopence for yourself. I'm a poor man, but I can spare twopence for a lad what's civil." "Oh, gad!" exclaimed Cardew. (See page 15.)

Racke chuckled.
"Not quite!" he answered.
"Have you bought this road, by any chance?" asked Crooke.

"Not at all, Cwooke. But I wefuse to allow you fellows to go to the village this aftahnoon," said D'Arcy calmly.

"You refuse to allow!" roared Racke. "And what right have you got to stop us, you dummy?"

"On certain occasions, Wacke, might is wight," said Arthur Augustus. "You are goin' back to the school now, and you are stayin' there."

"We're jolly well not!" snorted Crooke.

"Vewy good! Tompkins, you have already thwashed Wacke once, so you can tackle him again. I will handle Cwooke."

"Good!" chuckled Tompkins. "Come on, Racke!"
The cads of the Shell backed promptly away. They were looking for a rag, not for a fight.

"Look here—" began Aubrey Racke. "Oh—ah—yooop!"
He staggered back, yelling, as Clarence York Tompkins rushed upon him, hitting out in great style.

"Keep off, you fool!" howled Crooke, as Arthur Augustus came into action.

Crash! Bump!
Racke went spinning in the dust in the middle of the road, and Crooke sprawled across him the next moment.

Tompkins, with all the fighting blood of the Tompkinses boiling in his veins now, danced round them with brandished fists.

"Get up!" he roared. "Get up and have some more, you funks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Groogh! Wow-wow-wow!"

Racke and Crooke did not get up. They had had a sample, and they were satisfied with it. Further deliveries were certain to be quite up to sample, so to speak; and Racke and Crooke did not want any more. They sprawled in the dust and groaned.

"Come on, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, replacing his eyeglass. "I think we have finished with those wotten boundahs. Wacke and Cwooke, kindly wemembah that if I see you again this aftahnoon I shall give you a feaful thwashin' on the spot!"

The two Fourth-Formers walked on to Rykcombe, Tompkins grinning cheerfully and looking, as he felt, "no end bucked." Racke and Crooke scrambled up when they were gone, in a dolorous mood.

"I'll make them smart for this, somehow!" groaned Racke, as he dabbed his damaged nose with his handkerchief.

Crooke gave him a savage glare.

"Hang your rotten stunts, and hang you!" he snarled. And Gerald Crooke tramped away towards St. Jim's, evidently fed up with the enterprise. Aubrey Racke was left dabbing his nose, and murmuring words which it was fortunate for him that his Form master could not hear.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his protege walked on to Rykcombe unpursued. As they entered the village, Arthur Augustus consulted his handsome gold ticker.

"What time does your uncle's twain come in, deah boy?" he asked.

"Three-thirty."

"It is now thwee; so we will dwop in at Mrs. Murphy's

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and west and have a gingah-beah," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Good!"

Never had Clarence York Tompkins enjoyed a ginger-beer so much. The two juniors sat in the village tuckshop and chatted pleasantly till it was time to proceed to the station. More than half Tompkins' troubles seemed to have rolled away. Indeed, he was rather wondering now why he had regarded that afternoon in advance with such terrified misgiving. His face was quite bright as he sauntered into the station with the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The two juniors waited on the platform for the local train to come in from Wayland Junction. Something of Tompkins' uneasiness returned as the train was signalled. His uncle—his unknown uncle—was at hand; the gentleman from Australia, whom Racke had nicknamed the Bushranger.

What was he going to be like? What would be the effect of him on the fastidious Gussy? Tompkins was not a snob, and he was not ungrateful; but under the stress of sneers and mocking smiles he might easily have slipped into both snobbishness and ingratitude from sheer irresolution of character. Arthur Augustus knew that his support was valuable to Tompkins, but he did not realise how very valuable it was.

"Here comes the train!" said Tompkins at last rather faintly.

"Yaas, heah it comes!" said Arthur Augustus cheerily. The train rattled into the station and stopped. Both the juniors watched the passengers alighting, Tompkins with a beating heart, and Gussy with lofty and unmoved serenity. Mr. York was unknown to Tompkins by sight, having emigrated to Australia years before Clarence York was born; his kindness had been bestowed upon a nephew whom he had never seen, which showed that he must be a good man at heart, whatever his outward peculiarities might or might not be.

"I suppose you will know your uncle, deah boy?" remarked Arthur Augustus, as the passengers streamed past them towards the exit.

"Well, he will know me," said Tompkins. "He knows I'm meeting him here, you see; and he's got my photograph that the mater sent him. Better wait till he comes up to speak to us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Most of the passengers cleared off. Arthur Augustus' eye was on an elderly man who lingered behind the rest. In spite of his aristocratic self-control, Arthur Augustus was a little startled as he wondered whether this was his companion's uncle.

The man was looking about him, evidently for someone whom he expected to meet him at the station.

He was a man of about fifty-five, dressed in clothes that were quite respectable but the last word in shabbiness. They looked as if they had been mended and cleaned, and cleaned and mended, until they were scarcely in a state to stand any more cleaning and mending. The boots were clean, but obviously patched; the silk hat was carefully brushed, but it was old and worn and dulled; the shabby frock-coat was buttoned up to the chin, only too obviously to conceal a lack of linen. D'Arcy, who was not particularly observant, could see that the gentleman was wearing what is called a "dickey."

Such a picture of painfully respectable poverty the swell of St. Jim's had never seen before. It was almost as if the man had deliberately got himself up in that style for a stage play.

