

GREAT STORIES OF SCHOOL, MYSTERY, AND SPORT INSIDE!

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

No. 846.
Vol. XXV.
April 26th,
1924.

LIBRARY OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES.



THE HAUNTED HAT!

What is the matter with Mr. Ratcliff's hat? It is a question Bernard Glyn, the schoolboy inventor, might be able to answer!
(Read the screamingly-funny, long school story of Tom Merry & Co. in this issue.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
"THE MAGNET" Every Monday
"THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
"JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

MY DEAR CHUMS,—It would be hard to find anything jollier or more enlivening altogether than a typical yarn of St. Jim's. I am not saying that on my own, though I am quite convinced of the fact in question. It was a remark inspired by the numerous letters to hand from readers, who say the tales by Martin Clifford cheer them up, and make the worst loose end imaginable do the vanishing trick. We have plenty more stirring features in the GEM each week, but, of course, the St. Jim's series have pride of place. Mr. Martin Clifford never turned out more amusing stuff than he is doing now. Perhaps this inclement season, of which we are at length seeing the last, has suited the great author's genius and brought him added inspiration! Anyway, the results are to be seen every Wednesday, and they are tip-top.

"SEVEN ON THE WARPATH!" By Martin Clifford.

Next Wednesday's story of the celebrated school fairly takes the prize. It is ingenious, it is high-spirited, and it reveals in wonderful style the strange ups and downs of a school-master's life. Of course, Mr. Rateliff has had a very generous share of misfortunes, and in next week's highly amusing story we find him "in the cart" once more. He has only himself to blame for his unhappy experiences. He listens to conversations which are not intended for his ear. Apart from the interesting little circumstance that listeners never hear good of themselves, we have the consideration that "Ratty," by his tactless eavesdropping, lands others into trouble. He is busy as usual next week, and at last his long-suffering victims rise in wrath, and read Rateliff a needed lesson. Make sure of next week's GEM. You will have a hearty laugh over the self-inflicted woes of the unpopular master. There are certain happenings which eclipse for excitement anything yet. As for the sagacious Seven, they do not take to the warpath for nothing. They are "all in" to win. Just what occurs you will see in our next grand issue.

THE "ST. JIM'S NEWS!"

There is immense satisfaction to me, and I know it is the same with all Gemites, that the "St. Jim's News" is booming along so successfully. The plain truth is that the Supplement has romped in with undoubted triumph. Everybody is talking about it these days, and there will be more laurels yet for the laking little paper once the next issue gets going. It is a special Bullying Number, and contains some really useful information about this always unwanted, and yet seemingly inevitable, phase of life at a big public school. Of course, when one thinks of bullying in association with St. Jim's, there is bound to be a harking back to some of the misdeeds of clever Cutts and the amiable Aubrey Racker, and fellows of that kidney. They have their bullies at the grand old school, but such tyrants do not get all their own way. Publicity is the best thing possible for a bully. The "St. Jim's News" is doing excellent work by focusing attention on the abuse. Fair play for fags!

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"THE LURE OF PRECIOUS STONES!" By Martin Walker.

This sensational complete story for our next number is one to read, and then to pass on to some chum. It is the most baffling narrative yet in that wonderful series concerning the mysterious Dr. Ziglio. Of course, ever since the world was very young indeed the quest of sparkling jewels has led men to strange deeds, but in the truly great yarn which will appear on Wednesday next Mr. Martin Walker does a bit more than show the lengths to which the unscrupulous will go in the chase after fortune. Here we have a glimpse of an arresting and magnetic personality. Ziglio is a fair wonder of any age. His actions are those of a strong man, gifted with all but superhuman powers. He is well described as the world's master criminal. He commands respect of a sort for his unlimited audacity and the grim determination to crush down all who dare oppose him as he drives forward like some human juggernaut of crime.

"RIVALS OF THE RACECOURSE." By Andrew Gray.

With the racing season in full swing this serial about the racecourse side has, naturally, an added appeal. It is a gripping story, and, of course, the narrative of a youngster who is up against long odds in the battle of life must always command sympathy. The next instalment carries matters to a pitch of intensity never equalled, and the glimpse one gets of the vile treachery of the hound Scurf. I feel positive you will admit that the narrative of Mat Martingale gets better with each chapter. In addition to the thrills, which are many, we have some splendid word-pictures of the scenes on the Turf.

SPARKLERS TO COME!

Don't forget that the list of new attractions in store contains work by some of our

most popular writers. I have a splendid bill coming. By the way, suggestions are always welcome. I am constantly acting on the ideas sent in by ardent readers who make requests concerning certain characters or ask for the introduction of a new feature.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

Week in, week out, our Tuck Hamper page is always a winner, and an easy one. Send your entries to Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4, addressing them to the Editor of the GEM, and marking them "Tuck Hamper." I give careful consideration to all storyettes. If you fail to pull off a hamper or a half-crown one week, you may manage the thing the following Wednesday.

LIFE IN THE OPEN!

This is what my correspondent, Len R. Taylor, of Winnipeg, prefers. He tells me he has been having a grand jaunt through Manitoba. It was a grand life on the lakes and rivers—camping, shooting, fishing, and swimming, and sleeping on the way. At Hill River the party ran out of provisions for a couple of weeks, and lived on fish and some stuff the Indians call coffee. They struck an Indian camp. "Talk of profiters! Just try to argue with an Indian when he knows he has what you want!" It was altogether a wonderful experience. My correspondent says he intends to join the Canadian Mounted Police. He says the outdoor is a swell life. He has been missing the Companion Papers, but intends to get them all, for the school stories are like Nature, very alluring. I should like to hear more of those Sioux Indians whom he struck on the trail.

TALES ABOUT CARDEW.

Further proof of the success of the Merry-Cardew series is forthcoming in a cheery letter from Leek. "I cannot help thinking," says the writer, "that the author of these stories is a genius. I was very sorry to finish the tales about Cardew—who, by the way, is my hero. How I would like to meet Martin Clifford!" Cardew deserves the tribute. Of course, we shall soon be hearing of him again. Cardew has been hauled over the coals by some readers for his audacity in challenging Tom Merry; but, for all that, he remains one of the best-liked characters.

Your Editor.

THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS!



Grand Long Stories of
the Wild West in the
"POPULAR"

EVERY TUESDAY. GET A COPY TO-DAY!

Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the sour master of the Fifth, has already earned the enmity of all the Juniors at St. Jim's. In this magnificent yarn we again find him asking for trouble—which he gets with a vengeance!



UP AGAINST RATTY!

A Highly - Amusing Story of the
Well-Known Schoolboy Characters,
Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.

BY FAMOUS

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. A Great Occasion!

"NEW House cad!"
"Bump him!"
"Yaas, wathah!"
George Figgins of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's grinned cheerily as he received those polite greetings.

Figgins had walked across the quadrangle from the New House to the School House. He mounted the staircase and arrived in the junior quarters of the School House, and strolled along the Fourth Form passage as coolly as if it belonged to him.

Figgins seemed quite forgetful of the feud that raged between the rival houses of St. Jim's. Quite a number of School House fellows reminded him of it at once.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy were lounging by the doorway of Study No. 6. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell were chatting to them. Bernard Glyn, also of the Shell, was in the group. So there were eight voices to address the venturesome New House fellow, and they addressed him all at once.

Whereat George Figgins only grinned.
"All serene!" he remarked. "Keep your wool on."
"Weally, Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I should like to know what a New House boundah is doin' on the respectable side of the quadrangle."
"Don't you know that dogs and New House chaps are not allowed indoors?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"Bump him!"
"Pax!" said Figgins promptly, as the School House juniors circled round him.

Tom Merry shook his head gravely.
"Pax is off!" he said. "It's weeks since we've licked the New House."

"Weeks?" said Figgins. "You mean centuries, if it ever happened at all?"

"It's time we made an example of a New House bounder!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Frog's march!" said Glyn.
"Pax, I tell you, you asses!" said Figgins. "I've come over to ask you to a feed in the New House."

"Bai Jove!"
"That alters the case," said Manners. "In the circumstances we can let you off, Figgins."

"Dear man!" said Blake. "I never did believe in keeping up these House rows, especially at tea-time."

"Yaas, I weally considah that these wows and wags are wathah overdone," concurred Arthur Augustus.

Figgins chuckled.
"Hold on, though," said Herries thoughtfully. "There's eight of us here. I suppose Figgins isn't asking eight fellows to his feed?"

"The more the merrier," said Figgins cheerily. "Kerr's had a whacking tip from an uncle in Scotland, and we're spreading ourselves a bit. Mr. Ratcliff's gone out, so we sha'n't have him butting in. It's a record spread, and we want you all to come."

"Good man!"

"Yaas, wathah! It will give your spread quite a tone, Figgay, to have a School House crowd pwsent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgay!"

"We'll come!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Blake will put a muzzle on Gussy for the occasion."

"Certainly!" said Blake.

"Weally, you ass!"

"Might ask a couple more fellows," said Figgins. "There's that Canadian chap, Wildrake—I'd like him to come. And Grundy of the Shell—he's not a bad sort."

"My hat! You'll find it rather a squeeze in your study, won't you?" asked Digby.

Figgins smiled.

"As Ratty's gone out, we're holding the spread in the Common-room," he said. "There will be a dozen New House fellows as well as you lot. It's going to be quite a function."

"Oh, ripping!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Fatty Wynn's getting it ready now," went on Figgins.

"If you fellows are ready, trot along with your uncle."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Figgins!"

As Tom Merry & Co. emerged from the School House in a cheery crowd, with George Figgins in their midst, nobody who saw them would have guessed that a deep and deadly warfare raged between the two Houses of St. Jim's.

That warfare was sometimes suspended, and deep and deadly as it was, there was seldom anything but good nature displayed on either side.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were quite convinced that they represented the cock-house of St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were equally convinced that School House was cock-house. Alarums and excursions were frequent and painful and free. Nevertheless, the rivals of St. Jim's could meet in amity on such an occasion as a School game or a study spread. On such an occasion the hatchet was buried.

Ten School House juniors marched across the quad with Figgins, Wildrake and Grundy having joined up willingly. Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, noted them from his study window, and smiled. The sight of a happy, healthy crowd of schoolboys, cheery and care-free, was a pleasant one to Mr. Railton. It did not produce the same pleasing effect upon his colleague, Mr. Horace Ratcliff of the New House, a gentleman who was generally dismal, and liked to see other people dismal, too. Fortunately, Mr. Ratcliff was out of gates now, and was not likely to mar the festivity of this great occasion with his long, disagreeable countenance.

In a cheery crowd Tom Merry & Co. marched into the New House with George Figgins.

Kerr of the Fourth, and Redfern and Owen, and several other New House fellows, greeted them cheerily as they came in.

"All ready!" said Kerr.

"Fatty's going strong!" grinned Redfern. "He's been making jam-tarts. I believe he's made hundreds!"

"Good old Fatty!" chuckled Figgins. "Come on, you fellows. This way!"

And Figgins led his flock into the Common-room. Fatty Wynn turned a bright and ruddy face from the fire.

"Jolly glad to see you fellows. All ready!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as weally wippin' of you fellows to ask us ovah, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy graciously.

"I guess that's some spread!" remarked Wildrake.

There was no doubt that it was. The long table in the junior Common-room was stacked with good things. "Feeds" were certainly not supposed to be held in the Common-room, but no junior study could possibly have accommodated Figgins & Co.'s crowd of guests. Mr. Ratcliff would have frowned upon such a proceeding. But Mr. Ratcliff had gone out for the afternoon, and it was a case of the cat being away and the mice sporting themselves in his absence.

A merry crowd sat down to the spread round the table, all in the highest good humour. Even Grundy of the Shell had his best manners on, and forgot to be lofty and dictatorial. It was a great occasion, and every fellow played up and did his best to make it a success.

CHAPTER 2.

An Interrupted "Orgy."

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF, Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's, snorted.

Mr. Ratcliff had a very expressive snort when he was angry.

As he was very frequently angry, his snort was very frequently heard in the New House, and was known there as a danger-signal.

On the present occasion Mr. Ratcliff's snort was bestowed on Ephraim Taggles, the school-porter of St. Jim's.

Mr. Ratcliff had come in—early.

The Housemaster had walked out on a fine spring afternoon, to walk over to Wayland town. The fine spring afternoon had lasted till he was nearly a mile on his way. Then it had changed to a rainy afternoon.

Mr. Ratcliff had not taken an umbrella. The deceptive British climate had deceived him. He was soon very wet; and Mr. Ratcliff lived in terror of colds and chills and coughs. Often and often he had scared himself into a malady merely by being afraid of it. So when the rain came down, Mr. Ratcliff turned back at once, and his long legs went at a record rate on the road to St. Jim's.

He came in at the school gates wet and ill-tempered and frowning. Taggles, the porter, was at the door of his lodge—but Taggles did not observe Mr. Ratcliff coming in, and so did not touch his hat.

Whereupon Mr. Ratcliff snorted.

He was a touchy gentleman, always on the look-out for offences. He never lost a chance of misunderstanding and taking offence. So he had no doubt whatever that Taggles intended to be insolent.

He snorted, and walked on towards the New House.

He was already cross, and Taggles' supposed offence made him more cross. By the time he reached the New House Mr. Ratcliff was in a humour to deal severely with any offender who came his way—and also in a humour to regard the most inoffensive person as an offender!

A Fourth Form fellow came running in out of the rain, and almost brushed against Mr. Ratcliff. The New House master fixed him at once with a glittering eye.

"Pratt!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" faltered Pratt.

"How dare you rush into me in that manner?"

"I didn't—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I didn't mean to, sir!" stammered Pratt.

"You will take a hundred lines, Pratt! Another word, and I will cane you."

Pratt was very careful not to utter another word. He could see that Ratty was in what the New House fellows called a "tantrum" and he was glad to get off with lines. Mr. Ratcliff glared at him, regretting that he had no excuse for caning Pratt, and whisked away.

He stopped suddenly.

From the junior Common-room at the end of a long corridor came the sound of a rousing chorus. Figgins & Co.'s spread was going strong. The health of George Figgins had been drunk in tea, coffee, lemonade, ginger-beer, and various other fluids. Now the numerous guests were musically stating their opinion that Figgins was a jolly good fellow. Twenty merry young voices joined in the chorus.

Properly speaking this should have had a cheering effect on Mr. Ratcliff. But it hadn't! That any fellow should presume to enjoy himself at a time when Horace Ratcliff felt miserable and cross, was an offence not to be tolerated.

Mr. Ratcliff whisked down the passage, and stood in the open doorway of the junior Common-room, looking in.

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Figgins & Co. and their numerous guests were too busily occupied, at the moment, to observe the menacing figure in the doorway. They did not even know that the basilisk eyes of Horace Ratcliff were upon them.

"Pass the rosy wine!" sang out Monty Lowther, thus humorously designating the ginger-pop.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!"

"Figgins, old man, you're a real sport, and you deserve to belong to the School House!" declared Grundy of the Shell.

"Dear old man, I wouldn't belong to the School House if there wasn't another House in the kingdom!" said Figgins affably.

"Why, you ass—" said Grundy.

"New House is cock-house, you know," remarked Thompson of the Shell.

"What utter rot!" said Grundy. "Utter bosh!"

"Look here, you School House ass—"

"Look here, you New House fathead—"

"Gentlemen," interposed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, mildly but firmly, "pway do not begin an argument. It is not grateful to our kind hosts, Gvunday."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry. "I vota that New House is cock-house of St. Jim's—"

"What?"

"So long as this jolly spread lasts, I mean!" added the captain of the Shell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Passed unanimously," said Blake. "Shove that topping cake this way, Kerr, old man."

"Try these tarts," said Fatty Wynn. "I made them, you know—and, though I say it myself, they're really top-hole!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Lucky old Ratty's out!" observed Grundy. "He doesn't like to see fellows enjoying themselves."

Snort!

Mr. Ratcliff's snort, in the doorway, fell with the effect of a thunderclap on the merry gathering.

Cheery voices died into silence at once; every face turned doorward; every eye was fixed on Horace Ratcliff.

That gentleman strode into the room.

The utter dismay caused by his unexpected appearance gave Mr. Ratcliff quite a pleasant feeling. It was quite a triumph for him to make more than twenty fellows uncomfortable all at once.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Watty, bai Jove!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"What awful luck!" mumbled Kerr.

Tom Merry knitted his brows. Had Mr. Railton happened on such a festive scene in the School House he might have regarded the proceedings as a little irregular, and might have told the fellows not to make so much noise. But that would have been all. Mr. Railton was a white man. Mr. Ratcliff was regarded by the St. Jim's fellows as anything but a white man. Now he proceeded at once to live up to their opinion of him.

"So this," said Mr. Ratcliff, in his rather shrill voice—"this is what goes on in my absence!"

There was deep silence.

"This," repeated Mr. Ratcliff, "is what goes on during my absence from the House!"

Had the juniors been caught burgling or coining in Mr. Ratcliff's absence he could hardly have spoken more savagely and bitterly.

"Disgraceful!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

Still silence! Nobody but Mr. Ratcliff saw anything disgraceful in a spread in the Common-room. But nobody was disposed to argue the point with Ratty.

Mr. Ratcliff glanced along the table, which was still well-laden with good things, in spite of the progress the juniors had made.

"This—this orgy—" said Mr. Ratcliff.

He seemed to like that word.

"This disgraceful orgy—this disgusting orgy— Who is responsible for this orgy, Figgins?"

"This what, sir?" stammered Figgins.

"This orgy!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"It—it's just a spread, sir!" murmured the hapless Figgins. "No harm intended, sir! Just a spread!"

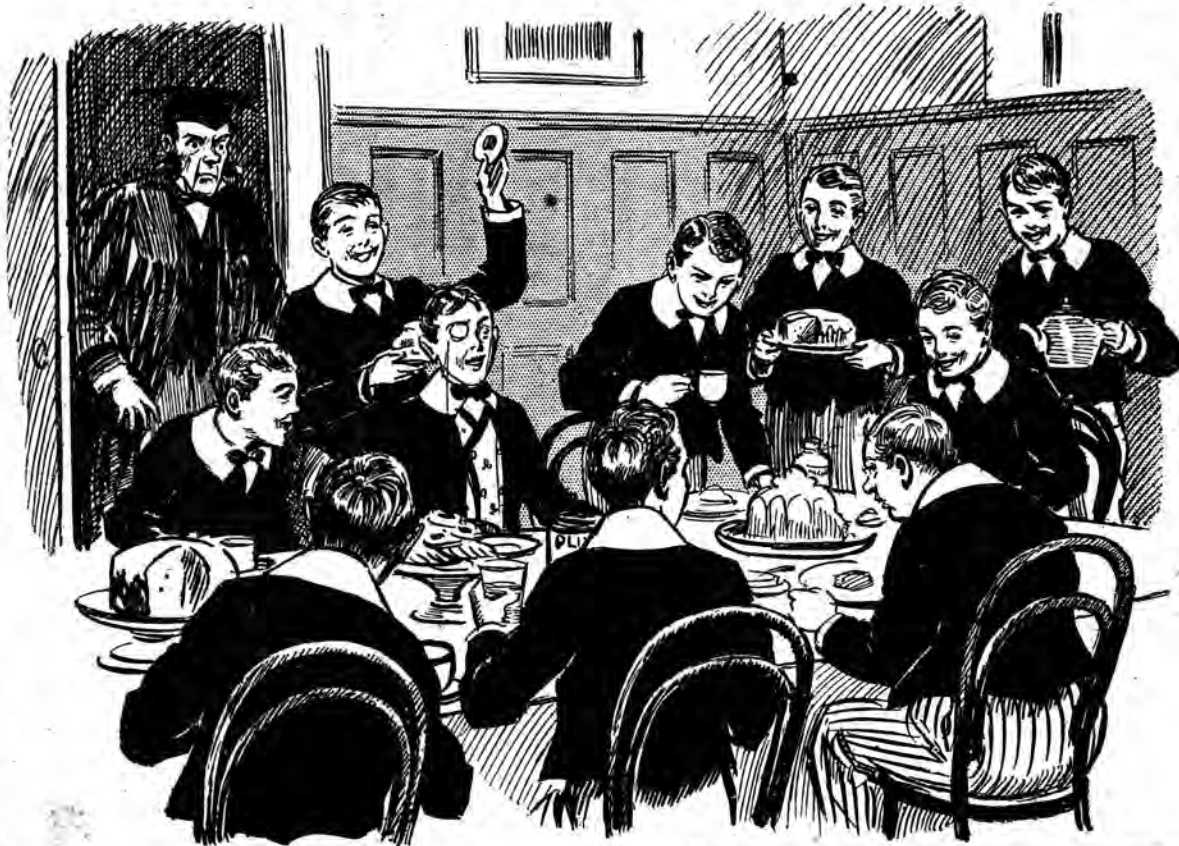
"I term it an orgy," said Mr. Ratcliff—"a disgusting orgy! Have I given you leave, Figgins, to hold an orgy in the Common-room?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"I have no doubt that you are the ringleader, Figgins!"