His face, however, rather contrasted with his clothes. It was plump and red and good-humoured.

Tompkins' heart sank.

He realised that this was his uncle; this was the relative he was to take to the school and parade across the quadrangle in the sight of all St. Jim's. A panic-stricken thought came into the hapless junior's mind of fleeing from the station before his uncle recognised him. He made an undecided movement. Arthur Augustus touched him on the arm, with a cheery, smiling face.

"I wathah think this must be your uncle, Tompkins—this old gentleman who is comin' towards us."

Tompkins suppressed a groan.

"I—I'm afraid—I—I mean—I think so!" he stammered.

"D'Arcy, I—I say—"

"Yaas, deah boy?"

"You can cut, if you like!" breathed Tompkins. "I—I sha'n't mind."

"Weally, Tompkins—"

"I—I sha'n't mind, honest Injun!" whispered Tompkins.

"Wats! Don't be a young ass, Tompkins!"

There was no time for more; the patched and brushed gentleman was bearing down on the juniors.

"Skuse me," he said. "You young fellers belong to St. Jim's?"

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

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"P'raps one of you is my nevvie, young Tompkins, then?" said the shabby gentleman.

Mr. York's manner of speaking was in keeping with his calligraphy and his orthography. Tompkins was almost pale.

"I—I'm your nephew," he gasped, "if—if you're Mr. York!"

"I'm old Sam York!" agreed the gentleman, holding out a rather large hand to the junior. "Glad to see you, boy! Shake!"

Tompkins shook hands with his uncle, and gave a squeak under the grip of the gentleman from Australia. Mr. York grinned.

"So you're young Clarence!" he said. "Amelia's boy, hay?"

"Yes, uncle!" whispered Tompkins.

"I'd have knowed you, from your photograph," said Mr. York. "Jest like you, boy. And you're glad to see your old uncle from the bush, hay, though he's had bad luck, and has come 'ome to sponge on his relations!"

Tompkins hardly breathed. The clear, pleasant voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in.

"Pway intwduce me to your uncle, Tompkins."

And Clarence York, recovering himself, performed the introduction, and the trio left the station together.

CHAPTER 8.

In the Limestone!

TAGGLES, the porter, stared.

Taggles was surprised.

He was not only surprised, but he was shocked.

Taggles looked forth from his lodge, and beheld two Fourth Form fellows of St. Jim's, entering at the gates, walking one on either side of a strange gentleman—a gentleman who, so far as Taggles could see, was a tenth-rate commercial traveller in the last stages of decay, or something else equally unworthy of the lofty attention of Ephraim Taggles. So Taggles stepped forth from his lodge, like a lion from his den, and interposed.

"Now, Master D'Arcy!" said Taggles reprovingly. "This 'ere won't do, Master D'Arcy!"

"Pway step aside, Taggles."

"I'm not so much surprised at you, Master Tompkins," said Taggles, more severely. "But you ought to know better."

Tompkins crimsoned.

"Hallo! What's the row, my man?" asked Mr. York affably. "Anything biting you, old boy?"

"You're the row," said Taggles. "And not so much of your 'my man.' I ain't your man, by no means, and I want civility from the likes of you."

"Taggles," said Arthur Augustus, "I wathah think you forget yourself!"

"Which it's you that forgets yourself, Master D'Arcy, a-bringing of this 'ere codger into the school!" snapped Taggles. "Wot would the 'Ead say?"

"If you do not treat Tompkins' uncle with pwopah respect, Taggles, I shall weport your wudeness to Dr. Holmes, and wequest him to administah a severe wepwimand."

Taggles nearly tottered.

"Master Tompkins' uncle!" he breathed.

"Yaas, wathah! Now stand aside and dwy up!"

Taggles backed away dazedly. He had seen all sorts and conditions of visitors at St. Jim's in his time, but never had he seen one like this coming to the school as a relative of a St. Jim's fellow. The trio walked on, Tompkins with a burning face.

"Pway take no notice of that wude old fellow, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm sowvy to say that Taggles is given to dwinkin'."

"Bad 'abit," said Mr. York, with a nod. "Don't you ever take to drink, Clarence."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tompkins. "I—I mean, certainly, uncle—I mean certainly not! Oh, no! Never!"

"Stick to that!" said his uncle approvingly. "I say, this 'ere is a nobby-looking old show. I'm glad to come 'ere and see your school, Clarence. Must 'ave cost a tidy bit to put them buildings up."

Tompkins groaned in spirit, and was silent. Never, in his moments of darkest apprehension, had he dreamed that his uncle was quite like this. And he could not understand it, either. He had never had any reason to suppose that Samuel York was a man entirely without education or manners. At home the Tompkinses rather prided themselves on their connection with the Yorks, and Clarence had always supposed them to be a nobby branch of the family; in his diffident way, he had rather swanked about his Uncle York at the school. It seemed that it had been a case of distance lending enchantment to the view. Clarence had a horrible suspicion now that Samuel York was of the very humblest origin, and had probably worked his way out to Australia in his early days. Yet the man was good and kind, and the

nephew who had received munificent favours from him was bound in common decency to make the best of him.

"Goal!" came in a roar from the direction of the football ground.

Mr. York looked round.

"Playing football 'ere, what?" he asked.

"Yaas, it's a House match, sir," said Arthur Augustus. Most of the burden of conversation was falling upon Gussy.

"Good!" said Mr. York. "Let's 'ave a look at the young fellers. Dog's ages since I've seen a football match."