Figg's eyes gleamed. That was just like Mr. Ratcliff. First he turned a harmless escapade into a serious offence, and then he picked out a "ringleader."

"Though I have no doubt," continued Mr. Ratcliff bitterly, "that you received every encouragement from some of the School House boys present—Merry, for instance!"



At the sound of merry voices Mr. Ratcliff whisked down the passage and stood in the open door of the junior Common-room, listening. Figgins & Co. and their numerous guests were too busily occupied to observe the menacing figure in the doorway. They did not even know that the basilisk eyes of Horace Ratcliff were upon them. "Pass the rosy wine!" sang out Monty Lowther. (See page 4.)

"Merry is here as a guest, sir," said Figgins. "He has nothing else to do with it."

"I don't see that any harm's done, Mr. Ratcliff!" said Tom Merry.

"Indeed!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, indeed!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "I twust, Mr. Watchliff, that you see no harm in a spweed—a vevy genewous spweed stood by our fwriends heah! I twust, sir, that you are not goin' to act as a spoilsport."

"Wha-a-at!"

"It would be a gwaceful act on your part, sir, to wetire, and leave us to finish our spweed!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "Ow! Wow! What silly ass is that twampin' on my foot?"

"Dry up!" hissed Blako.

"Cease this—this orgy at once!" rapped out Mr. Ratcliff. "Every New House boy here will be punished for this flagrant transgression of the rules of the House. The School House boys I shall report to their own Housemaster!"

"Look here, sir—" said Grundy.

"Silence! All boys who belong to the School House will leave this House at once!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Wenly, sir—"

"Go!"

Figgins & Co. looked unhappy. Their great celebration was quite spoiled; and there was trouble to follow. Dearly would Figgins & Co. have liked, at that moment, to take hold of Mr. Ratcliff and bump him on the floor. But such methods of dealing with a Housemaster were not to be thought of.

"Better clear, you fellows!" murmured the dismayed Figgins. "I'm awfully sorry—"

And Tom Merry and Co., with rather grim faces, walked out of the room; and Figgins & Co. were left to the tender mercies of Horace Ratcliff.

CHAPTER 3.

Called on the Carpet!

"TOM MERRY!"

"Yes, Kildare!"

"Mr. Railton's study at once," said Kildare of the Sixth. "You and all the fellows who have been kicking up a shindy in the New House."

"Nobody's been kicking up a shindy in the New House, Kildare," said Tom.

"Well, you're all wanted," said the captain of St. Jim's, with a smile. "Mr. Ratcliff seems to have come over to complain."

"Bother him!" said Tom.

Kildare affected not to hear that remark, and walked away.

Tom Merry & Co. had not been feeling very cheerful since their return to the School House. They fully expected to hear more from Ratty. Certainly they were not conscious of any wrongdoing, and they knew they could depend on justice from their own Housemaster; still, they felt very uncomfortable.

Tom Merry proceeded to gather the fellows who had been at Figg's spread, and a party of ten headed for Mr. Railton's study. In that apartment they found their Housemaster with Mr. Ratcliff. The latter gentleman was frowning darkly. He had explained matters to Mr. Railton, but he had not received so much sympathy as apparently he expected. Mr. Railton, much to his annoyance, did not seem to see that any harm had been done. However, he had sent for the delinquents.

"Merry, and all of you," said Mr. Railton quietly, "Mr. Ratcliff complains that you have joined in a breach of the regulations in his House. This must not be repeated."

"Very well, sir!" said Tom, wondering if that was all.

"D'Arcy, Mr. Ratcliff tells me that you spoke to him with impertinence."

"Mr. Watchliff is mistaken, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Boy!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"I twust, Mr. Wailton," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "that you do not suppose that I would tweat a gentleman in Mr. Watchliff's position with impertinence. I feel bound to respect Mr. Watchliff's position, if not Mr. Watchliff himself."

"That is an example of this boy's impertinence, Mr. Railton," said the New House master. "If he is to be allowed to tell a Housemaster to his face that he does not respect him—"

"I am sowwy, sir, to be lackin' in wespect to you personally," said the cheerful Gussy. "But that is not my fault. Mr. Watchliff. Pewwaps you will allow me to point out that it is up to you to inspire wespect!"

CHAPTER 4.

Up to the School House I

Mr. Ratcliff's thin face grew crimson. "Shut up, Gussy, you awful ass!" breathed Blake in the noble ear of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Kindly be silent, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton. "You will take five hundred lines."

"Bai Jove! I considah——"

"If you say anything further, D'Arcy, I shall cane you!"

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus relapsed into indignant silence. Mr. Railton turned his glance upon Grundy of the Shell.

"Grundy, Mr. Ratcliff tells me that you applied an opprobrious epithet to him."

Grundy started.

"A which?" he ejaculated.

"You alluded to me, boy, as 'old Ratty'!" thundered the New House master.

"Not in your presence, sir," said Grundy. "And I don't see how you can know what I may have said in your absence!"

"Do you deny using the expression, Grundy?" asked the School House master.

Grundy considered for a moment.

"I don't deny it or admit it, sir," he answered. "A fellow isn't bound to accuse himself, is he?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Railton. "But I understand that Mr. Ratcliff heard you so allude to him."

"I certainly did!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Mr. Ratcliff was not present when I spoke, sir," said Grundy. "It was some minutes before he came into the room; at least, it was a minute. All these fellows will say so, sir. Did any of you chaps see Mr. Ratcliff before I spoke?"

"Wathah not!"

Some of the juniors grinned. They were all aware that Mr. Ratcliff had been standing at the door when Grundy spoke of him as "old Ratty." But certainly they had not seen him up to that moment, and they had a right to suppose that he had not been within hearing of their remarks.

"I was at the door, and I heard you plainly, Grundy, and entered immediately afterwards!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"That is clear," said Mr. Railton, with a worried look.

"Excuse me, sir!" said Grundy firmly. "Should I be allowed, sir, to accuse a Housemaster of listening?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then I have a right to say that Mr. Ratcliff did not hear me speak of him, as he couldn't possibly have done so unless he was listening at the door when I spoke."

Tom Merry & Co. gave George Alfred Grundy quite admiring looks. Grundy of the Shell was not considered a very bright fellow. But undoubtedly he was putting his case well now. It was quite a nice legal point—either Mr. Ratcliff had not heard him, or alternatively, as the lawyers say, Mr. Ratcliff had been listening at the door before showing himself.

Mr. Ratcliff's sour face grew sourer, and his cheeks were crimson. He quite understood the lurking smiles on the faces of the School House juniors.

Mr. Railton broke in.

"Grundy! I am afraid you are adding to your offence."

"Sorry, sir," said Grundy, "but I'm bound to refuse to believe that a Housemaster would listen at a door. So whatever I may have said, Mr. Ratcliff couldn't have heard it."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"D'Arcy! Be silent!"

"Oh! Yaas, certainly, Mr. Railton!"

"Grundy, it appears clear that you used the expression complained of. Do you or do you not deny it?" demanded the School House master.

"I'm not here to tell lies, sir," said Grundy sturdily. "I did speak of Mr. Ratcliff as old Ratty, and if Mr. Ratcliff cares to own that he listened at the door I admit that he heard me."

"Am I to tolerate this, Mr. Railton?" exclaimed the New House master passionately.

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"Grundy, I shall cane you for speaking disrespectfully of my colleague," he said.

"Very well, sir!"

Mr. Railton took up his cane.

Swish, swish!

"Now you may all go!" said the School House master; and the juniors left the study, Grundy grunting and rubbing his hands.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard through his nose.

"You must allow me to say, Mr. Railton, that I do not regard this light punishment as adequate!" he snapped.

"You must allow me to say, in return, that I do not agree with you, Mr. Ratcliff," answered the School House master tartly.

"Oh! Very well!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "Very well indeed, sir!"

And the New House master flounced out of the study.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 846.

"FIGGY, old man——"

"Hard cheese, old chap!"

Figgins of the Fourth looked into Tom Merry's study, No. 10 in the Shell, that evening. The

Terrible Three were at prep; but prep was suspended at once as Figgins appeared.

"Trot in, old chap," said Tom Merry. "We've been rather anxious to hear how you got on with Ratty!"

"How did you fellows get on?" asked Figgins. "I've come over to ask you. I know he buttered in here to complain."

"Grundy's licked, and Gussy's got five hundred lines, and the rest of us let off with a giddy caution," said Lowther.

"It's rotten," said Figgins dolorously. "Beastly, you know! If the rain hadn't come on, Ratty wouldn't have come in, and then everything in the garden would have been lovely. Of course, he was bound to butt in just when he wasn't wanted."

"Bound to," agreed Manners. "That's Ratty's way."

"We've had a high old time, of course," went on Figgins. "I can't see that any harm was done!"

"Of course not!" said Tom. "Only Ratty's rot!"

"You'd think we were a giddy set of Anarchists, by the way he talked to us," grunted Figgins. "All the stuff was confiscated!"

"Rotten!"

"And there was a lot of it, you know. Ratty's sent it down to the kitchens," said Figgins. "I believe he makes a profit on it—that's just his style. Saves something on the house-keeping, you know. He was jolly glad to confiscate such a lot of stuff. Mean beast!"

"Mean isn't the word for Ratty!" said Manners.

"And I've had two on each hand," said Figgins. "Kerr and Wynn the same. All the other chaps two hundred lines each. Nice, isn't it? Just for a spread in the Common-room—an orgy, as Ratty calls it. And we've got next half-holiday stopped."

"Ratty's come down heavy," said Monty Lowther. "Perhaps his jolly old rheumatism came back along with the rain."

"We're jolly well going to make him sit up for it, somehow," said Figgins darkly. "We're not taking this lying down. Only it's jolly hard to make a Housemaster sit up! The beast's got all the power in his hands, you see!"

Tom Merry nodded thoughtfully.

"You can count us in, if there's anything doing," he said.

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther emphatically.

"Hallo, here's old Grundy!"

Grundy looked in.

"I saw you come in, Figgy," he said. "Monteith of the Sixth has just poked his nose in downstairs. Is he after you?"

"I don't see why he should be," said Figgins. "I suppose Ratty hasn't been watching me. Of course, a fellow isn't supposed to leave his House during prep."

Bernard Glyn looked in over Grundy's shoulder.

"Monteith's coming upstairs!" he said. "He's been asking for you, Figgy."

Figgins groaned.

"More trouble!" he said. "Ratty's sent him over, I suppose—just as if a fellow can't pop into a study to speak to a chap! I'm getting fed up with Ratty!"

Monteith of the Sixth, a New House prefect, arrived at Study No. 10. He beckoned to Figgins.

"Mr. Ratcliff has sent me for you, Figgins," he said. "You've left your House during prep."

"Don't we often?" grunted Figgins.

"Possibly; but it's not permitted, and you know it. Come along."

"I suppose this means another licking!" said Figgins.

"Most likely. Come on!"

Figgins followed the prefect from the study. The School House fellows looked at one another grimly.

"Ratty's going it strong," remarked Glyn. "He seems to have a down on poor old Figgy."

"It's up to us!" said Grundy.

"Eh? What's up to us, Grundy?" inquired Tom Merry.

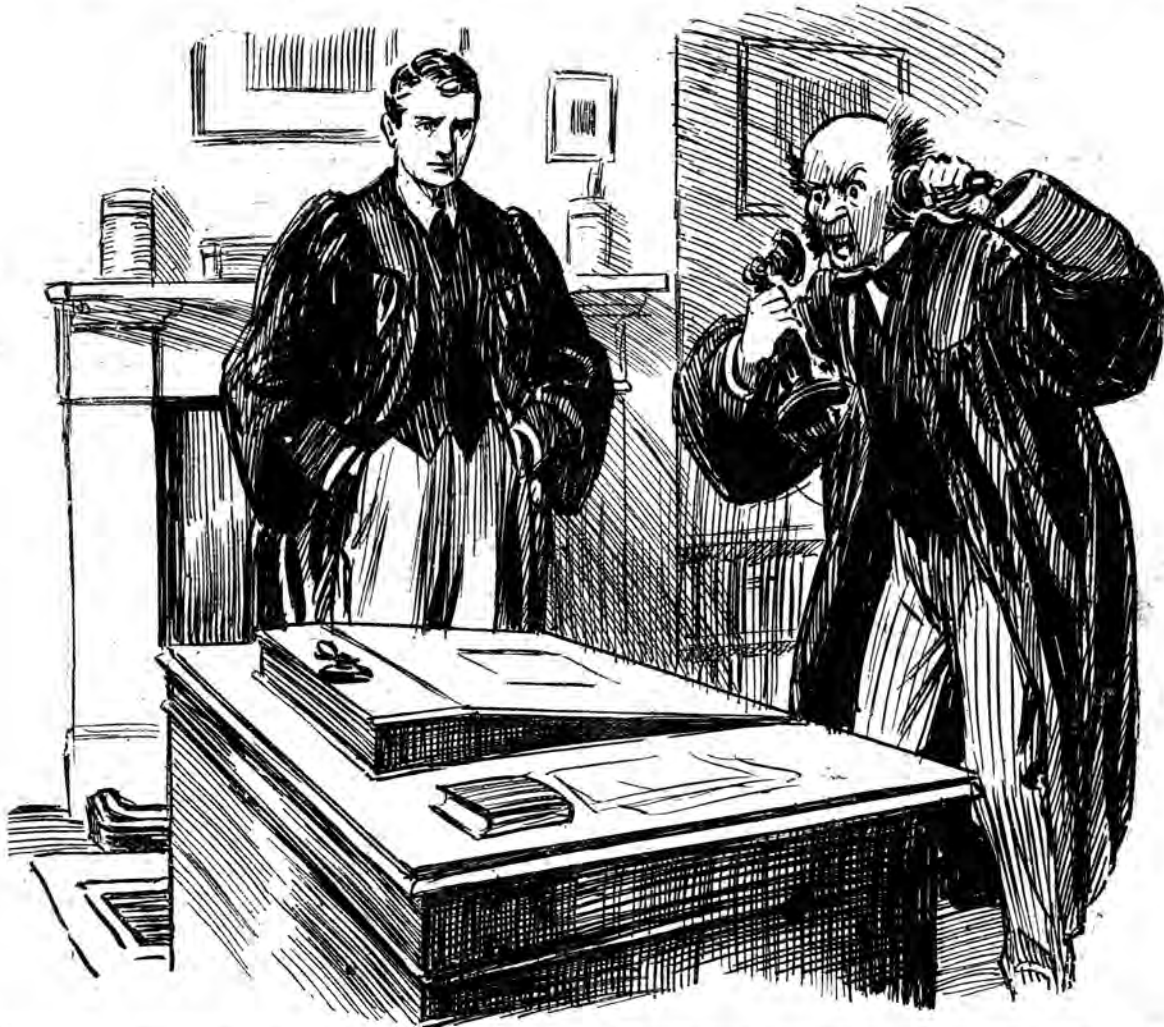
"I've been licked!"

Grundy made that statement as if it were an announcement of the greatest moment. The other Shell fellows did not seem to be impressed. Indeed, their looks intimated that they attached no importance whatever to the fact that Grundy had been licked.

"What about it?" asked Glyn.

"What about it?" repeated Grundy. "Lots about it! I don't blame old Railton—he's bound to cane a chap for calling Ratty old Ratty, and giving him lip. But I'm going to take it out of Ratty's hide, see?"

"Giving him a licking?" asked Monty Lowther, with gentle sarcasm.



Buzzzzzz! "Excuse me a moment, Mr. Ratcliff!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, grabbing the receiver. "Mr. Ratcliff speaking." "Old Ratty—what?" came a voice over the wires. "Sneaking old Ratty!" "Wha-a-at?" shrieked the Fifth Form master. "Ill-tempered old Ratty!" came the voice. "Old Ratty, the jolly old Tartar!" Mr. Ratcliff's face crimsoned over the telephone. "Who is speaking?" he shouted into the transmitter. (See page 9.)

"Don't be a cheeky ass, Lowther! Those New House chaps can't back up against their own Housemaster very well, right under Ratty's eye. All the same, he's got to get it. It's up to the School House—that's us, and specially up to me, as the only brainy fellow on this side—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm going for Ratty," continued Grundy. "Figgins stood up a splendid feed, and Ratty butted in and spoiled it. He's licked Figgins, and I've been licked. My opinion is that it's up to the School House to give Ratty the kybosh."

"Something in that," agreed Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather."

"Glad you see it," said Grundy. "You fellows had better not butt in, though—you haven't much sense, if you don't mind my mentioning it."

"Not at all," said Manners. "But, on the same grounds, you'd better not butt in, Grundy, not having any sense at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Grundy. "I'm going for Ratty; and I can tell you that Ratty is going to hop!"

Grundy stalked away with that declaration. Glyn and the Terrible Three discussed the matter a little longer, and Blake & Co. came along from Study No. 6 and joined in the consultation. No fellow believed that Grundy would have any success in a campaign against the Housemaster of the New House. But they all agreed with Grundy on one point; and that was, that it was up to the School House to avenge Figgins Co. Mr. Ratcliff was generally obnoxious; and it was an exceedingly difficult matter for fellows in his own House, under his own watchful eye, to "back up" against him. So Tom Merry & Co. cheerfully took on the task of showing Mr. Ratcliff what was what, and who was who.

That important matter settled, the School House fellows returned to prep. Later that evening they learned that Figgins had been caned for leaving his House during prep; a proof that Mr. Ratcliff was down on poor Figgy with a very heavy down.

"Awful beast!" said Monty Lowther. "It's up to us to make him sorry for himself; and if we give him something to think about he won't rag poor old Figgy so much."

"Yass, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

And Tom Merry & Co. put their heads together, and proceeded to plot plots, and scheme schemes, and plan plans, all having for their object the deep discomfiture of Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House.

CHAPTER 5. Grundy Begins!

"**A** LICKING!" said Grundy.

"Eh?"

"What?"

It was the following day, and Grundy was in his study with Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy's chums were in a somewhat uneasy, indeed apprehensive mood.

They had heard of Grundy's hostile intentions towards Mr. Ratcliff. They fully approved of Horace Ratcliff being made to "sit up." But they did not want to take a hand in the proceedings under the lead of George Alfred Grundy. Grundy was a good fellow, and they liked him; but they did not value him as a leader. In a matter where lines and lickings might be collected, they would have preferred to be left out of Grundy's campaign.

So they were apprehensive; for Grundy was sure to count upon being backed up by his study-mates; and so far from taking a refusal he would not even have listened to one.

"A licking!" repeated Grundy, with a nod. "That's what he wants! He's fond of handing out lickings to fellows! Let him have one himself! Eh?"

"Not Ratcliff?" faltered Wilkins.

"Of course!"

"Lick a Housemaster!" said Gunn faintly.

"Just that!"

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins and Gunn with simultaneous dismay.

"Mind, I know it's not easy," said Grundy. "Chap might be expelled for licking a Housemaster."

"No 'might' about it!" snapped Wilkins. "He jolly well would be expelled; and serve him right, too, if you come to that!"

"I'm going to be careful," said Grundy, unheeding. "You fellows will be helping me, too."

"Helping you lick a Housemaster!"

"Yes."

"Look here, Grundy—"

"My idea is to lay for him in the quad," said Grundy calmly, just as if his anxious study-mates had not spoken. "Catch him after dusk, when he can't recognise us, see? You fellows grab him and bend him over, and I give him jip with a cricket-stump."

Wilkins and Gunn blinked helplessly at the great Grundy. They were accustomed to harebrained ideas from George Alfred. But the idea of giving a Housemaster "jip" with a cricket-stump made them feel quite faint.

"We should be sacked!" gasped Gunn, at last.

"How could we be sacked without being found out, ass?"

"We should be found out."

"Not at all. Rely on me," said Grundy reassuringly.

That was exactly what Wilkins and Gunn couldn't do, in so serious a matter.

"You see," went on Grundy, who had evidently been giving the subject a great deal of thought, "I get on the telephone here—any old telephone—and ring up Ratty in the New House. I call him names—"

"C-c-call him names?"

"Yes; and let him know he's being ragged from the School House. What do you think will happen?"

"He will come rushing across, I suppose."

"Just so! And fall right into our hands," said Grundy, with satisfaction. "We shall be waiting for him on the path, in the dark, and as he comes along we grab him and down him—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And give him jip. How does that strike you?"

"Potty!" said Wilkins. "Catch me giving a Housemaster jip! I don't want to be bunked from the school."

"No jolly fear!" said Gunn emphatically.

Grundy eyed his chums morosely, and rose to his feet. Wilkins and Gunn expected trouble. Grundy had a four-point-seven punch, which he was never slow to introduce into an argument. Scrapping with Grundy was a painful operation; Wilkins and Gunn had borne many trials to avoid it, many a time and oft. But they were resolute now. They were not going to join in licking a Housemaster of St. Jim's, if they had to fight Grundy every day regularly for the rest of the term. Doubtless Mr. Ratcliff had asked for the punishment. But Wilkins and Gunn did not mean to ask for the "sack."

So as Grundy morosely rose, Wilkins and Gunn rose, too, and Wilkins carelessly picked up a cushion, and Gunn annexed a big Latin grammar in a casual sort of way. Grundy did not seem to notice those preparations for war. He turned to the door. For once, to the amazement of his chums, Grundy did not seek to enforce his point of view with his powerful knuckles.

"So-long, then," said Grundy.

"Where are you going, old chap?" asked Wilkins.

"Phone to Ratty, as I told you."

"But—but not—"

"I'm letting you back out," said Grundy. "I despise you, of course—can't help despising funks. Still, I admit there's danger, and I'm not going to drag you into it. Keep here safe while I tackle Ratty on my own."

"You couldn't tackle Ratty on your own, old man."

"I'm going to try."

"Grundy, old chap—"

"Don't jaw, Wilkins! I'm not asking you to help, am I?"

"But—but I say, old chap—"

stammered Wilkins.

"That's enough."

George Alfred Grundy stalked out of the study. Wilkins and Gunn gazed blankly at one another.

"Oh dear!" said Gunn.

Wilkins had a worried look. Had Grundy sought to enforce obedience, in his usual style, Wilkins and Gunn would have resisted manfully. They did not like scrapping with Grundy, but they would rather have scrapped with Grundy than risk expulsion. Grundy's unexpected moderation disarmed them. Leaving them out of his remarkable enterprise, he was going into the danger alone; it was clear that there was no stopping him. And the danger was much greater for one than for three. Three sturdy Shell fellows could easily handle Mr. Ratcliff, but one fellow certainly could not with much hope of success.

"I—I say, wharrer we going to do?" mumbled Wilkins. "That silly ass is asking for the sack—begging for it, in fact. We—we—we can't let him butt into it on his own."

"But we can't handle a Housemaster!" gasped Gunn.

"I know! But—"

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There was a brief silence, and Wilkins and Gunn gave each other worried looks. Then Wilkins said:

"We can't desert the fathead! We'll try to stop him, at least. If he won't stop it, we're bound to help him out."

"Oh dear!"

Not in cheery spirits, but feeling that they could not desert their hot-headed chum in such an extremity, Wilkins and Gunn quitted the study to look for Grundy. Levison of the Fourth was coming up the stairs, and he was able to inform them that Grundy had gone into Mr. Railton's study, the Housemaster being out just then.

Wilkins and Gunn proceeded to Mr. Railton's study. It was in darkness, but they heard a movement within. Wilkins pushed the door open.

"Grundy—" he breathed.

"Shut up, Wilkins," answered Grundy's voice from the gloom.

"I—I say, suppose Railton comes in—"

"All the more likely to, if you fellows waste time jawing. Shut up! I've just got through!"

And Wilkins and Gunn relapsed into dismal silence, while Grundy proceeded to talk on the telephone.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy Going Strong!

"NONSENSE!" said Mr. Railton.

Snort from Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House, was standing in Mr. Ratcliff's study in the New House. He did not care to sit down; indeed, he had called very unwillingly on his colleague. Mr. Ratcliff, as usual, had a complaint for him to hear.

"Excuse me!" Mr. Railton coloured slightly. "I should not have used that expression perhaps. But really, Mr. Ratcliff, I have heard so very many complaints, some of them quite groundless—"

"You may term them so, if you please, Mr. Railton!" said the New House master, with acerbity. "I repeat that several of the School House boys have treated me with impertinence since the occasion when I interrupted an orgy in this House."

"Really, Mr. Ratcliff—"

"Yes, really!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I—"

Buzzzzzz!

There was a sudden interruption. The telephone-bell buzzed in Mr. Ratcliff's study. He whisked out of his chair.

Mr. Railton made a movement to go. He regarded the interruption as a rather happy one.

"Pray remain, Mr. Railton!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I have not yet finished—unless, of course, you are so pressed for time that you cannot spare me a few minutes."

"Oh, not at all!" said the School House master, suppressing a sigh. And he remained.

Mr. Ratcliff grabbed off the receiver.

"Is that New House, St. Jim's?"

"Yes!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "What is wanted?"

"Is that Ratcliff speaking?"

"It is Mr. Ratcliff speaking."

"Old Ratty, what?"

"Eh?"

"Sneaking old Ratty!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Ill-tempered old Ratty!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Old Ratty, the jolly old Tartar!"

Mr. Ratcliff's face crimsoned over the telephone.

"Who is speaking?" he shouted into the transmitter.

"Little me!" chuckled the voice. "Speaking from the School House, you know! Just rung you up to tell you what I think of you, old bony boulder! Catch on?"

Mr. Ratcliff turned a baleful eye upon the School House master. Taking care to cover the transmitter with his hand, so that the speaker from the other House could not hear him, he said:

"Mr. Railton! You deny that the boys of your House treat me with impertinence. Take the receiver and listen to this."

"Really, sir—"

"I insist!"

"Oh, very well!" said Mr. Railton, again suppressing a sigh.

He took the receiver from his colleague, and placed it to his ear. Then he jumped. The voice over the wires was going on.

"Still there, Ratty? Are you listening, old tintrips? What sort of a rank outsider do you call yourself, old bird?"

"Goodness gracious!" murmured Mr. Railton.

Mr. Ratcliff gave him a bitter look as he stood at the telephone. On this occasion, at least, it could not be denied that the New House master had grounds for complaint. Such language to a Housemaster was almost enough to make the skies fall.

"We're all down on you in this House," went on the voice. "Do you know what we think of you, Ratty? We think you're the rankest outsider that ever asked to be kicked! Got that?"

There was something familiar in the voice to Mr. Railton's ears, though the speaker was plainly disguising it by adopting a deep bass.

"Go and eat coke, Ratty! Don't ever put your horrid old face into this House again! It's cruelty to animals to take your features about in the daylight. Good-bye, old bird! Now go and cuff some New House chap and work off your beastly temper!"

And the unknown interlocutor rang off.

Mr. Railton's face was a study as he hung up the receiver.

"Well, sir!" ground out Mr. Ratcliff.

"A—a most extraordinary and amazing piece of insolence!" said Mr. Railton, his face pink with anger. "I shall proceed at once to discover the offender, Mr. Ratcliff, and administer the most condign punishment. I have never been so shocked in my life. Probably it is my own telephone that is being used. Pray excuse me now—I must lose no time!"

Mr. Ratcliff smiled sourly as the School House master quitted his study. He had been able to prove his case, in this instance, at least. It was not, as usual, an imaginary offence that he had to complain of.

Meanwhile, over in the School House, Wilkins and Gunn had listened in utter horror to Grundy's eloquence on the telephone. Grundy hung up his receiver, and came out of the unlighted room.

"Grundy—" pleaded Wilkins.

"Don't waste time! He's bound to come rushing across after that!" said Grundy. "There's no time to lose!"

Wilkins and Gunn gave one another a hopeless look. Then they followed Grundy.

It was very dark in the quadrangle. But they followed Grundy's heavy footsteps down the gravel-path.

Grundy stopped at a point where the old oak—older than most of the buildings of St. Jim's—shadowed the path. Wilkins and Gunn joined him under the tree.

"Grundy—" beseeched Gunn.

"Shut up! Look!" whispered Grundy.

Across the dark quad the door of the New House was seen to open, and to close again immediately. For a moment light streamed into the quad, and then vanished as the door shut. In that moment there was a glimpse of a figure leaving the New House.

"He's coming!" whispered Grundy.

"For goodness' sake chuck it, old man!" breathed Wilkins.

"You've done enough already to get a Head's flogging!"

"I'm not asking you to back me up, am I?" sneered Grundy. "Clear off while you're safe!"

But that his comrades could not decide to do. They stood irresolute, while footsteps became audible on the path, and a dim shadow was seen approaching.

Whoever it was, he was striding rapidly towards the School House. As he came under the tree, Grundy leaped at him like a tiger. Grundy, at least, had no misgivings and no terrors, whatever his comrades were feeling like.

Indeed, he was feeling greatly satisfied and triumphant at that crucial moment. His scheme had succeeded perfectly—the taunts on the telephone had brought Mr. Ratcliff post-haste across the quad, and here he was—at Grundy's mercy! It only remained to give him "jip!"

Grundy's sudden tackle in the darkness sent his victim reeling back. Grundy had no doubt that Mr. Ratcliff would go down with a crash; he was a weedy gentleman, and Grundy was heavy and hefty. Had the victim been Mr. Ratcliff, probably Grundy's calculations would have proved quite correct.

Unfortunately, Grundy's grasp closed on Mr. Railton, and not on Mr. Ratcliff, who was still in his study in the New House. Certainly, Grundy could not have foreseen that Mr. Railton, who was so fortunately absent from his study when Grundy wanted to use his telephone, was gone to call on Mr. Ratcliff. He could not have guessed what had occurred in Mr. Ratcliff's study. Afterwards, thinking it out, Grundy could not see that he had been to blame for this disaster. But blameable or not, there was no doubt that Grundy was very unfortunate. For the man in his grasp, instead of crumpling up and falling, returned grip for grip with such effect that Grundy found himself a helpless prisoner in sinewy hands. And at the same time his startled voice was heard, and it was the voice of Grundy's own Housemaster!

"What—who—who is this?"

Wilkins and Gunn heard Mr. Railton's voice. Had the victim been Horace Ratcliff, no doubt they would have backed up their chum. But the discovery of Grundy's awful mistake was enough for them. Wilkins and Gunn stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once. They vanished in the darkness of the quad like spirits at cock-crow.

Grundy struggled dazedly.

"Who is this? What does this mean?" Mr. Railton's voice was deep and angry. "How dare you! Who are you?"

Grundy dizzily realised that this was not Ratty. Something had gone wrong, somehow, somewhere, with his wonderful scheme. He struggled to escape, only hoping to escape unrecognised.

But the hands that grasped him were not the weak and nervous hands of Mr. Ratcliff. He was in the strong grasp of Victor Railton, and there was no escape for him.

Mr. Railton, keeping a strong hold on his prisoner, forced Grundy along the path towards the lighted facade of the School House. As soon as they came within the radius of light from the windows the Housemaster recognised him.

"Grundy!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Grundy.

"Are you mad, Grundy? You—you have assaulted your own Housemaster! You have dared to attack me!" Mr. Railton almost stammered with amazement and anger.

"I—I didn't know it was you, sir!" stuttered Grundy.

"You don't think I'd have touched you, sir! Oh dear!"

"Indeed! Then what—"

"I—I thought—"

A light broke on Mr. Railton's mind. He remembered some familiar tones in the disguised voice on the telephone.

"Grundy! It was you telephoned to Mr. Ratcliff—"

"Oh dear!"

"You were lying in wait for him!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Oh crumbs!"

"I shall take you to the Head, Grundy!"

"Ow!"

And with Mr. Railton's hand on his shoulder, George Alfred Grundy was marched into the School House—and marched to the Head's study under the astonished eyes of Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 7.

Alas for Grundy!

WILKINS and Gunn, by devious paths, gained the back of the School House, and scuttled in surreptitiously by a back door. What had happened to Grundy they hardly dared to think; they were only thinking of themselves just then, and of the extreme importance of proving an alibi. They found a buzzing crowd of juniors in the passages when they got into the House. Blake of the Fourth shouted to them.

"Hallo, Wilkins! What's up with Grundy?"

"Somethin' wathah w'ong, what?" inquired Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Is—anything up?" faltered Wilkins.

"Mr. Railton's just taken him to the Head!" said Tom Merry. "What's he been up to? Were you fellows with him?"

"Poor old Grundy!" said Gunn, without answering the question of the captain of the Shell.

"Mr. Wailton looks awfully waxy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"He weally looked in a tewwific wax!"

"I've never seen him look so angry!" said Talbot of the Shell. "What on earth can be the matter?"

Wilkins and Gunn did not care to explain. They waited, with the curious crowd of juniors, for Grundy to reappear. Toby, the page, was summoned to the Head's study, while Mr. Railton and Grundy was still there. Toby left immediately, and hurried out of the House. He returned, accompanied by Taggles. It was the painful duty of Taggles to "hoist" any offender who was "up" for a Head's flogging; so the juniors knew at once what was toward.

"It's a giddy flogging!" said Manners. "Poor old Grundy! I wonder what he's done?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The dear man is always askin' for trouble," remarked Cardew of the Fourth. "On the present occasion he seems to be gettin' what he's asked for."

"He was playing some game in Mr. Railton's study a while back," said Levison. "I think he was at the telephone. But he wouldn't be flogged for using a master's phone."

"Depends on what he used it for!" murmured Wilkins.

The juniors gathered in a rather excited crowd at the corner of the Head's corridor. From Dr. Holmes' study there came a distinct sound of swishing.

Undoubtedly there was a flogging going on.

Floggings were very seldom administered at St. Jim's; only a very serious case called for such a punishment. Grundy's offence, whatever it was, must have been serious. Tom Merry & Co. wondered more and more.

The Head's door opened at last.

Taggles came away, and passed through the crowd of juniors. After him came Grundy of the Shell.

George Alfred Grundy was looking quite pale. The Head had not spared the rod; and even George Alfred, hefty as he was, had felt the infliction severely.

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"Grundy, old man——" said Tom Merry.

"Gwunday, deah boy——"

George Alfred did not heed. He limped away to the staircase, and went to his study. Wilkins and Gunn sympathetically joined him, and went with him. The study door closed on the three.

Curiosity among the School House juniors as to what had happened was at boiling-point now. But Tom Merry & Co. realised that Grundy ought to be given time to recover a little before he was questioned. Only Baggy Trimble, burning for information, ventured to open the door of Study No. 3 in the Shell. Baggy Trimble had just time to look in, and then Wilkins' heavy hand smote him, and he retreated with a yell. Visitors were evidently not wanted in Study No. 3 just then.

In Grundy's study, Wilkins and Gunn tried to comfort their afflicted chum.

For a long time, however, comfort did not come to George Alfred. He had been through it severely. Wilkins and Gunn turned to prep at last; but Grundy did no prep that evening. It was a long time before he could even sit down with comfort. And it was not till nearly bed-time that Grundy showed signs of recovery.

Then he came down to the junior Common-room with Wilkins and Gunn. He was surrounded at once by an inquiring crowd. A dozen voices inquired what all the trouble was about.

Grundy was not loth to explain. Tom Merry & Co. listened blankly as he told them.

Then—much to Grundy's surprise—there was a roar of laughter in the Common-room.

The juniors simply yelled. Grundy stared at them morosely and angrily, and they yelled the more.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Gwunday does weally take the cake! The fidgetful ass, you know!"

"Look here——" roared Grundy.

"You silly chump!" shouted Blake. "You're jolly lucky to get off without being sacked! Don't you know that a chap mustn't go for a Housemaster?"

"Ratty's a cad——"

"Oh, we all know that, but there's a limit," said Tom Merry. "It beats me why the Head hasn't sacked you. You've got off cheap with a flogging!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"So that's all the thanks I get for standing up for this House against Ratty!" roared Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All you get, and all you deserve, you frabjous ass!" said Monty Lowther. "If you hadn't bungled, and collared Railton by mistake, you'd have been sacked for a cert. Ratty would have insisted on it."

"Yaas, wathah! It is vewy lucky for Gwunday that he is such a sillay ass, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy of the Shell stalked out of the Common-room in great wrath. Apparently he had expected the School House fellows to greet him as a hero and a champion. Instead of which they howled with laughter over his exploit, and a roar of merriment followed him as he stalked wrathfully away. And Grundy, in his indignation, determined that he would leave the School House fellows without his valuable assistance in their campaign against Mr. Ratcliff. He told Tom Merry & Co., in the dormitory that night, that he was "done" with the whole thing, and they could get on the best they could without his brains behind them. And he seemed still more cross when Monty Lowther immediately proposed a vote of thanks.

CHAPTER 8.

Glyn's Gadget!

BERNARD GLYN of the Shell left the Form-room on Saturday morning the richer by two hundred lines.

Mr. Linton had handed out that impot, on the ground that Glyn was inattentive in class.

There was no doubt that Mr. Linton was right, and that the imposition was justified. Glyn had been thinking, in class, certainly not about his lessons. Some of his friends had noticed it, and smiled. When Glyn of the Shell went off into a day-dream, forgetting time and space, it was evidence that he was on the inventive tack once more, and that one of his weird scientific stunts was working in his active brain. As that afternoon was a half-holiday, Glyn had a good opportunity of getting his lines done; but he was thinking about anything but lines. When his study-mates—Kangaroo and Dane—asked him to join them in a cycle spin, he waved an impatient hand and told them to clear. They grinned and cleared, leaving Glyn to his own devices, whatever they were.

A little later Tom Merry, coming along to Study No. 10 in the Shell, heard a deep chuckle from Study No. 11, which was Glyn's quarters. The captain of the Shell paused and looked in.

"Finding it awfully jolly doing lines!" he asked.



George Alfred Grundy struggled to escape from his captor. He realised that the strong hands that grasped him were not the weak and nervous hands of Mr. Ratcliffe. He was in the strong grasp of his own Housemaster! Mr. Ratton, keeping a strong hold on his prisoner, forced the junior along the path. As soon as they came within the radius of light from the window Mr. Ratton recognised him. "Grundy!" he cried angrily. (See page 10.)

Bernard Glyn looked round.
 "Lines! What lines?"
 "Linton gave you lines this morning," said Tom. "You ought to have finished them by now."
 "What rot! I've no time to worry over lines. I was thinking out a little stunt this morning."
 "I thought so," chuckled Tom.
 "Up against Ratty, you know."
 "Oh! How's that?" asked Tom Merry with interest. "We haven't made Ratty sit up yet—it's still got to be done."
 "Leave it to me," said Glyn. "I fancy I can handle a job like that—better than poor old Grundy, anyhow. Look at that!"

Buzzzzz!
 A tiny electric bell buzzed, like the sound of a telephone bell at a distance. Tom Merry looked at it. There were endless electrical gadgets in Study No. 11, wet batteries and dry batteries, bells that tinkled and buzzed, clocks that went—or did not go—by electricity, chairs that gave electric shocks to unsuspecting visitors. Glyn was great on this subject, and fortunately, being the son of a wealthy and indulgent father, he had plenty of money to spend on his hobbies. The electric bell he was now displaying to Tom Merry was a tiny one, and it seemed to be worked by an exceedingly tiny dry battery, very flat in shape, apparently manufactured by Glyn's own hands. Tom Merry looked at the article, wondering what it had to do with making Mr. Ratcliff "sit up."

"I've made it specially—the whole gadget," said Glyn. "It's special for Mr. Ratcliff. It's bound to amuse him, I think. If it doesn't, it's sure to amuse somebody else."
 "How's that?" asked Tom.
 Glyn chuckled.

"Ratty is taking Figgins & Co. out for a walk this afternoon," he said. "You know the style—all the poor chaps in their best hats walking two and two with their jolly old Housemaster. All the New House Fourth and Third have to go. They hate these House walks. I dare say that's why Ratty takes them. It busts up their half-holiday, too. That's a joy to Ratty—he's such a nice man. Well, I dare say you've noticed Ratty's hat when he takes his flock for a walk—he sports his silk-topper, of course."