Tompkins breathed hard. More than half the Lower School were gathered on Little Side, to watch the match between the Houses. Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins' eleven were both going strong, and there were loud shouts and cheers as the game swayed to and fro. But the attention that was fixed on the football match was pretty certain to turn to Mr. York, as soon as he appeared among the crowd of juniors.

Tompkins' caught Arthur Augustus' eye.

He drew fresh courage from it. He pulled himself together. After all, what had he to be ashamed of? He was in company with a good and kind man, who lacked the little outward advantages given by education. There was no shame in that. All Tompkins had to do was to play the game, and strengthened by Gussy's encouragement, he resolved to do it. His look became firmer.

"Come on, uncle!" he said, almost cheerily. "It's worth seeing!"

And the two juniors piloted Mr. York to Little Side.

"Goal! Good old Figgins!" came in a roar, as the three arrived on the junior football ground.

"How's it goin', Cardew?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was lounging by the field, taking a mild interest in the exploits of his chums, Levison and Clive, in the School House eleven.

"One to one," yawned Cardew. "First half blank. Oh gad! Who—what—"

He caught sight of Mr. York, and stopped.

"My uncle," said Tompkins, with subdued fierceness.

Cardew collected himself.

"Ah, Mr. York!" he said, with a pleasant smile. "Pleased to see you at St. Jim's, sir. How are they all at home in Boorrio-boola Ghaas?"

Arthur Augustus gave him a warning look, and Tompkins looked daggers. But Cardew's eyes were upon the remarkable visitor with a look of friendly interest.

"I'm from Australia," said Mr. York cheerily. "Young Clarence 'ere is my nevy. 'Ow do you do—what?"

"At the present moment," said Cardew gravely, "I find myself in fairly good health, only slightly bored. It's a pleasure to see you here, sir. We've heard a lot about Tompkins' uncle lately, and we've all been looking forward to seeing you. Now that we see you, sir, we're delighted to see that you're just what we expected."

"Well, that's very nice of you to say so, young shaver," said Mr. York heartily. "And 'ere's tuppence for yourself!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Take it," said Mr. York. "If I'm a poor man, I can spare tuppence for a lad what's civil."

"Oh gad!"

"I—I say, uncle, that's Cardew of the Fourth!" murmured Tompkins.

"My eye! One of your schoolfellers, Clarence?"

"Yes, uncle."

"He ain't the pageboy?" asked Mr. York.

"Oh, my hat! Nunno!"

"The pageboy!" breathed Cardew.

"My mistake," said Mr. York genially, but with a puzzled look. "I s'pose there's all sorts in a big school. But I'd 'eard that only young gentlemen was St. Jim's fellers, so the mistake was natural, if you take my meanin', young man."

Cardew blinked at him. For once the dandy of the Fourth was completely taken aback. Mr. York moved on with D'Arcy and Tompkins, leaving Cardew still staring blankly.

Tompkins was looking perplexed, but there was a slight smile on the noble face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He knew perfectly well that Mr. York had not taken Cardew for the pageboy, and he had repaid Cardew's impertinence by telling him that he was no gentleman in quite an effective way. Cardew's cheeks were pink as he stared.

Tom Merry & Co. were making a hot attack on the New House goal, and there was a ripple of cheering as it materialised, and the ball went in from Talbot's foot.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo, School House!"

"Bray-vo!" shouted Mr. York heartily. "Well played!"

If Samuel York's looks had not drawn attention upon him, his loud shouting would certainly have done so. Fellows looked round from far and near at the burly, weirdly-dressed gentleman. They craned their necks to get a view of him.

"Who is it?"

"What is it?"

"Tompkins' uncle!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Even some of the footballers looked round. Tompkins' uncle had all the limelight now. And Tompkins of the Fourth stood at his side, erect and steady and composed. It was his uncle to whom he owed it that he was at St. Jim's at all, and Tompkins was standing by him loyally.

CHAPTER 9.

Rough on Racke!

RACKE of the Shell tapped at Mr. Railton's study door. There was a grin on Racke's face—a delighted grin.

"Come in!" called the Housemaster.

Racke entered the study. Mr. Railton was busy, but he paused to look inquiringly at Racke.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, sir," said Racke. "I think I ought to tell you that there is a very queer character coming into the school."

"A what? What do you mean?"

"The man looks to me like a pickpocket, sir," said Racke. "D'Arcy and Tompkins have brought him in for some reason; I cannot imagine why. I think you ought to know, sir."

Mr. Railton looked at him in amazement.

"This is very extraordinary," he said. "If any such character has been brought into the school, you are acting right in telling me, Racke. Where is the man now?"

"He's been on the football-ground, sir. They're bringing him into the House now," said Racke. "He must have imposed on them somehow, I think, and may intend to rob the place, so—"

"Very well, Racke. I will look into the matter."

Racke retired, and did not chuckle till he was safely out of the Housemaster's study.

Mr. Railton, looking very perplexed, laid down his pen and went to his window. From the window he had a view of D'Arcy and Tompkins coming towards the School House, with Mr. Samuel York walking between them. In the distance a crowd of grinning faces could be seen.

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Housemaster.

He left his study and went to the door of the School House. He was in time to meet the shabby gentleman coming in.

Mr. Railton held up his hand as a sign to the juniors to stop.

"Who is this person, D'Arcy?" he asked severely.

Before Arthur Augustus could reply the voice of Tompkins rang out clearly, with a faint note of defiance in it.