"Blessed if I see!" said Tom, quite perplexed.
 "Of course you don't," agreed Glyn. "How could you see

a scientific stunt, old chap, unless I explained it to you in words of one syllable? Look at that bell, and the battery, and look at this press button. They're connected up, and as soon as this flat button is pressed the bell rings. See?"

Buzzzzz.
 "I see!" said Tom. "Blessed if I see, though, anything new in that, except that they're on a very small scale."
 "The thing isn't new, but the use it's going to be put to is quite new," explained Glyn. "I've got it from Kerr that the New House walk begins at three-thirty. If you want to see Ratty hop, turn up at three-thirty and see the New House bounders start."

"But what—"
 "Run away and play, old bean. I'm busy."
 Tom Merry laughed and quitted the study. It was a fine spring afternoon, and Tom Merry & Co. had intended to take their bikes out for a run. After some consideration, however, they decided to "hang on" till the New House walk started, in order to watch what might happen. The Terrible Three, and Study No. 6, and Wildrake, and several other fellows, determined to be on hand. If Mr. Ratcliff was to be made to hop, they were quite keen to see the hopping.

Bernard Glyn, with his electrical gadgets in his pocket, strolled out of the School House and across the quad. Figgins & Co. were lounging in the New House, and they nodded to Glyn rather glumly. "House" rows were off at present. Figgins & Co. were looking forward—not with pleasure—to the infliction of an afternoon walk under the sour eye of their Housemaster.

"Where's Ratty?" asked Glyn.
 "In the prefects' room jawing with the prefects," grunted Fatty Wynn. "Ragging them, I expect. He's always ragging somebody."

"Where does he keep his Sunday topper?" asked Glyn.
 "Eh! What?"
 "In his room, I suppose?"
 "Yes; in a hat-box there," said Figgins. "What the thump do you want with his Sunday topper?"

"My dear man, the less you know about it the better, as you're in his House," answered Glyn, and he went up the staircase, leaving Figgins & Co. mystified.

Glyn knew his way about the New House. As Mr.

Ratcliff was in the prefects' room, it was safe to enter his bed-room. Glyn entered it coolly, and closed the door after him. In a few moments more Mr. Ratcliff's Sunday topper was in his hands. That was the headgear Mr. Ratcliff wore when he took his juniors on a school walk. Glyn extracted it from the hat-box, and extracted his electrical gadget from his pocket.

His next proceedings were peculiar.

He carefully slit the silk lining in the crown of the hat with a penknife, and into the opening pushed the tiny bell attached to the tiny dry battery.

A short length of wire ran down behind the white silk lining of the hat.

It was connected with the flat press-button which Glyn disposed behind the leather lining inside the brim of the hat, where Mr. Ratcliff's bony head was wont to press.

Having arranged the lining to conceal his handiwork, Glyn grinned the grin of satisfaction.

Unless on a close examination, there was nothing to be seen of Glyn's improvements in the hat.

Glyn lightly pressed the spot where the leather lining concealed the press-button.

There was no result.

He pressed a little harder—and from the hidden bell in the crown of the hat came a buzz.

The inventive genius of St. Jim's chuckled.

If Mr. Ratcliff put the hat lightly on his head, there would be no sound. If he jammed it on, the electric bell would buzz all the time his head pressed the inside lining. Mr. Ratcliff, who did everything sharply and viciously, was certain to jam on his hat, especially as there was a keen spring wind.

Glyn carefully replaced the hat in the box, and left the Housemaster's room. He scudded down the staircase, and almost ran into Mr. Ratcliff coming away from the prefects' room.

The New House master raised a bony and commanding hand.

"Glyn!"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!"

"You were one of the party of School House boys who joined in an orgy in this House the other day—"

"Oh, sir!"

"You will leave this House immediately, Glyn! I am quite certain that you are here for no good object."

"Really, sir—"

"Go!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Bernard Glyn went.

CHAPTER 9.

The Haunted Hat!

FIGGINS & CO. were ready for their walk.

They did not look happy.

Outside the New House the juniors of that House were gathered, in marching array, waiting for Mr. Ratcliff.

Rather to their surprise, a number of School House juniors had gathered to see them off. What interest Tom Merry & Co. could possibly have in their afternoon walk was a mystery to the New House fellows. But there Tom Merry & Co. were waiting and watching.

According to Bernard Glyn, something of an unexpected nature was to happen when the New House army started. Tom Merry & Co. were very curious by this time.

"There's Watty!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The lean figure of Mr. Ratcliff appeared in the doorway of the New House. He was dressed for the walk, and carried his shining silk hat in his hand.

He put it on, and came down the steps. A gust of wind came across the quad, and Mr. Ratcliff put up his hand to his hat again, and jammed it on a little tighter.

Buzzzzzzzzzzzz!

"Really, upon my word!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "The telephone—"

All the juniors heard the buzz of the bell, but they did not suspect that it came from the crown of Mr. Ratcliff's tall hat. Even Mr. Ratcliff did not suspect it. The window of his study was close at hand, and it was open. Mr. Ratcliff supposed that the telephone-bell had just rung and he went back into the house.

Naturally, he took off his hat indoors. The bell in his headgear was silent as soon as the pressure of his head was removed from the lining inside the brim.

Mr. Ratcliff hurried crossly into his study. He grabbed at the receiver on the telephone. A gentle, feminine voice came through from the exchange.

"Number, please!"

"I have been rung up!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Indeed! Sorry you've been troubled."

Mr. Ratcliff snorted, and jammed the receiver back on the hooks.

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Apparently it was only a mistake at the telephone exchange.

He left the study, and put on his hat in the hall.

"Buzzzzzz!"

"Well, upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff, in great irritation.

He almost bounced back into the study, with his hat still on. He tore the receiver off the instrument.

"Number, please!"

"My bell has rung again!" snorted Mr. Ratcliff. "This is the second time I have been rung up. Am I wanted, or am I not wanted?"

"You have not been rung up, sir."

"Madam! The bell is ringing now!"

"The bell cannot be ringing."

"What? What?"

"You have certainly not been rung up from the exchange," said the feminine voice coldly.

"I tell you that the bell is still ringing, madam!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff.

There was no reply; but he heard the feminine voice at the exchange remark, apparently to the owner of another feminine voice:

"It is that cross old gentleman at the school. He fancies he has been rung up."

Mr. Ratcliff fumed furiously. The bell was still buzzing quite close at hand, and Mr. Ratcliff did not even think of guessing that it was buzzing in the crown of his hat. He jammed the receiver back, and the bell still buzzed. He strode from the study, and the buzz of the electric bell accompanied him.

He hurried out into the quadrangle, determined to take no further notice of the telephone. The exchange could go on ringing as long as they liked.

"Here he comes again!" murmured Tom Merry.

Mr. Ratcliff came down the steps of the New House.

All the juniors on the spot distinctly heard the buzz of the bell, but they naturally supposed that the sound was floating out of the open study window. Mr. Ratcliff's supposition was the same. But as he joined the array of New House juniors waiting to walk, there was astonishment in all faces. For almost all the fellows detected the fact that the buzzing bell accompanied Mr. Ratcliff, and moved with him as he moved.

"Bai Jove!" whispered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the New House master in amazement. "Is Watty pottay, you fellows? He's got a bell wingin' about him."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's the stunt."

"Glyn's stunt!" murmured Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's astonished face broke into a wreath of smiles.

"Oh cwmbs! Watty's got an electwic bell in his hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff stared round at the sound of laughter. He did not see anything to laugh at.

"Follow me!" he snapped to his own boys.

And he stalked away towards the gates.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

Figgins & Co., and the rest of the New House crowd, marched after Mr. Ratcliff. They tried to keep serious, but they could not. For a Housemaster to take his boys for a walk, with an electric bell ringing in his hat, was too funny for them. They grinned and they chuckled, and finally they laughed loudly.

Mr. Ratcliff spun round, his face red with wrath. The buzz of the bell puzzled and amazed him, for he was now out of hearing of the telephone in the New House.

"Figgins!" he rapped out.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Figgins.

"Is that bell in your possession?"

"Wha-a-a-t, sir?" stuttered Figgins.

"Someone is ringing a bell—apparently a small electric bell! Who is it?" shouted Mr. Ratcliff angrily.

"N-n-not I, sir!" gasped Figgins.

"The boy who has that bell in his possession will hand it over to me immediately!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

Nobody handed it over. All the New House fellows knew, by this time, that the bell was in Mr. Ratcliff's top-hat, though the fact had not yet dawned upon Mr. Ratcliff.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"We—we haven't got it, sir!" gasped Redfern.

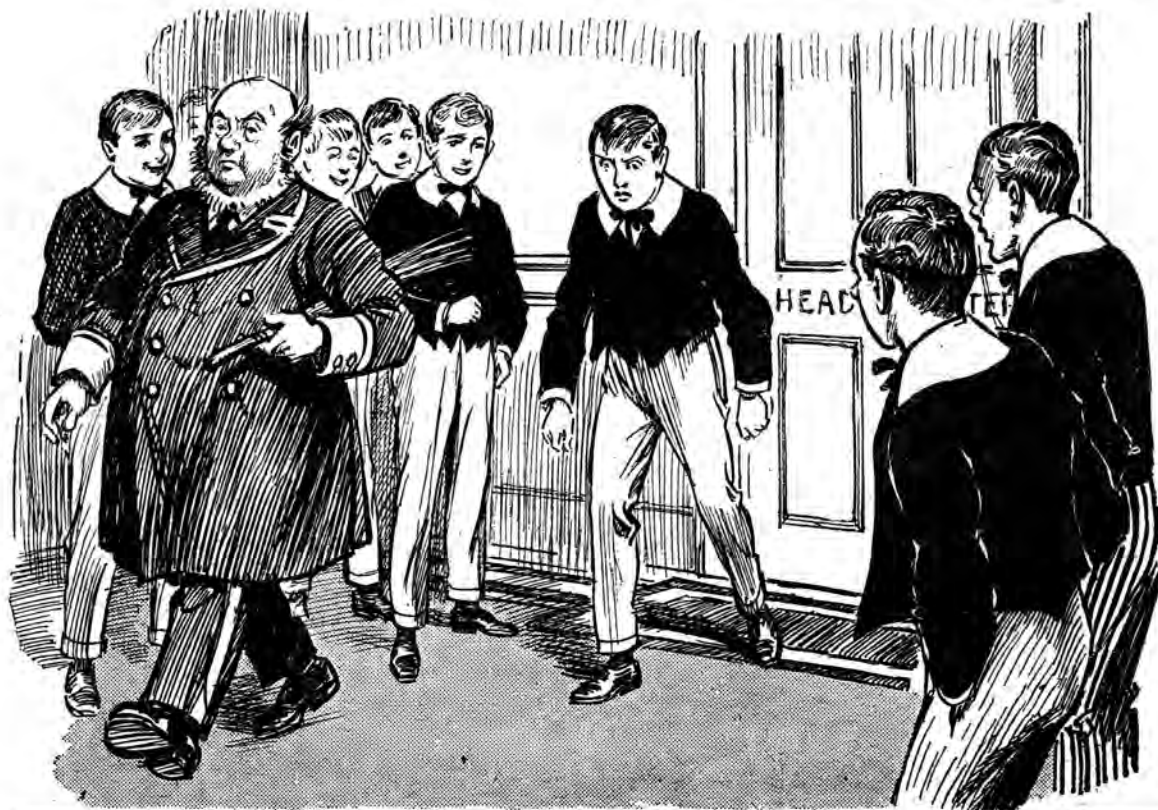
"Oh, no, sir! Nothing of the kind!" stammered Pratt.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co. Perhaps it was not quite respectful, but they could not help it.

Mr. Ratcliff glared past his marching column, at the crowd of School House fellows.

"This is some trick!" he exclaimed.

Buzzzzzz! Sharp and incessant, the electric bell buzzed in the crown of Mr. Ratcliff's hat. It seemed to Mr. Ratcliff



The Head's door opened at last and Taggles came away and passed through the crowd of juniors. After him came Grundy of the Shell. George Alfred Grundy was looking quite pale. The Head had not spared the rod, and even George Alfred, hefty as he was, had felt the infliction severely. "Grundy, old man—" said Tom Merry. George Alfred did not heed, but limped away to the staircase. (See page 10.)

that the sound came from behind him, and he spun round to see whether any practical joker was in his rear. But there was no one, and he spun round again. Still the bell buzzed on.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you laugh?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "This is a miserable trick of some sort. I will know the author of it! One of you boys has a bell; at least—"

Mr. Ratcliff broke off, utterly puzzled. He could see that the juniors had no bell in their hands, at least, and he could not detect that the buzz proceeded from anyone in particular. He was growing very excited as well as angry. But for the utter impossibility of the thing—or its seeming impossibility—he might have suspected that the bell was attached somehow to his own person.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Old Watty is growin' wild—quite wild! I am afraid he will begin to smell a wat soon."

"Oh dear!" Blake wiped away his tears. "Great Scott! Here comes the Head!"

Dr. Holmes came out of the Head's house, and glanced towards the halted array of New House juniors, and their excited Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff, red and raging, did not make a dignified figure at the moment, and the Head frowned.

With majestic steps he advanced towards the spot. Mr. Ratcliff perceived him, as the juniors respectfully capped the old gentleman, and lifted his own hat in salute. The buzzing of the bell ceased instantly.

"What is the matter, Mr. Ratcliff?" asked the Head, with a touch of asperity.

"A wretched trick of some kind, sir," articulated Mr. Ratcliff. "Someone—some disrespectful young rascal—is ringing an electric bell—"

"I do not hear it," said the Head.

"It has ceased at this very moment—" Mr. Ratcliff replaced his hat on his head as he spoke.

Buzzzzzzzzzz!

CHAPTER 10. Rough on Ratty!

DR. HOLMES looked fixedly at Mr. Ratcliff. He had never been so astounded in his life. Standing quite near Mr. Ratcliff, facing him, he could not help detecting the fact that the electric bell was ringing in the Housemaster's own hat.

"Mr. Ratcliff!" he ejaculated.

"You hear it now, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "I cannot make out whence the sound proceeds. It seems quite close at hand; indeed, it is buzzing in my very ears—"

"Sir!" said the Head freezingly. "I am surprised! I am—am amazed! I—I—Really, Mr. Ratcliff, this is—is—is—" Words failed the headmaster of St. Jim's. Many a strange experience had come his way during his long career as a schoolmaster, but he had never encountered before a Housemaster with a musical hat.

"Dr. Holmes, what—"

"Boys, disperse at once!" exclaimed the Head. "Go back to your Houses at once!"

The juniors backed away, trying to suppress their laughter. School House and New House faded from the spot. After them floated the sound of the buzzing bell.

"I have sent the boys away, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head, in the same freezing tone. "If you are ill—"

"Ill, sir!"

"To be quite plain, if you have been drinking—"

"D-d-d-drinking!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir!" said the Head grimly. "Unless you are in a state of intoxication, Mr. Ratcliff, I cannot account for this."

"In-in-intoxication!" breathed the hapless Housemaster.

"The boys must not see you in such a state. Take my arm, and I will assist you to your House."

"Dr. Holmes, I—"

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

"Take my arm, Mr. Ratcliff! I will assist you!" said the Head sternly. "Afterwards, when you have recovered yourself a little, we will talk further."

"I—I—I—" spluttered Mr. Ratcliff, utterly bewildered. "Do you—do you suppose that I have been—been consuming intoxicating liquors, Dr. Holmes? I am a tee-tee-teetotaller—I—I assure you—I—I—I—"

"If you are sober, Mr. Ratcliff, for what reason are you making yourself an object of ridicule to the whole school?"

"I, sir!"

"You, sir!" rapped out the Head. "This foolish trick, unworthy of a small boy in the Third Form—"

"Wha-a-a-t—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 16.)



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THE English Cup Final is quite one of the most popular sporting events of the year. We all know what happened at Wembley Park a year ago, when the barriers were rushed, and when the playing-pitch was swarming with people. It must have been an amazing spectacle, though, personally, I was not there to see it.

Even the capacity and size of the new ground could not accommodate all the thousands who wanted to see the Final. Lots of people had to go empty away, so to speak, and it only goes to show what a tremendous grip professional football has on the British public. You couldn't imagine thousands of people rolling up to see a chess tournament, or a game of bowls!

The original English Cup was stolen from the window of a jeweller's shop, and has never been recovered. The first team to win the coveted trophy was the Wanderers, who won it five times altogether.

The famous Birmingham club, Aston Villa, has won the English Cup five times. The last occasion was in 1920, when they defeated Huddersfield Town, at Stamford Bridge, by one goal to nil, after extra time was played.

On four occasions the Cup Final attendance has exceeded 100,000. In 1901, the Final between the Spurs and Sheffield United attracted 110,820 people. In 1905, the duel between Aston Villa and Newcastle United produced a crowd of 101,117. In 1913, Aston Villa again proved a tremendous attraction. They fought out the Final with Sunderland, in the presence of 121,919 people. And last year, at Wembley Park, when Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United had their nerve-racking ordeal, the official attendance was given as 126,047, though crowds more got in without paying.

These facts and figures speak for themselves. Goodness knows what the Cup Final crowds of the future will be like! It is certain that a bigger ground even than Wembley Park will have to be constructed. And perhaps in time, we shall read something like this:

"The Cup Final between Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur was played on the new ground before half a million spectators." How ripping to be a director of the winning club, and have a share of the takings!

I won't weary you with any more Cup Final details, but will leave you to read of the humorous side of Cup Finals. Our contributors are in a merry mood this week. They evidently regard Cup Finals as funny.

Tom Merry

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THE CUP FINAL!

By Monty Lowther.

I'LL start with, "Once upon a time, (The simplest way to start a rhyme).

I took my charming cousin Elsie To see a Final, played at Chelsea.

Which were the teams? Well, I've forgotten.

My memory is simply rotten! I fancy one was Bradford City— But let me hasten with my ditty.

We got two seats inside the stand: The view we had was simply grand. And when the teams came sprinting out I gave a most terrific shout!

My charming cousin plucked my sleeve. "You're going mad, I do believe! Pray simmer down, dear Montague; Excitement isn't good for you."

The whistle blew; the ball was kicked; The players trapped and passed and tricked.

And one went sprawling on his chest; Thick mud was clinging to his vest!

"Oh dear!" gasped Elsie. "I can see That football's not a game for me! All rough and brutal sports I hate. Just look at that man's muddy state!"

"It's quite all right, my dear," I said. "See that man standing on his head? He quite enjoys such funny tactics— Seems to be fond of acrobatics!"

But Elsie turned away her eyes. "Such 'stunts' I heartily despise! So this is football, Monty dear? I wish you hadn't brought me here!"

The game went on, and goals were scored; Spectators shouted, raved, and roared. "Toppers" went sailing through the air, And sticks were waving everywhere!

Elsie implored me not to leave her. Said she: "They've got the football fever!

I do believe you've got it, too! Oh, take me home, dear Monty, do!"

MY CUP FINAL EXPERIENCES!

Described by Various Celebrities at St. Jim's.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

I WENT to see the Cup Final at Chelsea, the year before last, but I cannot truly say that I enjoyed the experience. Cup Final crowds have no regard whatever for a fellow's twousahs. In that respect, they resemble Hewwies' beastly bulldog. I looked a great deal smartah befoah I went into the ground than I looked when I came out. Although I'm not a snob, deah boys, I don't like havin' to wub shouldahs with ewevy Tom, Dick, an' Hawwy who comes along, and I considah that a special grandstand ought to be constucted to accommodate membahs of the British Awistocwacy. Yaaa, wathah!

MONTY LOWTHER:

I've only seen one Cup Final in my life. That is to say, I've only had a glimpse of the ball on one occasion. I've often tried to see a Cup Final, and that's about as far as I've got. I can't say that I enjoy getting mixed up with a Cup Final crowd, any more than the noble Gussy does. It gives a fellow "that crushin' feeling!"

MR. RATCLIFF:

I have never seen a Cup Final, I have never wanted to see a Cup Final, and I never intend to see a Cup Final! I regard professional football with lofty scorn and withering contempt. It is a ruffianly game, and will get no support from me!

(Your two-shilling entrance-fee will be sorely missed, sir. I expect the Football Association will send you a frantic telegram, begging you to reconsider your decision, and to attend this year's Final!—Ed.)

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY:

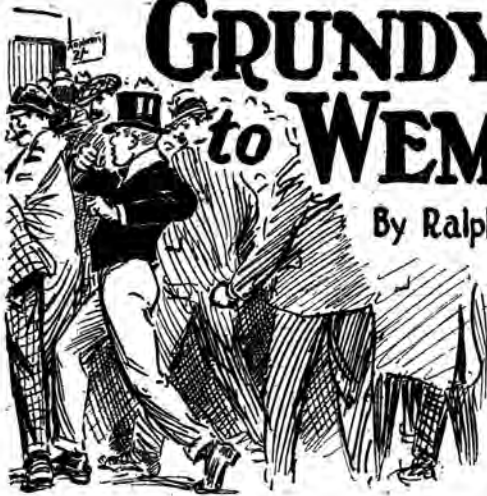
Don't—please don't ask me to write about my Cup Final experiences! You will find them on the next page. Last year I took my selfybrated Brass Band to Wembley Park for the Cup Final, and we came to grief. And this year—well, the least said about it the better! I shan't go to any more Cup Finals, unless I can watch them from a stationary airoplain!

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

I have made several attempts to see the Cup Final, but I can never mannaage to skweeze my fat frame through the ternstiles! Besides, they always want to charge me dubble price for admission, bekwase they declare I take up enuff room for two. However, I hope to see the Final in comfort next year, bekwase my uncle, who happens to be a professional trouser-presser, says he will try and get me a "Press" ticket!

GRUNDY GOES to WEMBLEY!

By Ralph Reckness Cardew.



"THE great day has dawned!" George Alfred Grundy made this dramatic exclamation as he jumped out of bed. Grundy's schoolfellows in the Shell dormitory stared at him.

"What great day, fathead?" asked Tom Merry.

"The day of the Cup Final, of course! And I'm going up to see it!"

"Ass!" growled Manners. "You've left it far too late. Even if the Head gives you permission to go—which I doubt—you won't get so much as a glimpse of the game. Why, the crowd started to queue up about three days ago!"

That was, perhaps, rather an exaggeration. But there was no doubt that the Cup Final would attract a tremendous crowd, and that George Alfred Grundy had left things very late. He had not even bought a ticket.

"Take my advice, Grundy," said Monty Lowther, "and don't go within a hundred miles of Wembley Park. The place will be swarming like a beehive. From north, south, east, and west people will be pouring in, and you'll get caught in the crush. You'll never come back to tell the tale!"

But George Alfred Grundy was not to be deterred by the prospect of a colossal crowd. He had made up his mind to see the Cup Final, and when Grundy made up his mind he was very firm—obstinate, his schoolfellows called it.

Grundy asked his faithful henchmen, Wilkins and Gunn, to accompany him to Wembley. But they politely declined. They had no desire to get mixed up with a Cup Final crowd. It would be almost as bad as being run over by a steam-roller, or being hit by an earthquake.

But Grundy cared nothing for crowds. He would simply roar, "Make way, there!" in his stentorian tones, and force his way into the ground. So he thought, anyway.

The Head happened to be in a good humour when Grundy approached him.

"May I go up and see the Cup Final, sir?" asked Grundy.

"Certainly, my boy, provided you are back at the school at a reasonable hour. Have you obtained a ticket?"

"No, sir."

"Then I fear you will find it difficult to obtain admittance."

"Oh, I shall be all right, sir!" said Grundy confidently.

And the burly Shell fellow hurried away, to change into his Sunday best.

Grundy caught a train at eleven

o'clock, at Rylcombe Station. The train was packed from end to end with football enthusiasts. Even in that corner of sleepy Sussex the Cup Final had aroused tremendous enthusiasm.

Grundy had bought a first-class ticket, but he found the first-class carriages crammed with third-class passengers. He could only glare at them.

They were not likely to make room for a mere schoolboy, and Grundy had to stand in the corridor. He had a very uncomfortable journey, and he heaved a sigh of relief when the train reached the London terminus.

On emerging into the streets, Grundy found that the entire population of England seemed bent on going to Wembley Park. Lorries and cars and motor-buses, laden with passengers, went whirling westward.

"Some hopes of getting there!" grunted Grundy. "But I'll manage it somehow, if I have to walk!"

He waited for a bus. Hundreds of others were amusing themselves in the same way. He gave it up, and tried to get a taxi. Hundreds of others were trying to get taxis. He tried to approach one of the Underground railway-stations. The booking-hall was packed to suffocation, and Grundy was obliged to beat a retreat.

Suddenly he caught sight of a lorry, laden with people. It was being held up by the policeman on point duty. Grundy saw that there was just room for him at the back, and he took a flying leap, and clambered on to the tail-board. The other passengers good-naturedly permitted Grundy to join them.

"Is this going to Wembley Park?" panted Grundy.

"Yod bet!" was the reply.

Owing to the press of traffic, it was well over an hour before the lorry reached its destination.

Grundy gave a gasp of dismay when he saw the dimensions of the crowd that surged round the main entrance to the football-ground. It was "a multitude which no man could number." From all parts of the country they had come, with the intention of witnessing the Cup Final, though many would not see a ball kicked.

Grundy gaped in open-mouthed wonder at the multitude which was trying to force an entrance to the ground. And then, having recovered from his amazement, he did a very rash thing. He tried to fight his way by sheer force to the turnstiles.

Now, a junior at a public school, however burly he may be, cannot hope to fight his way through a solid mass of people and come out unscathed.

Grundy charged into the crowd, shoving people to left and right with his elbows. He certainly managed to progress a few yards by these drastic methods. And then he found a solid wall of people in front of him—a mass that no amount of pushing and shoving

would shift. Grundy tried to shift them, but he was hurled back without ceremony.

Then a startling thing happened. An old gentleman in the crowd suddenly gave a shout.

"My gold watch has been stolen! Stop thief!"

Now Grundy happened to be standing quite close to the old gent. He had, in fact, bumped into him when the crowd had hurled him back. And the old gentleman imagined that it was at that precise moment when his watch had been stolen. (As a matter of fact, it had been snatched by a pickpocket half an hour earlier.)

"That's the thief!" exclaimed the old gent, nodding violently towards Grundy.

Instantly the crowd made a menacing movement towards Grundy. Panic seized him. He realised that it would be no use to try to explain his innocence. There was only one thing to do, and that was to bolt with all speed.

Violent hands laid hold of George Alfred Grundy, but he wrenched himself free with a mighty effort, and fought his way towards the outskirts of the crowd. It took him quite a long time to get out of the danger-zone; and when he did manage to get free of the mob he was a very complete wreck. His collar had broken loose, his necktie was streaming over his shoulder, his Eton jacket was rumpled and torn, and his "topper" had been flattened down over his head.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy. "I feel as if I've been through a mangle! No more Cup-Final crowds for me! I'm going back to St. Jim's!"

And he limped painfully away in the direction of the nearest railway-station.

Tattered and torn and dusty and dis-



Grundy returns from the Cup Final

hevelled, George Alfred Grundy staggered in at the gates of St. Jim's.

"Hallo! You're back early!" said Monty Lowther. "Who won?"

"Don't know—and don't care!" snapped Grundy.

"What! Haven't you seen the Cup Final?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I've seen the Cup Final crowd, and that's all I want to see!" growled Grundy. "I've been pushed and shoved and trodden on, and turned inside-out and upside-down, and flattened to a pancake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

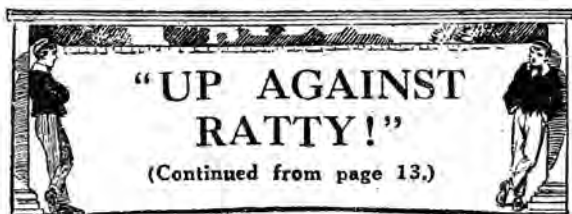
With that merry peal of laughter ringing in his ears, George Alfred Grundy staggered into the school building.

Will Grundy visit the Cup Final of 1925?

Echo answers: "No jolly fear!"

THE END

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"You can hear the boys laughing," said the Head, with grim sternness. "I am not surprised at it! This—this clowning—"

"Clowning!"

"Yes, sir, clowning. I can call it nothing else. Take off your hat at once!"

"Mum-mum-my hat?"

"Yes, sir, and at once. I command you, as headmaster of this school, to remove your hat instantly."

Mr. Ratcliff, utterly dazed and confounded, removed his hat. The haunting sound of the electric bell ceased.

"As I thought!" said the Head, with bitter contempt. "You have arranged the bell to ring when you wear your hat. A childish freak of which a small boy would scarcely be guilty. If you are not intoxicated, Mr. Ratcliff, what is the meaning of this?"

"Sir, I—I—I—"

Mr. Ratcliff stared into his hat. He held it up for the Head to look into. Certainly the buzzing of the bell had seemed very near his ears; he had even wondered whether it might be some wireless trick. But it had never dawned on him that the bell was in his top-hat. And even now it was not to be seen.

From a distance the crowd of juniors watched the two masters eagerly. They howled with laughter; they could not help it. Even the frowning brow of their headmaster could not subdue their merriment.

"Weally, you fellows, this does take the cake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It weally pwances off with the whole jollay old biscuit, you know."

"It do—it does!" gurgled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dr. Holmes was looking into Mr. Ratcliff's high hat. He seemed puzzled for some moment. Finally he groped in the hat, and found the slit in the white silk lining of the crown, and groped in it, and then—like a conjurer—produced a tiny electric bell and dry battery from the interior of the hat.

Mr. Ratcliff gazed at them dumbfounded.

He could scarcely have been more surprised had Dr. Holmes, like a real conjurer, gone on to produce white rabbits and yards of ribbon from the hat.

"A—a—a bell!" said Mr. Ratcliff dazedly. "A—a—a bell! The—the—the—the bell was in my—my—my hat! Bless my soul! In—in—in my own hat!"

The Head jerked out the wire. The tiny flat push came out from under the lining of the brim. All was now revealed.

"A childish trick!" said the Head icily. "I will not discuss the matter here, Mr. Ratcliff! You have already made yourself utterly ridiculous in the eyes of the school. Take your hat—take this foolish contrivance! I will see you in my study in half an hour."

"Dr. Holmes, I—I—I—"

"Enough, sir!" rapped the Head.

He rustled away towards the School House, his face set and stern. Mr. Ratcliff stood with the hat in one hand, and Glyn's gadget in the other, dumbfounded.

It dawned upon him how he had been tricked, though by what means the gadget had been introduced into his hat did not occur to him. He jammed the hat on his head—no longer accompanied by the buzzing of an electric bell. Then he strode away to his House with a crimson face. As he strode in, crimson and furious, a roar followed him from the quad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Chopper Comes Down!

TOM MERRY'S study was crowded at tea-time.

It was a great celebration.

Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of the Shell, was the guest of honour. Glyn was the hero of the hour, in both Houses.

Figgins & Co. had come over to tea, and Study No. 6 were present, and Wildrake and Levison & Co., and Bernard Glyn and his chums—so Study No. 10 was swarmed. There was a buzz of happy talk in the study, and roars of laughter. It was known that Mr. Ratcliff was in the Head's study—having, as Cardew put it, a heart-to-heart talk with the old

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scout. The Head's words in the quad had mostly been heard, and it was known that he had supposed Mr. Ratcliff to be guilty of a childish prank—inexplicable in a gentleman of Mr. Ratcliff's age and position, only to be explained in fact on the ground that Ratty had been partaking of the cup that cheers not wisely but too well. That seemed to the juniors the cream of the joke—the Head's intervention in the matter had given Glyn's jest a worthy finish.

No doubt Mr. Ratcliff would succeed in clearing himself in the Head's eyes—and in making Dr. Holmes understand that he had been the victim, and not the perpetrator, of the trick. That, indeed, was quite certain. Nevertheless, nobody envied Mr. Ratcliff his painful interview with the severe old gentleman.

There was, perhaps, at the back of Glyn's mind, a slight lingering uneasiness. Mr. Ratcliff had unfortunately seen him in the New House that afternoon. Glyn's devotion to electrical experiments was well known. So it was possible that Ratty might jump to a right conclusion. But in the general hilarity Glyn did not give that possibility much thought.

"It was the jape of the term, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That cwass ass, Gwunday, was bound to come a muckah; but Glyn has pulled it off all wight. I wegard him as havin' avenged the wongs of our friend Figgins."

"Hear, hear!" said George Figgins heartily.

"We got out of the giddy walk this afternoon, too!" chuckled Kerr. "Ratty forgot all about taking us for a walk."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wasn't his face worth a guinea a box!" chortled Fatty Wynn. "And the jolly old Head doing his Maskelyne-and-Cook stunt, getting gadgets out of a top hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I weally wegard Glyn as a great man! Fancy old Watty walkin' about with a bell wingin' in his hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

And there was another roar of laughter round the crowded tea-table.

The door of Study No. 10 opened, and the fat face of Baggly Trimble looked in.

"The Head's coming!" he said, with a grin.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"The Head!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ratty's with him—and Railton!" grinned Trimble. "I heard them asking after Glyn!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Sudden silence fell on the merry party in Tom Merry's study. Bernard Glyn drew a deep, deep breath.

Footsteps came along the Shell passage. They stopped at the door of Study No. 11.

"Glyn is not here!"

It was Mr. Railton's voice.

"Trimble!" It was the Head's voice now. "Is Glyn in one of the studies?"

"He's in Tom Merry's study, sir."

"Very good."

Tom Merry's door was opened wide. A scared crowd of juniors, lately so merry and bright, faced the Head, as he entered, the two Housemasters remaining in the passage. Mr. Railton was looking very concerned and serious—Mr. Ratcliff bitter and vindictive.

Dr. Holmes fixed his eyes on Glyn of the Shell.

"Glyn! You were in the New House this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Glyn.

"Mr. Ratcliff saw you coming down the stairs."

"Ye-es, sir."

"What were you doing upstairs in the New House, where you have no business, Glyn?"

No reply.

"Did you enter Mr. Ratcliff's room and place an—an electrical contrivance in his hat?"

Glyn did not speak. Dr. Holmes laid the gadget on the study table.

"Have you seen this before, Glyn?"

"Hem! Yes, sir!"

"It is your property?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was found in Mr. Ratcliff's hat."

"W-w-w was it, sir?"

"I think there is little doubt on the subject," said the Head grimly. "Glyn, you have played a most audacious trick on a gentleman holding a high position in the school. You have even caused me, for a short time, to suspect that gentleman unjustly of frivolous conduct. This is a very serious matter, Glyn."

"Oh, sir!"

"Your Housemaster speaks in your favour, and urges it upon me that you are so devoted to scientific contrivances, that you are liable to forget more important matters in the

pursuit of such things. But for Mr. Railton's high opinion of you, Glyn, I should feel it my duty to send you away from this school."

"Oh!" gasped Glyn.

"As the matter stands, I shall ask Mr. Ratcliff to be satisfied with the administration of a flogging for what you have done."

Mr. Ratcliff set his lips. Probably he would have preferred to see the sterner sentence enforced. But the way the Head had put it left him scarcely any choice in the matter.

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

"Glyn! You will follow me!"

Bernard Glyn followed the Head.

There was deep silence in Tom Merry's study when Glyn was gone, with the Head and the Housemasters. Hardly a word was spoken till Glyn came back, very quiet and rather white in the face. In sympathetic silence, Kangaroo and Dane led him into his own study.

"Wotten!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was the

jape of the year, you know; but this wathah spoils it. It weally seems that Watty is bound to score."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"He's got us to deal with yet," he said, and Manners and Lowther nodded assent.

"And Study No. 6!" said Blake. "You Shell-bounders had better keep clear, and leave it to us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry politely.

The gathering in Study No. 10 broke up. They broke up in a determined mood. The Terrible Three, and Study No. 6 were taking up the gage of battle—and the obnoxious Ratty, triumphant so far, was yet to be made to suffer for his sins!

THE END.

(Will Tom Merry & Co. succeed in getting their own back on the rascally Ratcliff? Be sure you read next week's splendid yarn, entitled "SEVEN ON THE WARPATH!" by Martin Clifford. It's absolutely ripping!)



(If You Are Not a Prizewinner This Week You May Be Next.)

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AUSTRALIA SENDS IN WINNING JOKE!

NO NEED TO COMPLAIN!

A traveller once entered a cafe and ordered coffee, which was duly brought to him, by the waiter. The waiter had forgotten to bring him a spoon, and the man exclaimed: "Here, waiter, bring me a spoon for my coffee." "Sorry, sir," retorted the waiter, "but we don't supply any spoons, the music here is so stirring!"—The equivalent in cash has been awarded to L. J. Sutton, c/o T. Hall & Sons, Box 108 B, G.P.O., Broken Hill, Australia.

"DEAR, DEAR!"

A teacher had been very carefully explaining to the class the habits and uses of the reindeer. Then she noticed one small boy who was not paying the least attention to the lesson, so she asked him: "What is the use of the reindeer?" Awakening from his daydream, the startled boy replied. "Er—it makes everything in the garden grow, teacher!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Wark, The Birches, Hykeham Road, Lincoln.

SOME CAR, EH?

A man in the Midlands possesses a motor-car, which, when in motion, sounds like a load of tin cans rolling down a roof. Its appearance corresponds with its mechanical imperfections. The owner lives a distance from the town, and his usual custom is to drive up to a garage in the town on a Saturday, have the tank filled up, and take back enough petrol for the next week. One day his little boy went with him, and he sent him into the garage to order the tins

of petrol. The proprietor noticed that he had not ordered any for the car, as usual, for replenishment, so he said to the boy: "Go and ask your father if he will take a couple of tins for the car?" "I don't think he would, sir," said the boy seriously, "for a scrap-dealer he knows up the way just offered him a sovereign for it!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Davies, Glen Cairn, Dorsett Road, Darlaston, Staffs.

A SCOTCH YARN!

The manager of a hotel when passing along one of the corridors, saw a boot-boy kneeling outside a bed-room door cleaning a pair of boots. "How dare you clean boots up here!" said the manager. "Take them downstairs at once!" "I can't," replied the boy, "the gentlemen inside is a Scotsman, and he's holding on to the laces!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Douglas Elvidge, 157, Fox Lane, Palmer's Green, London.

IT MUST BE!

Small Boy: "Please will you come round to our house quickly, doctor? Muvver's ill; she's got neuleftis." Doctor: "Neuleftis—neuleftis! What on earth do you mean?" Small Boy: "Well, you said it was neuritis when she had it in her right arm, and now she's got it in her left arm it must be neuleftis!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Harold Midgley, 7, Tudor Gardens, Barnes, S.W. 13.

ALL WRONG!

The train steamed slowly out of the station as the worried individual sprinted up the platform and scrambled to an already overcrowded compartment, only to discover that he had left both his ticket and cash at home. He consoled

himself on being intimate with the official at the other end; but on reaching the City the ticket collector proved to be a new man. He demanded the ticket, and when it was not produced waxed wrath. "We've heard all that before, mister," he said. "I must have your name and address." "Saul Wright," said the passenger. "It's all right, be hanged! I want your name and address!" "Saul Wright, I tell you. What's the matter with you?" "You'll find out soon enough. Come along to the station-master!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Edward Welch, 6, Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

SOME FORCE!

Jobbling was a man whom his fellow clerks mentally dubbed as being a good deal too big for his boots. According to himself he was always having the most extraordinary adventures, and he had been the hero of innumerable thrilling episodes. One morning he came to the office and described how he had captured a burglar who had broken into his house on the previous night. "Of course, he gave in in the end," declared Jobbling boastfully. "But I had to use considerable force." "Indeed," remarked a bystander, with a sceptical smile as he looked the swaggerer up and down, "and what force was it you used?" "Oh," exclaimed the other, rather taken aback, "it was—er—ah—the police force!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. C. Foster, 31, Castle Street, Northampton.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT!

First Lawyer (losing his temper): "Sir, you are, I think, the biggest idiot I've ever seen!"

Judge (gravely): "Order! Order! You seem to forget that I am present!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Bate, jr., 25, Kendrick Street, Warrington, Lancs.