"My uncle, sir!"

"Your—your uncle, Tompkins?"

"My uncle, Mr. York. Uncle, this is my Housemaster, Mr. Railton."

It took Mr. Railton but a second to recover himself. He realised that this weird "merchant" was a relative of a St. Jim's boy, and, after one second of astonishment, Mr. Railton played up.

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. York," he said, holding out his hand. "You are very welcome to St. Jim's."

And he shook hands with the shabby gentleman.

"Just looked in to see my nevy Clarence, you know," said Mr. York affably.

"Quite so—quite so! Tompkins, if I can be of any service to your uncle, you will come to my study and tell me so. D'Arcy, will you find Racke of the Shell, and send him to me immediately?"

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Railton retired to his study, and Tompkins piloted his uncle into the House, what time Arthur Augustus conveyed the Housemaster's message to Aubrey Racke.

Racke was looking and feeling a little uneasy when he came to Mr. Railton's study again. Mr. Railton fixed a steady eye upon him, picking up his cane.

"Racke, were you aware, when you spoke to me, that that gentleman was Tompkins' uncle? I think you were. You will hold out your hand, Racke."

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Aubrey Racke left the Housemaster's study, with his hands tucked under his arms, and an expression of deep anguish upon his face. And for quite a long time afterwards Racke of the Shell was groaning and rubbing his palms, and had no attention to bestow on Tompkins' uncle.

But that amazing gentleman was receiving a great deal of attention elsewhere. Nearly every fellow in the school was deeply interested in him, though not one, even Tompkins himself, dreamed of what was to be the outcome of the Trials of Tompkins!

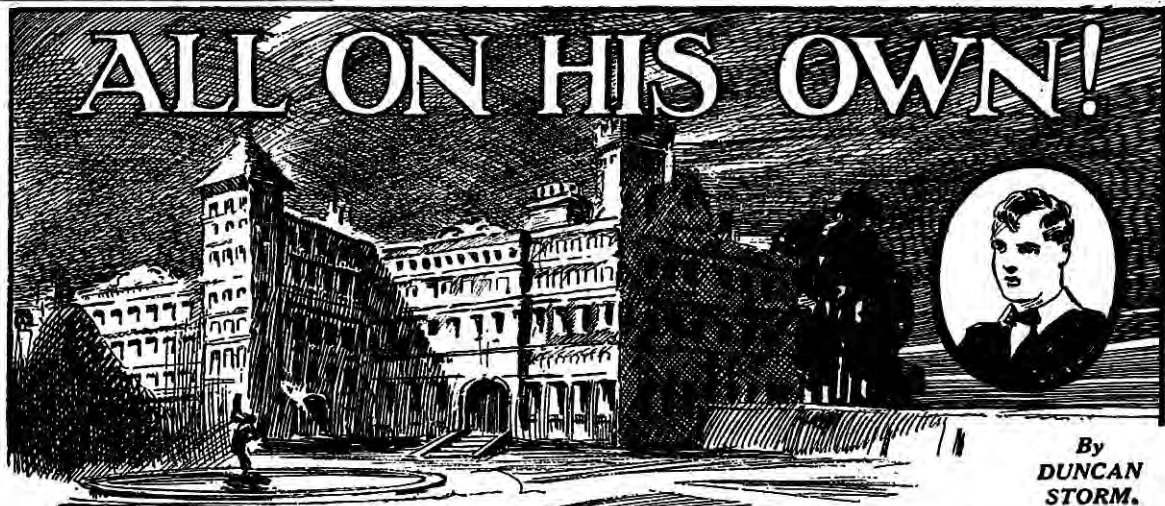
But that is another story.

THE END.

(Be sure you read next week's splendid story of the *chums of St. Jim's*, entitled: "TOMPKINS ON TRIAL!" By Martin Clifford. You will vote it as being one of the finest stories you have ever read.)

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BE SURE AND READ IT!



By
**DUNCAN
STORM.**

A Story of a Lad's Uphill Fight for Fame and Fortune!

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

JIM READY, a sturdy lad of fourteen, having seen his last friend laid to rest, is left all alone in the great world. He is leaving the cemetery gates, when he butts up against John Lincoln, the principal governor of St. Beowulf's, who hands him a free pass into the great school.

He finds a friend in Wobbygong, a plucky lad from Australia, and the master of a pet kangaroo, Nobby.

Nobby bolts one night, but the boys give chase and capture him. On their return to St. Beowulf's they find that members of a burglarious gang have broken into the school. The ruffians are captured, Wobby commandeering their car and hiding it in the Haunted Barn.

From a pocket-book he had confiscated, Wobby learns of the scoundrels' intentions of smuggling their ill-gotten gains out of the country. He plans to capture the plunder. At the dead of night he and his pals steal out of the school. Boarding the commandeered car, they are soon hot on the trail. They meet further members of the gang, two of whom they capture, and then drive on to Whitechurch Castle, where they find some of the stolen plunder hidden in a well. They are shadowed and attacked; but, by the timely arrival of John Lincoln and a party of men, their assailants are captured. Mr. Lincoln is interested in the lads' exciting adventures, and becomes a member of their party. Promising to send for them later, he takes them back to the school.

The next day, Mr. Teach, one of the masters, organises a paper-chase. Wobby and his chums are detailed off as the hares. Wobby's interests are centred upon Lady Castlewood's jewels, so, to suit his purpose, he lays a stiff trail by entering the haunt of a fiery bull to scatter his paper. Plunging through the thick undergrowth, he gets on the trail again, which leads him to a pool.