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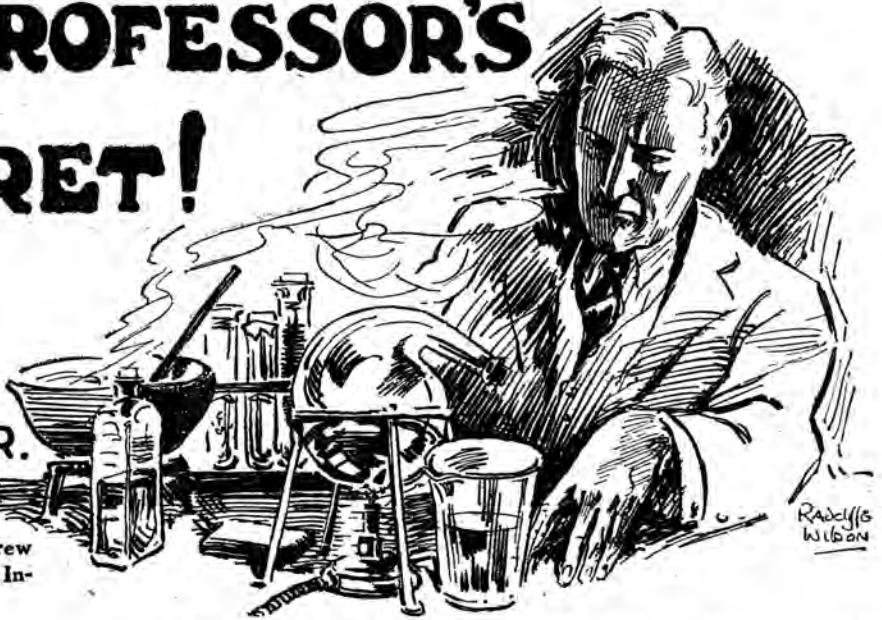
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THE PROFESSOR'S SECRET!

by

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CHAPTER 1.

A Clean Knock-out!

THE stadium was packed! A sea of tense, white faces—a smoke-laden atmosphere, a centralised glare of brilliant electric light, the quick pad-pad of feet beating on springy boards, the smack of gloved fists, and now and then a gasp as one or other of the combatants strikes home a telling blow.

The gong. The boxers in the ring retire to their respective corners. Seconds, already through the ropes, whip out towels and sponges, and commence their work of repairing the battered.

"Round five" is hoisted up.

You can tell, from the excitement permeating the entire building, that this is no ordinary fight. More than usual importance attaches to it. It is, indeed, the final match between two heavyweights of distinct class for the Interstate Championship.

The winner will go across the Seven Seas, and challenge the best the world can produce.

And, incidentally, the purse is no mean one.

Indeed, to the white-haired, wiry-looking little man in immaculate evening-clothes, seated in the front row, the winning of it signifies the realisation of almost a life's work.

Professor Winton, for such is his name, is the father of Ralph Winton, the tall, slim youth who has shown such amazing skill against a formidable opponent, whose thick-set frame is in marked contrast to that of the lithe, graceful boy.

A magnificent specimen of young, virile manhood is Ralph Winton, proportioned to perfection, muscled with rippling whipcord.

For the past two years the professor had watched this offspring of his fight his way cleanly and straightly to the top of the tree. And to-night, if the boy won this fight, the invention that meant a fortune would, surely, become reality instead of a dream.

The gong sounded once more. Jackson, Ralph's opponent, sprang into

the ring like a tiger, and with a lightning blow opened up the cut that he had succeeded in making in the previous round over Ralph's eye. It was, perhaps, a lucky attack, but the fact remained that it had achieved its objective. Blood oozed out, and trickled down Ralph's cheek, almost blinding him.

Still, he kept his head, and boxed the battering rushes with brilliant defence.

Jackson seemed a little out of breath half-way through. He knew that he was putting his all into the fight. The fact that Ralph still stood upon his feet maddened him. Subconsciously he realised that he could not stand the pace for long, and that he must finish the match quickly.

He closed for a clinch, jabbing with furious strength at his adversary's heart. The referee parted them.

Jackson returned like a bull, and drove home a terrific right to the solar-plexus. Ralph went back a couple of paces. Jackson followed on.

He had his man up against the ropes, and swung in, left and right to the head.

Ralph covered up, dodging this way and that in his efforts to elude the terrible onslaught.

Supporters of Jackson broke into a roar of cheering. The strained, white face of the little man in the front row, every vein standing out, was a tragedy in itself.

Ralph's knees sagged; Jackson brought his right up in an uppercut that would have felled an ox. But he missed—missed by just that fraction of an inch that only boxers know and fully appreciate.

He seemed stunned by his failure, for a moment his attack ceased; and Ralph realised that, instead of being on the boards, he was still standing up. Also he knew from experience that nothing is more disconcerting to a man on the

offensive than for his final blow to misfire.

With a superhuman effort, therefore, he straightened up—the last thing in the world Jackson, his father, or anyone else in the building had expected him to do—and, with a reserve of strength that he himself did not know that he possessed, flashed out a right to Jackson's jaw. Jackson, who was just coming in again, took it full on the point.

He stopped in his stride and shook his head curiously. A shiver ran through his bulky frame.

Then his arms fell to his sides, and he crashed to the boards, lying there in a heap, utterly unconscious.

The referee counted him out.

Rolph assisted to carry him to his corner. The boy felt dazed.

It had all happened so suddenly. Even the audience could not grasp the fact that he had won, yet there was no disputing it. Ralph had dropped his man in the fifth round—dropped him for the count, the full count, and longer.

The little man in the front row nearly went crazy in his excitement.

The future seemed so very much assured.

It was half an hour later, and the streets of the city were deserted almost, and teeming with a heavy downpour of rain, glistening in the pale yellow lights of the lamps. An occasional and belated tram clanged its way quickly homeward, and an odd and thoroughly wet pedestrian here and there completed the scene of sombre dreariness.

A night to be at home by the fireside, as the emptiness of the streets clearly showed.

A taxi, making its way east, turned off the main road into a small street on the left. Half-way up, the driver brought it to a standstill. From the dark recesses of a large doorway opposite there emerged four sinister-looking figures, short, powerful, and agile all of them. Two opened the door on the pavement side and entered the car; the other two darted round behind and waited. Each gripped an ugly-looking weapon in his hand. For several minutes it seemed that the body of the car swayed on its chassis, and then the roadside door opened. A tall, athletic figure staggered

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out, his hands clasped to his head. Even as his feet touched the ground one of the waiting assailants raised his weapon high and brought it down with deadly accuracy on his head. The man's knees sagged, and, crumpling up, he crashed to the ground.

Then a curious thing happened. From the pavement side door there emerged the two men who had entered the car, and they carried with them the prostrate body of another and much smaller man, which they bore quickly into the big building. The remaining assailants picked up the body of the man lying in the road and stuffed rather than placed it back in the car.

Then, without a word from driver or anyone, the car, with its burden, glided off into the night, and the two men followed the preceding party into the house. In all the action had not occupied more than two or three minutes. Not a voice had been raised. Silently, grimly, and irresistibly the tentacles of one of the greatest criminal organisations in the world had stretched out and had enmeshed yet two more victims.

It was a somewhat ironical ending to a triumphant day for the principal parties concerned, at any rate.

CHAPTER 2.

Kidnapped!

JENNIFER PETTIGREW WREN, the very eminent scientist, explorer, and crime investigator, lay back in his armchair as the clock on the mantelshelf of his cosy sitting-room struck the hour of ten. Jennifer Pettigrew Wren gazed up at the ceiling thoughtfully.

Brilliant sunshine streamed through the window, and the sounds of the city, already fully awake for the turmoil of a new day, floated up from the street below.

But Wren neither heard the sounds nor saw the sunlight. His pale blue eyes held a far-away expression. His thin, colourless lips were compressed tightly together. He passed a lean, brown hand nervously through his curiously long, fair hair.

To anyone who knew him it was perfectly obvious that his brain was working at express speed.

He had just laid down his morning paper. A period of possibly ten minutes elapsed before he spoke.

"Bad business!" he said. "Don't like it at all. Read it, Robertson?"

Robertson, Wren's secretary and aide-de-camp, looked up from his task of cleaning a pipe.

"I've read it," he returned.

"Like it yourself?"

"I do not."

Robertson heaved himself to his feet. He was a man of not less than six feet three inches in height, wiry-looking, and tanned—as was Wren—by the heat of many tropical suns.

"What do you make of it?" queried Wren.

"Nothing at all," came the reply.

Robertson ambled over to the mantelshelf and filled his pipe from a tobacco-jar.

"Read it again, then," said Wren, "and try."

Robertson lit his pipe first. He had once been charged by a buffalo in East Africa, but had stopped to light his pipe before going up the nearest available tree.

Blowing a contented cloud of smoke ceilingwards, he picked up the paper and re-read the following article:

"DISAPPEARANCE OF WELL-KNOWN INVENTOR."

WHERE IS PROF. WINTON?

Last night, or possibly early this morning, a case of brazen kidnapping occurred in the city. Prof. Winton, the inventor, whilst returning from the Stadium with his son, Rolph Winton, who has just battled his way to the enviable position of champion of Australian heavy-weight boxers, was kidnapped by persons unknown at a place unknown. Rolph Winton asserts that, as far as he can remember, their taxi stopped outside a large building, where he was sand-bagged and chloroformed. The next thing that he knows is that he found himself some miles out of the city on a lonely country road. On returning home, he succeeded in getting a car from a garage about a mile from the spot, but he found that his father had disappeared, and immediately informed the police.

The case is made all the more mysterious by the fact that Prof. Winton, so his son informs us, had just completed an invention that only required some capital to make a huge fortune. Have the two facts any relation?

The police are already following up what clues they have, but, unfortunately, these are very few. Any information will be received with thanks."

"Hum!" said Robertson. "As the paper says, case of kidnapping. Can't see any interest to us. Police'll do all that's possible."

"That old man's life is in very great danger, Rob," said Wren.

"What y'mean?"

"What I say. Ring for Augustus."

Robertson gave Wren one searching look, then he pressed the bell by the side of the fireplace.

"Still don't follow," he said, resuming the conversation.

"I'm taking a long shot," returned Wren. "I'm coupling two facts together. Two facts that I don't suppose either the police or Rolph Winton himself knows. I happen to know the nature of the professor's invention. He appealed to me for help, as a matter of fact. I also saw our illustrious friend, Dr. Ziglio, at the Stadium last night."

"Ziglio?"

Robertson stared hard at his chief.

"Dr. Ziglio," continued Wren, "was watching the fight last night with an interest that was, to the average person, quite normal. Knowing him as I do, however, his mask of calmness was somewhat transparent. When Winton knocked Jackson out, I positively failed to see the worthy Ziglio's heels for dust. He left the Stadium like a bullet from a gun, Rob."

At this juncture the door of the sitting-room opened, and a young man stood framed in the doorway.

The young man had his coat off, and a green baize apron covered him from his neck to the turn-up of his trousers. He had a round face, very red, and keen, intelligent brown eyes. His biceps, as displayed by the turned up shirt-sleeves, were, perhaps, the largest you ever saw in your life.

"I'm washing up, sir," he said. "And whilst I'm waitin' ere my water's gittin' cold, and that there bacon-fat's gittin' solid agin'!"

"Sorry to disturb you," said Wren apologetically, "but there is work on hand, Augustus."

"Crumbs!", quoth Augustus, hurrying off. "Wot's in the wind?"

"Suggest that Ziglio has got Professor Winton?" said Robertson, picking up the threads of the conversation once more.

"I do." Wren did not wait for any comment on Robertson's part. "For this

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reason," he continued. "Rolph Winton won his fight last night. Purse worth three thousand pounds. Plenty of good money for capitalisation of father's invention. Follow me? Well and good. Dr. Ziglio, waiting on the result of that fight, gets busy the moment he sees how the tide is running."

"Working for someone else?"

Wren smiled.

"The only time he ever works for himself is when he tries to destroy me," he returned. "Yes, Rob, unless I'm farther out in my notions about this man than I've ever been in my life before. Dr. Ziglio is working for a very powerful organisation of dealers in—bullion gold."

"Bullion gold?"

"Professor Winton is a very clever old man. He has discovered a formula, after many years of research work, whereby he can make pure gold. I know. I think I supplied him with the final link in his chain. He has jealously guarded his secret. He has demonstrated it, and has refused to sell. He has been offered a hundred thousand pounds for it, and he laughed at them. He has waited and waited, like a cat watching for a mouse, until he has acquired, through the medium of his son, sufficient capital to put his invention into working order himself. Rolph Winton, although he knew nothing of the invention, trusted his father implicitly. Also a wise young man."

"Ave you finished, sir?"

Augustus, now fully clothed, had seized the golden opportunity of breaking in at the moment when Wren had paused to light a cigarette.

"Oh, are you there, Augustus?"

Wren stirred himself for the first time. He got out of his chair, and, standing with his back to the fire, addressed the youth.

"Go down to the police-station," he said. "Present my compliments, and ask the inspector in charge of the Winton case if he thought to ask Mr. Rolph Winton the nationality of the driver of the taxi that took him and his father from the Stadium last night? If the inspector in charge of the case is out, ask the inspector on duty at the station. He'll know."

"Right, sir!"

Augustus turned abruptly and left the room.

"Want me this morning?" queried Robertson.

"Not yet. I'll 'phone you up some time."

"Going out?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

Robertson relit his pipe. "Got some good stuff coming from Cape Town, Cairo, and Colombo this morning, I believe. Wireless set of mine is in wonderfully good form. Told you about operating the engines of that boat of mine in the bay the other day, didn't I?"

"Yes," answered Wren.

"Ran her for ten miles due east and brought her back home safe and sound, and me sitting down in my little room here," said Robertson, with much satisfaction. "Not so bad?"

"You'll be able to transport yourself by wireless before you've finished, Rob," said Wren, with a smile.

Just before the investigator went out he examined carefully the magazine of a little revolver that looked as though it might do quite a deal of damage to anyone to whom it took a dislike.

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CHAPTER 3.

A Terrible Fate!

DZIGLIO'S apartment was more than striking in its Continental luxury. And Dr. Ziglio himself, as he reclined upon a great divan, smoking a cigarette with a wonderfully subtle aroma, looked so comfortable and peaceful that it would seem he never intended to move again. He wore the most immaculate clothes, and his black hair was brushed back in waves from his forehead. His face was wreathed in smiles. Benevolence exuded from him. It was only when you looked into his eyes that you perceived the true character of the man; the snake that lay therein was venomous; the hard glint. They might have been two balls of discoloured steel.

Suddenly Dr. Ziglio clapped his hands. A servant appeared.

"Bring Professor Winton here," said Ziglio.

The servant departed, and Ziglio resumed his contented smoking.

Five minutes elapsed. Then the door opened, and the professor, looking pale and worn, was ushered into the room.

Ziglio did not move.

"The time, Professor Winton, is three o'clock," he said. "I am afraid I shall have to ask you for your final decision in this matter."

The professor's jaw set firm.

"You had it last night, Ziglio," he returned.

"You will not divulge your formula, nor will you sell?"

"I will not!"

The foreigner on the divan sighed.

"I am sorry," he murmured. "I had hoped that a night's rest and thought would have caused you to alter your attitude in the matter, and saved all unpleasantness. However, since you are determined, I must admit that you will help considerably in my little experiment. I am by way of being an inventor, too, you know."

"Experiment?" queried the professor.

The foreigner nodded.

"I have," he continued, with a smile, "invented an appliance whereby an aeroplane can be operated by wireless. I am rather proud of it. I intend to

place you in an aeroplane to-night, and I shall operate that aeroplane from a room in my country house. I shall direct you out to sea, and at twelve o'clock precisely, if by that time you haven't intimated to me any change of attitude on your part, I shall switch off the current, and you will fall, to be swallowed up by the mighty ocean. If you think otherwise, you can communicate with me quite easily. Two taps upon the ordinary transmitter in the machine will be quite enough. Isn't it a good idea?"

"You—you foreign fiend!" shrieked the professor. "I'll—"

He made a rush at Ziglio, but almost instantaneously the report of a revolver rent the air, and he collapsed with a cry to the carpet.

Behind a smoking weapon Ziglio still smiled down at him imperturbably.

"A minor wound in the ankle, professor," he said consolingly. "I was once champion shot of my college in America. Didn't you know that? Dear me, I thought everyone knew that. Pingo, remove the professor. I have nothing further to say to him."

Pingo, a tall, painfully thin man, stepped across the room. As he did so, another shot rang out, and the man flung up his arms and crashed to the floor.

The professor, with amazing agility, sprang to his feet, and Ziglio found himself looking down the business end of a revolver that was as steady as a rock.

His own lay on the divan beside him.

"You must have left college a long while ago, Ziglio," said the professor. "Your aim is not as good as it was. Neither is your perception. Apparently my artistry at disguise has not deserted me. Don't you know me?"

The professor slowly, and with his disengaged hand, pulled off a wig. It was sufficient for Ziglio.

"Why," he hissed, between his teeth, "you are Detective Wren?"

The professor had changed magically into the youthful-looking but masterful detective, who stood holding Ziglio at bay with a revolver.

A silence followed, then suddenly, but swiftly, a long arm, like the fang of a snake, flashed out across the floor, and, gripping Wren's ankle, jerked him forward with terrific force.

It was the dying act of Pingo, but it had its effect.

Wren fell forward, and in a second Ziglio was on top of him.

Three other foreigners then burst into the room, and, realising what was going on, joined in the struggle.

In less than five minutes, Jennifer Pettigrew Wren was bound hand and foot, a prisoner in the hands of the man who hated him as few men have been hated before.

Dr. Ziglio straightened himself out and gazed upon the prostrate Wren.

"I think," he said, "that I shall include you in the professor's party, Wren. The trip might do you good—eh, what?"

The telephone in Wren's flat rang furiously. Robertson emerged from his wireless room, and going over to the instrument, took up the receiver.

"Hallo?" he said.

The voice of Augustus came over the line.

"That you, Mr. Robertson?"

"Yes. What's up?"

"Boss has been caught," said Augustus excitedly. "Ziglio's got him!"

Robertson seemed to become suddenly galvanised into action.

"Ziglio's got him?" he exclaimed, in alarm.

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"Yes. I met the boss as I were comin' from the station, an' I told him Mr. Rolph Winton was down at the station then, and that he had told me that the driver had seemed to him to be a Mexican. Boss says to me to follow him. We go down to the station. Boss sees Winton, and gets a description of his father from him.

"Then he goes round to Dobson's and fixes 'isself up. Clothes an' all. When 'e comes out I didn't know 'im. Exactly like the missin' man 'e was. Then we goes to a block of flats, and the boss enters one of 'em. Gets in by ringing the bell and 'olding up the chap what opens it. He tells 'im to lead us to the professor, takin' things for granted, which the chap does. 'e's so scared.

"We find the professor in a room, and just then in walks another furrin bloke. I 'its 'im on the 'ead quick. Then we tie 'em both up, and push 'em under the bed. Old man Winton's doin' some talkin', when we 'ear a third furriner comin' and the boss pushes 'im into a wardrobe. I gits be'ind a settee. The furriner comes in, and says for the boss to go with 'im to see Ziglio.

"The boss goes. I then got busy, and I climbs out of the window an' along a sort o' ledge till I gits to a big window, and I sees Ziglio and the boss inside talking. Arter a bit, there's a scrap, an' they git the boss. Point is, though, I 'card Ziglio say as 'e was goin' to take the boss off, and put 'im in a aeroplane what he could direct by wireless. An' at twelve o'clock to-night 'e said 'e was going to cut off the current and drop the aeroplane into the sea. When they got the boss I climbed back and got down the fire-steps. Then I 'phoned you up."

Robertson was calm and collected.

"Where did Ziglio say he was operating this machine from?" he said.

"Is country 'ouse, sir."

"You left Mr. Winton in the flat?"

"'E's goin' on the joy trip, too, sir," returned Augustus.

"Then do as I tell you," said Robertson. "This happened not more than ten minutes ago?"

"Ardly that, sir."

"Very well, then. When they leave the mansions, follow them. I don't care how you do it. But follow them. You've done it before. They won't leave until to-night, but if they do, go ahead just the same. When you get to wherever they're going, stow yourself away. Don't be seen. At eleven twenty-five to-night climb on to the roof of Ziglio's house, and disconnect his wireless transmitting apparatus. Then run for your life, and go down to the Central Aerodrome, and tell them to expect a machine in at any time. Mention my name."

"Right-ho, sir!"

"That all clear?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Don't make a mess of it. It's our only chance. Good-bye!"

Robertson hung up the receiver.

"I'd get the police to go in," he murmured to himself, "if I didn't know Ziglio so well. But he'd shoot the whole lot of 'em before they could say knife. It'll be all right, though. Augustus won't fail me, I feel certain.

CHAPTER 4.

At the Mercy of the Ether!

AN aeroplane hurtled through space at a speed of, roughly, eighty miles an hour. Below, many, many feet, the sea billowed and rolled. Land had been out of sight, swallowed up in the blackness for an hour or more now. Inside the machine two figures sat—two men. They were both



The aeroplane was hurtling through space carrying its two occupants to disaster.

waiting, both watching. Waiting for an hour that they knew must inevitably come, looking for some sign of help below that they knew could not possibly be there.

"What time do you make it, Wren?" roared the elder of the two men.

Wren looked at his watch.

"Twenty-five past eleven, Winton," he shouted back.

The professor's hand wandered in the direction of the wireless transmitter. He had only to make two taps, and—

"No!" bellowed Wren in his ear, and gripping his wrist. "Don't give in. Never give in. Better to die, professor!"

The professor nodded, and stared ahead once more. He seemed half crazed. On and on the machine was travelling.

At twenty-past eleven there crawled along the roof of a large house deep in the country a dark figure—the figure of none other than Augustus. He had come down on the back of the huge car that had brought the others from town, hang-

ing on by the skin of his teeth. He had scaled the ivy-clad walls of the house, and he was now about to execute the last part of his job before leaving the immediate neighbourhood.

Quickly he wormed his way forward, across the slanting slates, towards the two poles that reared themselves skywards about ten yards away. Reaching them, he stood up and consulted his watch. It said twenty-four minutes past eleven o'clock.

Augustus, wearing rubber gloves, went up the nearest of the wireless poles like a monkey. At the top he plunged his hand into his pocket and whipped out a pair of pliers. At exactly twenty-five past he closed them on the wires, and, with a slight twang they separated, falling across the roof in two straggling lines.

Augustus had certainly not failed.

At twenty-six minutes past eleven Wren and Winton, still speeding across the sky, noticed a peculiar thing. They were turning round and going in the opposite direction.

"Have you touched that transmitter?" shouted Wren.

The professor merely shook his head.

Wren watched the continued change of direction, and a little smile began to play on his lips.

"This is something to do with Robertson," he said. "I believe we shall be saved, professor."

The following day a select party gathered in Jennifer Pettigrew Wren's apartments. After a long sleep the professor and Wren himself looked new men. Robertson was talking.

"And so," he was saying, "at twenty-five past eleven, when I knew that Ziglio's connection would be cut off, I threw out my longest current and picked you up. Then I proceeded to bring you back—all quite simple. A bit lucky, perhaps; but, then, if one doesn't sometimes have luck, where the dickens is one—eh?"

"We," murmured Wren, "should have been in the sea, Rob!"

(Another exciting adventure in quest of the elusive Dr. Ziglio next week, chums. Don't miss it!)

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A Great Idea!

ALL was silent in the house. At last from across the garden came echoes of cheering. Mat's head was lifted at once. He dashed the tears from his eyes.

"The wretched cads!" he cried, springing up. "And the dad perhaps at death's door, too! Who are they, who dare to kick up all this row?"

He crossed to the window. The cheering was growing louder. Evidently something was afoot. It sounded like a regular mob advancing to storm the place.

At last they came in view, every lad belonging to the premises brandishing pitchforks and brooms, laughing and hallooing ironically.

Mat fell back in astonishment. He was white to the lips. The heartless brutes had actually rigged up two makeshift banners out of sheets and poles, and on one was painted in tarry letters:

"WARNED OFF! HOORAY!"

Furzedown Apprentices Support Sandown Stewards.

DOWN WITH DOPERS!"

On the other, similarly displayed in scrambling capitals:

"FURZEDOWN WILL STRIKE, AND FURZEDOWN WILL BE RIGHT!"

HONEST LADS DEMAND HONEST MASTERS!"

THREE JEERS FOR OLD MARTINGALE!"

BOOH ! ! ! YAH! BOOH!"

Nor was this all. Between these scurrilous flags someone was being marched along shoulder-high.

It was Scarfe!

What part he had played at the inquiry before the stewards Mat had not yet heard. But instantly he recalled the words of Lord Dungarrin's advising old Martingale to beware of this young

gentleman. In any case, his behaviour now showed Mat that he was an arrant young traitor.

Straight across lawns and flower-beds the procession came trampling. Mat's blood boiled to see it. He went bursting to the front door.

His appearance on the steps was a

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

LORD RIPLADE, late owner of the estates of Furzedown and the famous racehorse, Whiplash, the most-talked-of two-year-old of his day.

TOM MARTINGALE, his lordship's "trusted trainer and esteemed friend," and "guy'nor" of the renowned Furzedown training stables, in whose charge are sixty thoroughbreds, famous among them being the Stunt and Whiplash.

MAT MARTINGALE, his sixteen-year-old son, a true and trustworthy apprentice.

SCARFE, another apprentice, but an unscrupulous rascal.

SIR ROGER RACKSTONE, a mean and despicable scoundrel, and owner of the Stunt, a most unreliable racer.

The late Lord Ripplade had so willed that, should his property be unclaimed by his missing heir within one year of his death, the Whiplash colt was to become the property of Tom Martingale, providing the trainer was still at Furzedown. Failing this, it would go to Sir Roger Rackstone.

Realising the situation, Sir Roger Rackstone sets a plot in motion to get Tom Martingale hounded out of Furzedown.

The rascally apprentice, Scarfe, is instrumental in doping his horse, the Stunt, favourite in the big race at Sandown Park. The horse runs hopelessly last, and there is an immediate hue and cry for the trainer. Tom Martingale is unable to answer for the horse's utter failure, and, at a word of encouragement, the racecourse roughs advance threateningly upon him.

Young Tom is at his father's side in a moment, but the two are soon overwhelmed, and would have suffered a rough handling had not, just at that moment, a stranger in a cowboy hat appeared upon the scene, slashing about with a big stock-whip and scattering the roughs in all directions.

Tom Martingale is brought up before the stewards, with the result that he is warned off the course. He is escaping from the angry mob when he meets with an accident and is taken to hospital.

Young Mat returns to the stables to find a pile of telegrams from owners, ordering the removal of their horses to other quarters. In utter despair, the lad's thoughts fly to his new-found friend. "By Jove!" he cries. "That's the chap who would help me if he were only here!"

(Now read on.)

signal for a derisive howl. There they stood, flaunting the banners in his face, hissing and hooting.

They had made Scarfe their spokesman. He signalled them to silence. But not before a table carried aloft in the procession was planted in the middle of Mr. Martingale's bed of prize geraniums, and Scarfe had been deposited on it.

"Brother apprentices," he began, amid a chorus of coo-ees, cat-calls, and vociferous cheers, "we have come here this evening—you know what for"—cries of "Stunt! Stunt!" "Quite right!" assented Scarfe. "It's about the honour of our stables, which to-day we have seen dragged in the dirt!"

"Hear, hear! Bravo! Booh! Gr-r-r-r!" howled the apprentices, turning to where Mat stood, and brandishing their weapons at him.

"Steady, boys—steady!" said Scarfe magnanimously. "There's nothing to show that young Mat had anything to do with the rotten swindle, as I told the stewards this afternoon. So we don't want to be too hard on him."

"Did you ever hear such brazen cheek?" breathed Mat in fury.

He resolved, however, to let the young hypocrite finish his say.

"No, lads," continued Scarfe, taking courage at their victim's silence. "Young Mat may be all right—we hope he is. It's his guy'nor we're up against. And if he's afraid to turn up and hear what we've got to say, as man to man, that's his look-out. The great thing is that we've struck."

Mat was too sick at heart to listen any more; he slammed the door and made his way to the table where lay the unopened telegram. And it was there that the American found him.

Unable to arouse anyone to answer the gate, he had climbed on his saddle and had clambered over the wall. Now he had made his way to the only lighted window in the house.

"Say, younker, come, come! This won't do!" he said, rousing Mat with a gentle shake. "What's been flooring you now?"

The boy pointed to the telegrams, and the stranger read them one by one.

"Waal," he said coolly, "that's all right. If they want their horses, they must have them. It'll be the less for us to look after, anyway."

"But can't you see?" protested Mat. "This is only the beginning of it. If once the dad is really warned off, the whole business comes to smash! It means banishment!" he cried, distracted. "The dad will be made an absolute out-cast. Not only may he not train horses, but he may not even show his face at a race meeting, or he will be kicked off the course!"

The American seemed quite unperturbed nevertheless.

"Waal," he drawled, "I've been thinking it over, and we'll allow all that. But hasn't it struck you, sonny, that there's one way still out of it, supposing he is?"

"One way?" echoed Mat, amazed. "No! How?"

"Why, you told me, didn't you, that all this place was your father's own, built with his own money?"

"Yes, that's right—at least, I believe it was all his own money."

"Very waal, then. I ask you this question; This is a free country. What's to prevent you setting up as a trainer yourself?"

"Me?" cried Mat, shrieking with laughter at the notion.

"Why, sure," said the other unperturbed. "You've got all these fine stables to start business in."

"But I need to get licensed. You don't think it likely that the Jockey Club would grant a certificate to the son of a man they'd just kicked off the Turf?"

"Waal, I don't know," was the quiet response. "Folk do funny things sometimes. There's that high-toned friend of yours this afternoon in the motor-car—"

"Lord Dungarrin?"

"Yep! P'raps he'd put in a word for you. He seemed to want to be friendly."

Mat's eyes glistened. It was sheer madness, of course, to think twice about the notion. But how he only wished it were possible!

If he had a chap like this new friend of his, just to lend him a hand, he believed he could manage Furzedown—yes, and turn out winners, too. His dad always said he knew as much about getting a horse into condition as he did.

"Then perhaps you'd be able to save this Whiplash Colt from being sneaked by the feller Rackstone," the American suggested.

"By the way," he went on quickly, before Mat could reply, "I suppose your poppah hasn't got a copy of Lord Rip-lade's will by him, showing exactly how the colt was left?"

Mat believed he had. The search entailed a thorough ransacking of the trainer's desk and safe. The youngster found himself quailing at the sight of all the sheaves of paper and shelves of ledgers and diaries.

They found a copy of the will, sure enough, and the American ran his keen eyes over it. Mat noticed impatiently how he seemed to be weighing up every line, every word of it, not merely the clause by which Whiplash was to come to Tom Martingale. Occasionally he chuckled dryly as if it were all as good as a play to him.

"Waal, now," he said at last, "thar it is, and all fair and square and better than ever I calc'lated from what you first told me."

"In what way?"

"Why, I thought it might be so fixed that when the year was up your dad would have to be actually training at these stables. But it isn't worded like that. He's got to be living at Furzedown, that's all."

"Then, by George, that decides me!" cried Mat, banging his fist down on the desk. "I'll keep this place going some-

how, even if I have to feed on corn out of the manger! And if the dad has got any friends left that believe in him, I'll get them to work me a licence to train on my own."

"Bravo, younker—that's the way to talk!" cheered the American delightedly.

"Yes, and if I only get a screw or two to start with, I don't care!" cried Mat, his cheeks glowing at the prospect.

"But, at any rate, we'll have spoked Rackstone's wheel for him. He'll never get the colt. But if the new Lord Rip-lade does turn up, we'll give it back to him. And then, perhaps, he'll still let me keep him on and train him for the Derby!"

Unexpected Visitors!

"HURRAH!" cheered Mat Martingale's new friend, jumping up and swinging his cowboy hat in glee at this bold resolution.

"But I shall want a good chap to help me," Mat went on, watching the American with an anxious eye.

"Why, yes, you will," said the other promptly.

"Then what about yourself?" suggested Mat, coming straight to business.

"All day long you've been pulling me first out of one mess then out of another. I've lost you all your savings over that beast Stunt."

"Why, yes," confessed the American.

"If you put it like that, I reckon you've

about hit it." And he pulled out two empty pockets as proof that he was stony broke.

"Very well," said Mat. "And now I add insult to injury by asking you to help me still again without pay and without food, perhaps, until we can get things once more on their legs. Does that sound so rotten that you want to kick me for my cheek?"

"Rotten, younker?" laughed the other. "Why, not on your life, it don't. I'd just jump at the chance."

"You'd have to be my partner," insisted Mat, with boyish generosity. "We'd call the firm Martingale and—"

His mouth dropped wide. For it had only just occurred to him that, though he and the American had been together all day, the latter had never once told him his name.

The stranger could see what was passing in the lad's mind, and surveyed him with a dry twinkle in his grey eyes.

"Wow, go on," he laughed.

"But that's just what I can't do," said Mat. "Here, I owe you all these thanks and apologies, and now I come to think of it, I don't know who you are any more than the man in the moon. I—"

But again Mat had to break off short in astonishment. The twinkle in the American's eyes had given place to a look of startled surprise and dismay.

If the man in the moon aforesaid had descended to earth, and was now staring at them through the window, he could hardly have looked more taken aback.

For it was at the window, straight over Mat's shoulder, that the other was gazing. The boy swung round promptly, and there, sure enough, what should he see but three men's faces watching them.

One Mat knew well. He was old Widgin, the local sergeant of police, and a very good pal, fortunately. The others, though, were more in the shadow. And then it flashed upon Mat who they must be.

"Why, one's that commissionaire chap that chucked me out of the stewards' meeting!" he gasped.

"And the fellow I gave a swipe over the shoulder, too, when he tried to pull you down off the coach," added the



As Mat Martingale rounded the corner he came into full view of the source of the melody. "My hat!" he gasped. The next moment he was nearly jerked out of his saddle as his led team shied away.

American. "What's he doing here with a policeman? Come to make trouble—eh?"

"It looks like it," said Mat, catching his breath. "What's more, the third I see now is Sir Roger Rackstone himself. Surely he's not going to be dirty enough to run us in for assault?"

The faces had withdrawn by then, and Sergeant Widgin was evidently leading the way to the front door. Mat and the stranger looked at each other askance.

Could it be that this strike of stable hands had also been prompted by Sir Roger? It was quite likely when they came to think of it. And now this was to be his crowning stroke.

If they were hauled off to the police-station, Mrs. Grummidge would be the only soul left in all Furzedown, with its seventy horses. And even she had not returned from her "evening out."

Clang, clang, clang! rang the front door bell. Mat and his friend still regarded each other in silent dismay. Then the American rose.

"Yes, you jump through that back window and hide out of the way," said Mat eagerly. "I'll answer the door. Old Widgin won't touch me unless he's forced to, I know."

He had caught up the lamp, so the other had little chance but to obey. Again the door bell clanged.

"Evening, Master Martingale!" said Police-sergeant Widgin's gruff but friendly voice, when a minute later Mat confronted his visitors. "Sorry to trouble you, sir, but you've got a party I see along er you as, it appears, is wanted for a little affair at Sandown Racecourse to-day."

"It's not a little affair at all!" cut in Sir Roger's voice snappily. "Nor are we sorry to trouble this young puppy, either. They're both dangerous ruffians, I tell you!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Widgin with ponderous emphasis, turning on him. "If you're going to be along er me in this business, I'll have to ask you not to use no inflammatory langwidge about puppies and sich. And as for you calling Master Martingale a dangerous ruffian," he went on with a contemptuous smile, "all I can say is I've known 'im ever since he wasn't so high—"

"And all I can say is," rapped Sir Roger, interrupting him, "that I've applied for a warrant for his arrest for assaulting me—"

"Which you 'aven't got yet," Widgin reminded him, cutting him short in turn, "and which, till you have, you've no call to make a song about it. So now, then, Master Martingale," said Widgin, with a broad wink at Mat, "you're harbouring, as I've seen, a certing party, to wit, one Derringer Dick, alias Dick Derringer—"

"What?" gasped Mat. "Derringer Dick?" So this was what the stranger called himself!

"Alias the cove that druv six mules in a coach nearly over one Jacob Parsley, commissaire, complainant in this case, and then sloshed him with his whip, constituting an assault hactionable according to the lor."

"Well," said Mat, "half of it's lies; but what about it, Widgin?"

"What about it!" chipped in the aggrieved commissaire, with a yelp. "Just let me get 'old of 'im, and I'll show 'im what about it. He ain't going to lash me like a dog! Go in and do you dooty, sergeant!"

"Excuse me," said the sergeant again with heavy emphasis. "You two parties, as I've said before, will be

getting yourselves the wrong side of the gate if you can't keep them tongues of yours quiet."

"Then lead on, confound you, and fetch out your man!" stormed Sir Roger Rackstone, dancing with impatience.

"By all means," said Mat sweetly, making way as they shoved past him. For the American had had plenty of time by now to make his escape. "Walk in, Widgin. I don't know whether the man you want has waited for you—"

But at this moment a disappointed howl from the commissaire made it clear that he hadn't. The room was empty, an open window on the farther side showing how their quarry had made his escape.

"He's slung his 'ook through there!" shouted the aggrieved Parsley. "He's bunked off somewhere round the stables. After 'im!"

Before the stout old police-sergeant could take the lead the other had taken it for him. Out he clambered through the window-plump to the flower-beds below, and off he went into the darkness.

Unseen by Mat, a folded paper had fallen from the desk to Sir Roger's feet. The rascal's eye had caught but four words, "Mortgage—Furzedown Training Stables." Instantly his face lit up with wonder and glee.

He picked it up, but dared not examine it then. But when Mat had gone with the rest, he snatched it up and unfolded it.

"So," he said under his breath, as he read the deed through, "Furzedown Stables was not built entirely out of old Martingale's money, after all, it seems. He had to borrow seven thousand to complete it. Yes, and that money is due to be paid in two weeks' time." He chuckled, and made a rapid



MAT MARTINGALE (The Boy Jockey).

note of the name and address of the firm from which old Tom had borrowed it.

"I'll make those people an offer for the mortgage that they're bound to jump at. Then, if Martingale's cash is not forthcoming at the very minute on the very day, I'll seize the premises and put them up to auction for what they'll fetch. Then we'll see what comes of that young cub's boast that he'll fight me tooth and nail."

He went out, thrilling with a new exultation. For he had young Mat and his father now in the hollow of his hand.

"Still, I mean to see that infernal American arrested, none the less!" he growled to himself. "I can't afford to have chaps like him befriending young Martingale when I want to catch him alone."

That was the reason he had been egging on the Sandown Park door-porter to taking out a warrant against the fellow for assault.

He came upon the commissaire in an empty stable, standing beneath a trapdoor like a dog watching a rat-hole.

Near him was Mat, looking savage and anxious for his friend. Whether the American was really hiding in the loft overhead he did not know. But it was quite likely.

The commissaire had been given the policeman's bullseye to keep directed on the dark square above. Meanwhile, the sergeant had elected to climb to the loft at the farther end, and so take the fugitive in the rear.

"But why don't you go up, too, and help him?" demanded Sir Roger testily.

"Because he told me to stop where I was," was the equally short reply. "That's why he gave me his lantern, so there shouldn't be any chance of setting fire to the straw."

"Bosh!" sneered Sir Roger at this. "There's the ladder all ready. Give me the lantern!" he commanded, preparing to ascend himself.

"I know what the policeman told me to do, and I'm going to do it!" snapped the commissaire surlily.

"Confound it!" flashed out Sir Roger. "Do you think I care a straw what that fool says?"

"It's just 'cause he was crring about the straw that he said it!" was the grim answer.

"Oh!" said Sir Roger, with an ugly lift of his lip. "So that's the talk, is it? Very well, my man, we'll see about that when it comes to paying for this job. Arrest or no arrest, I'll see you hanged before I give you a penny!"

He had forgotten that Mat was standing so near. The youngster had heard him, however, and burst into an angry yell.

So now he knew why this fellow Parsley was showing such relentless animosity over a mere flick of a whip.

"You cur!" he cried. "So that's it, is it? Dirty bribery!"

Whether Sir Roger really believed that Mat was going to hurl himself on him or not is hard to say. At any rate, he scuttled up the ladder as if all the fiends were after him.

For the first dozen spokes all was firm as a rock. But, as Mat had suspected, the ladder was not so securely planted against the edge of the trap as it looked.