Submerged beneath its waters, the boys find a packet containing the jewels they had been seeking. On reaching the bank with their find, they are confronted by four more rogues who had been watching their movements. They make a dash for it, and are only just able to effect an exchange of bags with Nobby before their pursuers catch them up.

"What 'ave you done with them there jewels?" cried the leader of the gang. "Who are you, and what are you?"

(Now read on.)

Chased Off!

"SIR," replied Wobby, "we are but simple little schoolboys, quietly indulging in the sport of paper-chasing. We lost our way in the woods, and we discovered the hidden pool. We saw the boat, and we thought we would take a short cut across the lake. When we were in the

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boat we saw what we thought was a fishing-line."

"Yes, yes!" said the man impatiently.

"What next?"

"We hauled up the fishing-line," replied Wobby.

"Yes!"

"And there was another line attached to that first fishing-line."

"Get on with it!" replied the man eagerly.

"We pulled that up," said Wobby, with provoking slowness, keeping his eye on the fringe of the woods.

"Go on!"

"We pulled it up, and at the end of it we found a parcel," continued Wobby.

"What sort of a parcel?" demanded the man.

"It wasn't a large parcel and it wasn't a small parcel," continued Wobby, with provoking deliberation. "It was the sort of parcel you might find a bit of a dead body in, or some dirty linen in."

"What did you find in it?" demanded the man. "That's what we want to know!"

"Well, you know," said Wobby amiably, "it was just then that you clipped in with your talk about being keepers. If you had called out matey and pleasant we would have showed you the stuff. But when you got threatening and nasty about it we didn't think it worth while to worry about rowing to the shore to show you a lot of rotten, old sham jewellery."

"Sham jewellery!" gasped the man.

"Course it was sham," replied Wobby. "Great green stones like emeralds."

"Where are they?" demanded the man, with a threatening flourish of his revolver.

"Don't you start talking like that, or I sha'n't tell you anything about it, old peb!" replied Wobby. "They were great green stones—regular duds—like bits of ginger-beer bottle dabbed into brass!"

The man groaned.

Wobby was giving a very fair and accurate account of the famous Castlewood emeralds and their old-fashioned setting.

"Where are they?" the man mumbled.

"If you hadn't been so saucy you would have had all the rubbish," continued Wobby. "There were a lot of sparkly things as well, and ropes and ropes of imitation pearls, the same as the maids wear at our school."

"What have you done with them?" almost shouted the man.

Wobby had seen what he was looking for. There was a crash on the edge of the wood.

The pack was coming up.

Monsieur Faux de Blanquiere, always first in the field and last out of it, had leaped over the holly hedge and had landed on his ear.

The man turned hastily.

"Quick, out with it! Where's the stuff?" he demanded.

"Why, we shoved it in our paper bags, you silly ass," said Wobby, "and as our paper was running short, we chucked the bags over to our pet kangaroo that was running with us and took over the other bags that he was carrying."

"And where's the kangaroo?" demanded the would-be robber, in blank, dull tones.

"Oh, he hopped it! You scared him up squibbing with that silly little popgun!" replied Wobby. "There he goes over the ridge about three miles away!"

Wobby pointed to a tiny dot which showed on a distant ridge of the downs.

"Where's he off to?" demanded the man.

"Police-station!" replied Wobby promptly.

"I brought him over from Australia, where he was the pet of the police. He always smells out a police-station when he gets on the toot. You can't keep that kangaroo away from the police. He loves policemen, and if those dud jewels are yours, as they seem to be, if you go down to the police-station and ask for them, perhaps they will give 'em to you!"

"I'll give you police!" exclaimed the disappointed rough, lifting his fist. "I'll lam you within an inch of your life!"

Wobby sprang back.

"You won't, old cobber!" he exclaimed. "If you start lamming me, here's two hundred of the wolves will ask the reason why!"

As he spoke the fringe of the wood was broken by fifty dragged, mudstained figures.

Monsieur de Blanquiere had picked himself up out of the dry ditch. He was a pillar of mud from head to foot. His running



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shorts were split, and his head was tied up in a handkerchief.

He gave a shout at the sight of the boys talking to the men.

"Ze 'are! Ze 'are!" he cried. "Be'old, we 'ave catch ze 'are! An' what a run!"

He gave a series of wild yells, the view holloa of a French sportsman.

Close behind him came Blackbeard Teach, looking more like a tramp than a respectable schoolmaster.

Blackbeard was plastered with mud up to his eyes.

With a loud yell the main body of the pack burst from the woods. Never had there been such a run of the harricars. Only the pick of the school had survived it. They were fifty in number, and, with a cheerful yell, they came charging down the slope towards the group.

The disappointed gunman took one glance at the mob as it came trotting and limping down on them.

"Too many of 'em for us!" he said. "'Op it, mates!"

The four ruffians took to their heels as Blackbeard and monsieur came trotting up.

In Safe Keeping.

"**W**HO were those ruffians who ran away just now?" demanded Blackbeard Teach, as he came running up to the hares.

"Don't know who they were, sir," replied Wobby promptly; "but they would insist on joining in the paper-chase, and they wanted to sneak our bags, I think. At any rate, when they saw you coming, sir, they beat it while the going was good!"

"Good job for them!" growled Blackbeard, looking after the vanishing figures. "If you young rascals had not laid us such a trail, I would go after them; but I am nearly beat!"

"You told us to make it a stiff one, sir," said Wobby, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes," grumbled Mr. Teach; "but I did not tell you to seek out every mad bull and every lunatic asylum in the country. We were attacked by a herd of fighting goats and a madman at one point of the run!"

"Mais certainement!" exclaimed monsieur, gesticulating. "I do not know what was ze mos' giddy—ze goat or ze gentleman who was barmy. Ze goat 'e chase me up a tree and 'e tear my pantalon. Ze mad gentleman, 'e come out an' 'e threaten to kick me a punch in the jaws. So I 'it 'im on what you call 'im?—is konk, and I leave 'im my card to await his seconds, if 'e wish to 'ave ze affaire of honneur wiz me!"

"That was Squire Hardacres, monsieur," said Wobby, grinning. "He is a bit of a nut!"

"Ah, I do not care how hard nuts he shall be!" exclaimed monsieur, rolling his eyes. "I will cr-rack 'im if 'e makes any more insult to me! I will make what you call affaire d'hospital—'ospital job, of 'im!"

And monsieur, breathing hard, looked round fiercely.

One by one the hounds came panting up, smothered in mud from head to foot, and thoroughly pasted by the heavy run.

"I should have thought that you chaps would have got home," said Buckley. "You seem to have gone off like rockets, and fizzled out at the end of the run!" he added.

"We got delayed in those woods," Buckley, replied Wobby evasively. "and our paper had run out!"

"Well, it was something like a run!" said Buckley, laughing. "We left old Hardacres as mad as a hatter, threatening monsieur with an action for assault, and vowing that he would put man-traps and spring-guns down for us next time we go his way. All we can do now is to trot back gently to the school."

There was not much trot left in the long, straggling files of the hunt as it made its way across the downs in the direction of St. Beowulf's School. The hounds limped and lurched wearily along. One party stormed a motor-bus that was travelling in their direction. The conductor objected to fifty boys climbing on to his vehicle. So they put him under the seat, and showed the driver how many schoolboys a motor-bus could carry.

Our friends limped on carrying their empty bags, till, along the road behind them they heard the purring of a powerful car.

Stickjaw turned.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed. "Here comes Mr. Lincoln's car! And he's driving it himself!"

It was indeed John Lincoln who was driving the car, and, at the sight of the weary three he slowed down.

"Get in!" he called. "Good heavens, what a crowd of mudlarks!"

"We are too muddy, sir," said Jim, peering in at the luxurious linings of the car.

"All right!" replied John Lincoln. "Hang on to the footboard. I'll run you gently home to the school!"

They gratefully accepted the offer, and Wobby perched himself close by the driver's seat.

"What have you been up to, Master Wobby?" demanded John Lincoln. "You all look as if you had something more on than a paper-chase."

"We've been fishing for jewels, sir. And we've got them!" answered Wobby.

"Not Lady Castlemore's stuff?" exclaimed John Lincoln.

"Yes, sir. We fished it all up out of the Fairy Pool. There was a bunch of tugs on the trail, and they tried to run us down. But we foiled 'em."

"What have you done with the jewels?" asked John Lincoln.

"We've sent them home with the kangaroo!" said Wobby, with his cheerful laugh. "He'll be waiting for us in his stable. And if you don't mind, sir, you might drive us round that way. Then you can take care of them for us. A tuckbox isn't the place to stow away thousands of pounds-worth of pearls, diamonds, and emeralds. It's putting temptation in people's way!"

John Lincoln laughed heartily as the boys told him all their adventures of the afternoon.

"Perhaps it will be just as well if I do take care of the jewels for you!" he said, with a smile. "I am going into the school to call on Dr. Brackenbury, and there won't be anything out of the way in my calling round at the stable to see your pet!"

He drove straight in at the main gate of the school, where the porter touched his hat respectfully to the great man and stared in wonderment at the muddy group of boys who were hanging on to the footboard of the great car.

John Lincoln did not drive straight up to the school. Half-way up the great avenue he turned the car into one of the side roads which led round through the shrubberies, and in a few minutes they were at Nobby's stable.

"I hope he's come straight home!" said Wobby, with a slight misgiving, as he saw the stable door ajar. "He could get in, any-way!"

He was greatly relieved to find Nobby in his bed of hay, with the haversacks still on him.

"Here he is, sir," he called, "in the loose-box, and he's got the stuff all safe!"

The haversacks were unstrapped from the kangaroo, and their contents were proudly displayed to John Lincoln.

There was no doubt about the Castlewood emeralds and pearls.

"Upon my word, young gentlemen," he said, "you have made a lucky hit and a great friend. Lady Castlewood is an old lady who thinks the world of her jewels. She is a woman of considerable character, and never forgets a service. I will take the jewels straight to her. She will be immensely relieved to have them again. And don't forget, boys," said John Lincoln, smiling, "that on Saturday you are to be my guests. Now get off with you to the baths. You look as if you could do with a good scrubbing."

The boys handed over the precious loads from their paper bags, and ran off to the baths.

A Hot Time for Slurk.

THERE was a rush on hot baths. The whole school was trying to get itself clean from the mire of the paper-chase. It was a chance whether all would get through the baths by supper-time. But as the bell rang for supper in Hall, all were washed and clothed, and Wobby and his chums hastened off to get their share at the buttery-latch before their hungry comrades should have eaten everything up.

Wobby, who was a good forager, did very well. He managed to secure three large plates of cold beef and ham, and to borrow a bottle of pickles, whose owner was away from his seat trying to steal a bottle of Worcestershire sauce.

"Here you are, nobles!" he said. "Eat hearty, and give the house a good name! Stickjaw, my boy, pass the mustard! What have you got there, George?"

George Podgers was sitting in front of his supper with tears in his eyes.

George was a good chap. He came from the West Indies. Before him was a long,



"I'll lam you within an inch of your life!" cried the ruffian, raising his fist. Wobby jumped back. "You won't, old clobber!" he exclaimed. "Here's two hundred wolves who will ask the reason why." As he spoke the fringe of the wood was broken by a number of dragged, mudstained figures.



Slurk paused suddenly as the hot sauce began to burn his throat, then his hand went to his mouth. "Hi, kid!" he gasped. "What was in that pickle?" "Nothing!" replied the late owner. "Nothing!" choked Slurk. "Oh, my hat! Ow! Give me air—ow, I'm burning!"

narrow-necked bottle, the shape of which was new to the boys.

"What's the matter with you, George?" asked Wobby kindly. "What are you crying for? Anyone been kicking you? Or are you thinking of the little old home in the Spanish Main?"

"Yom—yom!" mumbled George, pointing to the pickle-bottle before him. "Mow-wow! Oh crumbs, I feel as if—yow!—I had swallowed a torchlight procession!"

Queer dainties were nothing out of the way at St. Beowulf's, especially towards the end of the month. The boys, coming as they did from all parts of the world, often had cases of jams, pickles, fruits, and sauces sent them to remind them of their distant homes.

Sometimes there would be a rush of pineapples and mangoes. Sometimes strange

hams and dried fish would turn up. Once George had had a case of dried shark sent to him, but this had never reached the school. The railway company had called in the sanitary officer of the district, who had ordered George's shark to be destroyed in the dust destructor, as being unfit for human food.

Wobby took the bottle from which George had taken a tiny spoonful.

"West Indian Hot Sauce!" he read. "Manufactured only by Podgers & Co., St. Kitts, British West Indies."

"May I have some, George?" asked Wobby.

"Take the—yom—lot!" mumbled George.

"It's too hot for me!"

"I like hot things," said Wobby affably, pouring out half a teaspoonful of the sauce, which seemed mostly to consist of cut-up chillies and pips. "Is it very hot, George?"

"Red hot!" gasped George. "Look out, Wobby, it'll scorch your neck!"

"I'm not afraid of it," said Wobby, swallowing the half-teaspoonful of the West Indian dainty. "It doesn't burn much!"

"You wait half a mo'!" replied George.

"It doesn't kick all at once. How does it feel now?"

Wobby was beginning to squint. But he felt that he must "crack hardy," as he put it, in his picturesque Australian tongue.

"It's just nice and warming," he said.

"It's hotter than a bulseye, and not quite so hot as a red-hot poker."

Then he moved uncomfortably in his chair, and the tears began to gather in his eyes.

"Crumbs, George!" he muttered, choking.

"Who sent you this stuff?"

"My cousin in the West Indies," said George. "I told you it was hot, Wob. You can't say I didn't warn you."

The tears were running down Wobby's face. He turned sideways from the table.

"Your cousin ought to be prosecuted, George!" he said, in choking accents. "This isn't sauce; it's a mustard-plaster! It's burning out my neck. Wow! Honk, honk! Do you mean to say they eat this stuff in the West Indies?"

"Lots of it!" said George. "They put it in the stews and what they call the pepper-pots."

"Then they must have tin linings!" said Wobby. "Pass the water boys, my socks are red-hot! I've got it in the neck! This is the knock-out drop. They ought to send a fire-engine with every bottle!"

Wobby consumed a whole jug of water before the tears ceased to chase one another down his red face.

"Don't you touch it, Stickjaw!" he warned

his chum. "It's the real snake-headed juice. Do you want any more of it, George?"

"Not me!" replied George with decision.

"Right-ho!" said Wobby, who had noticed a movement from the bullies' table. "If I am not mistaken, our friend Slurk is on the move pickle-bagging."

On the far side of the crowded Hall Slurk and the nigger, Jack Johnson, were on the move. They were off raiding amongst the tables for pickles or jam.

The bottle of mustard-pickle which Wobby had purloined was nearly empty. With a swift movement he tipped most of the bottle of red-hot sauce into the pickle-bottle, gave it a stir round with a tablespoon, and clapped the lid on.

Slurk and Jack Johnson were not having much success on their side of the Hall. They were well known as jam-stealers and pickle-pinchers, and, as soon as they showed amongst the tables, jam-jars and pickle-bottles disappeared under the great oaken tables as if by magic.

Wobby's experience told him that this was only a false attack though. From the tail of his eye, he could see Slurk's two allies, Sponge and Mudd, making their way in at the Hall doorway carrying huge plates of bread and cheese which they had got from the buttery hatch for the bullies' table.

"Here come the sharks, chaps!" he whispered. "Let 'em snatch the pickles. Then we'll see how George's mustard-plasters from the West Indies fit their necks."

"Cave!" was the cry.

There was a rush along the table to hide jam-jars and pickle-bottles.

George snatched up what was left of his bottle of hot sauce, but Sponge's hand descended on the bottle of piccalilli.

"Bags I!" he jeered.

"Bring that bottle of pickles back, Sponge, you thieving tug!" said Wobby, to give colour to the bona fide nature of the bottle.

But Sponge was off with a triumphant laugh, and his load of bread and cheese was received with cheers at the bullies' table as he held the snatched bottle of pickle on high.

"Those are my pickles, Slurk!" piped up the member of the Lowe School, to whom the bottle had originally belonged.

"You mean that it is your bottle, kid," replied Slurk, with greasy geniality. "Wait half a mo', and you shall have the bottle. We will clear out the pickles for you. Then it will make a nice home for your tiddlers."

"I don't keep tiddlers!" said the indignant owner of the pickle-bottle.

But Slurk took no notice of his protestations. He poured the pickles over the plates of bread and cheese, which his cronies had brought, treating himself to the lion's share. The bottle was emptied and scraped out to the last drop.

"Now, kid," said Slurk. "We will show you how to eat pickles. It's just one, two, three, and the whole lot is gone. Now, chaps, just show the kid. One, two, three!"

The bullies shovelled the pickle greedily into their mouths, swallowing the stuff like sharks.

"There you are, kid!" said Slurk, holding out the empty bottle and grinning. "That shows you how to eat—"

He paused suddenly as the famous West India sauce began to get its red-hot fingers on his throat.

His hands went to his mouth and neck, and he gasped.

"Hi, kid!" he began. "What's in that pickle?"

"Nothing!" replied the late owner.

"Nothing!" choked Slurk. "Oh, my hat! Oh, give me air! Ow, I'm burning!"

A dismal howl from Jack Johnson, the nigger, told that in the Barbados where he came from, the pickles were not quite so hot as in other parts of the West Indies.

Mudd and Sponge, their eyes streaming with tears, rose from the table coughing like mad, and made for the door.

They were in such a hurry that they barely noticed, amidst the confusion and laughter, the entrance of a distinguished-looking elderly lady, who, with Dr. Brackenbury and Mr. Lincoln in attendance, entered the Hall by the upper door.

(Next week's grand long instalment of this splendid serial will be better than ever. Make sure of reading it by ordering your GEM well in advance.)

WHO IS RIVINGTON SPEED?



Rivington Speed—the Master—mysterious, all-powerful—in outward seeming a little dealer in antiques with a knack of reviving the lustre in "sick" pearls—is the baffling character who dominates unseen every situation in the remarkable new serial story "Helen of London" which is shortly to begin in "ANSWERS."

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Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazines Post Subscriptions rates: Inland, 12s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Abroad, 25s. 10d. per annum; 12s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Go'ch. Ltd., and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada) Saturday, October 14th, 1922.

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EDITORIAL CHAT.

The Editor would like to hear from his reader chums. Address all letters to Editor, "The Gem Library," c/o The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Chums,—

Some of the best known characters at St. Jim's come forward in the course of next Wednesday's story, "Tompkins On Trial!" This does not mean that that good chap, Tompkins, has to face the grim ordeal of a court of law. It is just a test as to whether he is a real sportsman, or not. Tompkins comes out of the business with colours flying, and the band playing. As the poet said, things are not what they seem, and life is not an empty dream—just as the worthy Tompkins discovered.

You know how it is when you are reading a yarn in which the chief character does not know what is passing behind the scene, as it were. You, the reader, are, most likely, in the secret of

the author, or you think you are, thanks to the marvellous guessing powers, which are fit to mop up all the prizes in a competition. But sometimes a reader gets a wrong view. Suppose, now, that Tompkins had just felt that this old uncle of his had something a bit too odd in his make-up to be genuine—I say suppose? Then there would have been trouble. But Tompkins played the game on the simplest principles, and won as fellows do win, even when they do not know it, by following the dictates of that bit of their composition known as the heart. Next Wednesday's story will prove a winner for the chief figure, and for Mr. Martin Clifford.

There are a few jottings I must put in here. One of them refers to the "Holiday Annual" which is going in record style. By the way overseas readers are informed that the price post free of the "Annual" to any address in the world, is 7/-. Our Tuck Hammer Competition remains a first favourite, but I would ask my chums not to send me confidential letters about this competition, and put a lot of questions concerning it, for, as it stands to reason, I cannot enter into private correspondence

with individual friends about a competition which is free to all.

The closing date for the "Silhouette" Competition is October 19th, 1922.

Next week sees the inauguration of our grand new football competition, which offers some extra special inducements to everybody.

The results in the Head 'Em Competition will be announced in next week's issue of the GEM.

There are many splendid stories coming during the winter months. Mention of the winter reminds me of the strange way some fellows have of looking at the season of short days. There is a certain chill felt after the summer is over, and the river ceases to draw. But, good as may be the gay old summer-time, the months from November to March are crammed full of interest, quite apart from the consideration of the great winter game. Now is the time for debating societies to get into swing. There are cheery evenings to be obtained this way—three-minute speeches on things in general, and no extra even for the chap who can't find words.

YOUR EDITOR.

NEW



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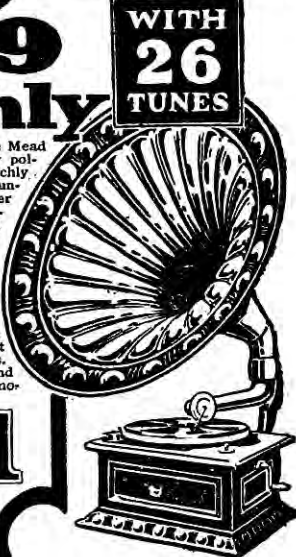
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