Sure enough, as soon as the climber had gained a certain height, down it came with a bang.

With one devastating swoop it crashed to the stable floor. A bale of peat moss across which it pitched converted it into a monster tipcat.

Parsley, the porter, at the lower end,

had no time to skip clear. He was caught in its upward jerk and sent whirling almost to the rafters.

Then down he came wollop on the back of Sir Roger, who apparently was still trying to bore a hole through the cobblestones with his skull.

"Yah! Oosh! Oh, my poor ribs!" roared Parsley, rolling about on his prostrate fellow-victim, but making no attempt to roll off him.

The latter, meantime, was ominously silent—so silent, in fact, that even Mat was moved to pity.

He had jumped to his rescue, but before he could reach him the order of things was reversed. It was Sir Roger who was doing all the howling. He was punching out and kicking like a madman.

The trouble was the bullseye lantern, which, though almost red-hot, was being unthinkingly applied to his ear by Parsley.

"You ass! You fiend! Stop it! Take it away!" bellowed the baronet, flinging off his dazed confederate at last.

Then, snatching up the still-shining bullseye, he hurled it in blind rage full at the commissioner's head. It missed by an inch only, and went whizzing across the stable.

Now the latter was an empty one, as has been said, used for storing loose straw. Into the heart of this inflammable heap then the lantern plumped, and, as luck would have it, the slide flew open.

"My goodness! Look!" yelled Mat, who saw in a glance what was happening.

The straw had caught alight. He flung himself headlong on the heap to beat out the flames.

But he was too late, however, and in a trice the flames had spread with a flash and a roar, and the famous Furzedown Stables, with seventy thoroughbreds and but five men to save them, were ablaze!

News of Lord Riplade!

THE orange glare of flames through the trapdoor into the loft quickly apprised Police-sergeant Widgin that Furzedown Stables were ablaze.

He thought no more of the hunt for the elusive American, but went scrambling down the nearest ladder to the ground.

"'Twas 'im done it, sergeant, not me!" protested Parsley, the commissioner, promptly. "Sir Roger chucked your bullseye into the straw and set it alight."

"No, I didn't, you liar!" spluttered Sir Roger, scared out of his wits.

"Yes 'e did, sergeant! Don't you believe 'im!" snapped the other. "Lost his nasty temper just 'cause 'e fell off a ladder. That's as true as I'm 'ere, and I'm as innocent as a new-born lamb!"

Each was so overwhelmed at what he had done that neither had made the remotest attempt to go to young Mat's assistance.

Mat, finding it impossible to beat out the burning straw, came butting out through the smoke to bring up one of the portable fire-engines with which the stables were supplied.

To Mat's relief and delight, he found someone already trundling the hand fire-engine to the scene of the blaze. He was more surprised still when he realised that it was his friend Dick Derringer, alias Derringer Dick, as the police warrant had described him.



As Mat held on tightly to the trailing reins of the galloping mules Dick Derringer sent his improvised lariat sailing through the air to land on the necks of the centre pair!

"Great Scott! Is that you?" panted Mat. "Don't show yourself along this way. The police are here to arrest you. Give me the engine, and bolt!"

"Bolt, sonny? What, and leave you in this tarnation fix? Not much!" replied the American scornfully. "I reckon the police won't touch me till the fire's under. So come along!"

And he was right. Widgin himself came trundling up just then, attracted by the rattle of wheels. He took no more notice of the fugitive than if he had been an archbishop.

"You look arter your 'osses, Master Martingale!" he told Mat. "I know how to work these things. Leave it to me."

Off dashed Mat then to lead out the animals in the stalls nearest the blaze. Fortunately the burning stable was right at the end of its row, with the wind setting the flames in the direction where they could do least harm.

Fortunately, too, the horses adjacent to the fire were steady old stagers who gave scarcely any trouble.

The chemical engine also worked like magic. The fierce outburst was checked before the loft overhead could catch alight, and long before anyone could credit it the danger was past.

"Well I'm jiggered!" was all Mat could get out for quite five minutes after the last spark was out.

The catastrophe had promised to be so overwhelming; it seemed too good to be true.

Then stolid old Widgin turned to the American, both begrimed with smoke and sweat. But before he could utter a word the commissioner anticipated him.

"No, sergeant, don't touch 'im—please don't!" he pleaded hysterically, thrusting himself between the policeman and his prisoner. "I withdraws everything I said against this gentleman—in fact, I begs his pardon for all I've done!"

"What! After you've got out a warrant and dragged me down here to arrest him?" demanded the policeman, with genuine astonishment, though he had seen from the first that there was something fishy about the charge.

"Yes, after all that!" admitted the

commissionaire miserably. "I don't want to go on with the case, particularly after this mess-up we've caused—"

"And after Sir Roger, who put you up to this dirty business, has told you he won't give you a penny, whether my friend is arrested or not!" chipped in Mat, with withering scorn. "Where is the cad now, so that I can tell him so to his face, eh?" he added, looking round for Sir Roger Rackstone.

But the latter had taken advantage of the excitement of the outbreak to quietly disappear.

"Yes, it's the truth, Widgin!" Mat assured the police-sergeant. "I heard the blackguard make the threat in those identical words. He had already put all our stable-hands up to striking, and he wanted my friend arrested, just to make sure that I had no one left to-night to help me in my fix."

Police-sergeant Widgin turned a glaring eye on the trembling commissioner.

"Is this right what Master Martingale says?" he suddenly thundered. "Out with it!"

The other began to stutter afresh; but Widgin had already made up his mind for himself. With a wrathful glare he leapt at the wretched Parsley and gripped his collar with a fist like a bagful of nails.

Then he ran him all down the row of stables and up the avenue to the entrance-gates as fast as his tottering legs could carry him.

What happened there only the stars and the brooding hills could see; but after a succession of leaden thuds and a chorus of anguished yelps, the worthy officer returned limping, and furtively caressing one big toe.

Mat told him then exactly what this assault was which figured in the charge against the American, and this led to the recital of the capture and a description of the mule team still at large.

"All right, master!" said Widgin, noting these facts in a notebook so capacious that it looked like a small and badly-stuffed portmanteau. "You leave this little affair to me. I don't suppose your friend will hear any more about it, nor you neither; and as for the

mules, if they ain't been hid for the purpose, our chaps will have dropped on to 'em by daylight. So I'll let you know."

As all fear for a further outbreak was now at an end, and the frightened horses round about were settling down, the party adjourned to the house.

Here the sergeant, after rinsing the smoke out of his mouth, took his leave.

"So," said Mat, after returning to his new friend, "your name is Dick Derringer, is it?"

"Yep; Dick Derringer or Derringer Dick. That'll find me, I reckon, out in Montana or down in the River Plate. It's been my tally ever since I landed out a tenderfoot from England."

"What! You are a Britisher, then?" exclaimed Mat, in delight.

"Yep; British bred and born."

"Great Scott!" gasped Mat. And then their conversation while waiting during the meeting of stewards suddenly flashed back to him. "I say, by the way, didn't you say something about knowing this new heir to the Riplade estates that they're all hunting for?" he demanded.

The stranger sat silent for a long minute as if weighing up many things in his mind.

"Why, yes, I've heard about him. I can't say I ever saw his actual face. That was up in Guanaco, in the Argentine."

"Guanaco!" exclaimed Mat. "Why, yes, that's right. I've heard dad say that that was where the lawyers had traced a young fellow who might have been the missing heir; but by the time they could send there he had vanished."

"Is that so?" drawled the other.

"Yes. But how did you know that he was a grandson of Lord Riplade?" persisted Mat. "Did he go bouncing about it? I always heard he had changed his name."

"So he had; but I happened to find it out," was the quiet reply, "though how I'm not going to tell you."

"But you'll write to the lawyers at once, won't you, and do all you can to help them?"

"Waal, no. Why should I?" retorted

Derringer Dick. "For one thing, I'm not so sure that I want everyone to know where I am myself; and again, if you turn trainer, as you said, and hold the Whiplash Colt safe for him, I don't see he stands to lose anything, even if he is a few months late in claiming the chips. In fact, from what I know of the feller, it'll about do him good to sweat a bit."

"You don't like him, then?"

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not going to worry myself on his account, anyway; and no more must you, sonny, for if you do you'll be interfering in private concerns of my own, which I particularly don't want raked up just yet awhile."

Mat looked a little surprised. His friend's nickname, Derringer Dick, suggested something dangerous. He hoped he had not been pistolling somebody in a quarrel, and had had to fly the country in consequence.

However, the other seemed to notice nothing. He merely impressed on Mat again the necessity of keeping silent and leaving everything to him.

"I can get word through to his new lordship, if nobody else can," he finished reassuringly.

"And you will!" persisted Mat.

Again the other nodded; but it was such a nod as made Mat feel that it was more binding than any legal oath, however attested, signed, and sealed.

The Procession!

THERE was no more scares that night, fortunately, and Mat, for a wonder, slept like a top.

When he did awake it was six o'clock, and broad daylight, and his new pal, Dick Derringer, had vanished from his room.

Mat's heart went plump. Was he an impostor? He might be, for, after all, Mat knew nothing about him.

Yet a moment later, from the direction of the stables, he heard a cheery voice singing, and the clink of a pail. Mat was dressed and out in double quick time.

"Why, you beggar," he cried, "why didn't you tell me you were getting up?"

You've actually done half the work already!"

"Have I, sonny?" was the cool reply. "Well, then, we shall get breakfast all the quicker, that's all. I reckon you deserved to sleep it out, anyway, after you went through yesterday."

The two set to watering, rubbing down, and feeding; and if it was nine o'clock before they were sitting down to their own meal, the morning's work, at any rate, was done, and such horses as were to be sent away were ready for the station.

Moreover, Mrs. Grummidge had received a telephone message from Ewell Hospital, where old Tom Martingale was lying, to say that he was going on even better than was to be expected.

"And now," said Dick Derringer, as Mat preferred to call him, "what's that diary of racing engagements I saw kicking around last night? For, if Sandown Park is barred to the stable, I suppose that don't necessarily affect other meetings yet?"

"Not until the dad is finally warned off," admitted Mat, fetching out the volume.

He had forgotten this most important point amid all the fluster. Windsor races followed immediately on Sandown, and they were bound to have some horses entered for that. The Stunt was running, he knew, though that did not concern them now, for old Tom had warned Sir Roger that never again should he set foot in his stables after Sandown Park.

If there were others entered from Furzedown, however, it was more than likely that their owners would be among those telegraphing withdrawing them from Tom Martingale's charge.

"But if there's one entered, and we aren't told to scratch him, I reckon we've got to send him to the post just the same," suggested Dick.

"Why, yes—rather!" admitted Mat, devoutly hoping to find that such would not be the case.

And so it proved, to the youngster's delight.

"There's only Whiplash left in!" he cried. "He's entered for a two-year-old plate. But the dad would not have let him turn out, in any case."

"Oh—and why?"

"Because it's a race of no particular account, and Whiplash was only put down for it in case it came handy for a test. I'll send to Weatherby's, scratching him, at once."

"You will!" exclaimed Dick threateningly. "You just won't, I reckon! You'll run that horse, if you have to ride it yourself! Why, don't you see the chance it gives you?" he cried. "Here's Sir Roger just hugging himself, thinking how you're down and done for, and daren't show your face anywhere, and then up you come, smiling, just the same as ever."

Mat stared in surprise.

"Why, it's the best advertisement our new firm could have!" continued Dick. "And there's the stakes, too, to think about—three hundred guineas. We shall want them for capital, every cent."

Mat could not help laughing at this cocksure way of jumping at things. But Dick Derringer's enthusiasm was infectious, and the youngster resolved to ride Whiplash himself to-morrow, come what might.

Breakfast over, there was still no sign of the "strikers" appearing outside the premises, as Mat half feared. Nor was there any news of the lost mules.

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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 Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum; 6s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada) Saturday, April 26th, 1924.

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However, there was small time to think about them. Captain Kesvane's valuable thoroughbreds were ordered to be "boxed" on the eleven o'clock train from Epsom Town. So they had to hurry.

Mat led the string on his father's trusty hack, while Dick acted as whipper-in. And a nice job it proved, too, for every horse would have had an apprentice in charge of it by rights. They sheered and shied at every tuft of grass almost.

Nearing the town, Mat grew doubly anxious.

Unfortunately, there was no way of reaching the railway siding without passing through some streets, and if his charges got scared, and injured themselves, he alone was responsible.

"I only hope to goodness there's no beastly traction-engine to meet us on the way," he told his partner.

"Or a circus," suggested the other, with an uneasy laugh. "It seems to me, though, as I kin hear some blamed fool tooting a trombone somewhere ahead now. If he boasts that off in front of this yer bunch, I reckon we shall see fireworks!"

Mat had seen how the people they passed were laughing curiously; but his father's downfall, in any case, would have been a fine mouthful for the gossips to chew.

Zoom—zoom—zitsi—zoom—boom!

It was certainly a trombone performing somewhere, accompanied by a big drum, of all instruments.

"Why, har! Great Scott, it's the Dead March in 'Saul' they're playing!" exclaimed Mat in astonishment.

"It's likely to be a dead march for us two if we run into each other," jerked Dick anxiously. "Push on, sonny. The railroad station can't be far, is it?"

The notes of the funeral dirge were growing louder, and the thoroughbreds were getting more and more restive. Mat pushed them on at a trot. But round the next corner they came square in view of the source of the melody.

"My hat!" gasped Mat.

The next instant he was nearly jerked out of the saddle, as his led team shied away.

It was the Furzedown apprentices on strike demonstrating through Epsom Town. And, as Dick Derringer had surmised, it was they who had got his missing mules.

There they were, in all the glory of their black-and-white stripes, harnessed to a capacious lorry bedecked with the two strike banners, and other emblems besides.

Apprentices in jockey rig rode each pair of mules, as outriders; other apprentices and stable-boys marched before and behind.

On the front of the wagon was Scarfe, coolly wearing Sir Roger Rackstone's racing colours. An itinerant performer

on the trombone sat one side of him, while Bantin, a pal of Scarfe's, smote the big drum on the other.

But the crowning feature of the processional car was a giant guy, propped up in the middle.

Mat, with three shying horses to control, had small chance to see who this was supposed to represent. But he had a shrewd suspicion, nevertheless.

A moment later it was confirmed. The young brutes had stuffed an effigy in breeches and gaiters to resemble his father.

More than that, under his arm he was clutching a toy horse with the name "Stunt" painted on it, while the other hand held a huge bottle labelled "Martingale's Dope Mixture."

There were placards, too, all over the car, while libellous notices had been inscribed even on the mules' own hides.

But Mat had no time to take these in just now. Round and down a side turning his horses had whisked like the wind. Fortunately, the road led to the station goods yard. Ironical howls, cheers, and groans pursued him.

How on earth he managed to steer his scared charges through without trampling somebody to death he could not imagine.

Dick Derringer with his trio were close after him, too, pounding along like the wind. So the smash-up, if one had fallen, would have been appalling.

But fortunately the railway porters were coming. They flung wide the double gates, and through the shying horses dashed, until a row of trucks brought them up, all standing.

Willing helpers darted to their aid, for at a racing station everyone is used to handling mettlesome thoroughbreds. Mat and his pal flung themselves to the ground, and in a moment all danger was passed.

"And not a scratch among the lot of 'em, begosh!" declared Dick, who had been minutely examining their charges.

"And that's no thanks to those wretched curs up town!" said Mat, breathing hard in his rage. "Come along! Let's get the brutes cooled off and rubbed down, and then I want to get back and stop this cowardly show!"

His pal was quite in sympathy, needless to say. Hardly waiting to see their charges safely boxed in the horse-trucks, Mat and he mounted their own backs again, and set out to confront the strikers.

"I'll have Scarfe off by the scruff of the neck, and kick him the whole length of Epsom!" vowed Mat.

"And I'll have them mules of mine back, if I get ten years for manslaughter doing it!" said Dick, who had borrowed a forty-foot length of stout rope from the goods-yard foreman, and was now knotting a running noose at one end of it.

The blaring notes of the trombone made it easy enough to track down the procession. Mat found the High Street packed with townspeople, grinning until their mouths nearly reached their ears.

"Hallo! There he is! Young Martingale's back again. Just watch his face now when he runs into them. This ought to make him blush for his father, I bet!"

The red blood was already surging in Mat's cheeks long before he encountered their jeering laughter. But it was indignation, and not guilty shame.

His blood boiled as he thought how only a couple of days ago all these smug shopmen would have been scraping and bowing to the son of old Tom of Furzedown.

But here was the procession car in sight once more. Mat's appearance on horseback was the signal for a hurricane of hoots and groans.

"Blackleg—blackleg!" was the greeting hurled at Derringer Dick, the red-nosed trombone man breaking into a nightmare rendering of the ragtime melody, "Hitchy Koo," as an appropriate sarcasm for the occasion.

"Booh! Yah! Who doped the Stunt—eh? Gr-r-r-r!" howled the striking apprentices, flaunting their ill-scrawled placards for Mat's eyes to read.

"We claim support from all true sports," declared one. "The Stunt was doped, old Tom has slooped, and that's the last of him it's noted" was the amiable expression of another.

Round the neck of the guy itself was hung a big card with the words, "Warned off, by Order of the Sandown Stewards!" and underneath "Three Cheers for Sir Roger Rackstone! Hooley!"

At each corner of the wagon, too, to make the libel more complete, were enormous barrels labelled "Stunt's Sleeping Syrup, worth a fortune a bottle"; "Martingale's Rollomelasto, warranted never to fail," and so on.

What the police had been doing, allowing this rabble to play pandemonium in the streets, it is difficult to say.

However, just as Mat and Dick Derringer were spurring forward through the crowd, down a narrow side street a little mob of constables came bursting, and at their head, as they could see, was Police-sergeant Widgein.

The Runaway Mules!

"A. I. right! Stand back, you two! We're on to 'em!" roared the sergeant, seeing they were just in time to prevent a blood-thirsty collision between the two forces. He promptly grabbed the leg of the apprentice riding the leading mule.



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"Now, then, you young limb, where did you steal them mules from—eh?" he demanded, shaking him like a rat.

Meantime, other bobbies were treating the remaining postillions in the same summary fashion, while three or four tried to storm the wagon, intent on capturing Scarfe and the trombone man as the principal disturbers of the public peace.

Needless to say, they were resisted. Bantin, with his big drum-stick, fetched one bobby such a welt as knocked him spinning, while the trombone man swiped out with his instrument in a way that showed he meant to sell his liberty dearly.

All this was scarcely the wisest course to have taken, for the mules had been restive enough already. Now they simply bucked and squealed like fiends.

Sergeant Widgin was the first to pay for his indiscretion, the near-side leader reaching round and making an impromptu sandwich out of a large mouthful of his trousers and a small slice of his leg.

"Oh! Help! Murder!" bellowed the sergeant, fetching the beast a clip on the nose with his truncheon.

This was fatal. The team promptly backed, forcing the wagon on to the pavement and through the plate-glass windows of a big haberdashery shop.

"Pull 'em out! Catch their 'eads!" yelled the crowd; while Mat and his pal simply rolled in their saddles, choking with laughter.

Pull the bobbies did, and the apprentices, too, and with such good result that the mules suddenly bounded forward, and before anyone could stop them had got wound round a memorial drinking-fountain, and nearly pulled it up by the roots.

A tall electric lamp standard did actually succumb, nearly braining in its fall the wretched Scarfe, who still clung to the driver's seat.

"Hi! Whoa! Stop 'em! They're off,

they're off!" bawled the crowd, tumbling over each other to get out of the path of this veritable Juggernaut.

The brutes had bolted without a doubt, turning, as ill-luck would have it, up one of the narrowest and busiest thoroughfares in the town. Somebody was bound to be killed here for a certainty. Mat saw that.

He had gone just as white as any of the strikers.

"Here, Dick!" he gasped. "We must do something. We can't sit here like this."

And, suiting the action to the word, he clapped spurs to his horse, and was off like the wind in pursuit.

He did not know which way his chum had chosen. Cutting down a cross-turning, scattering everyone who came in his path, he gained a thoroughfare into which he knew the runaways must turn.

And, sure enough, along they came thundering, the wagon slowly shaking to bits at their heels, yet still with the guy of old Tom rolling drunkenly amidstships, and still with Scarfe clinging on to the driver's dicky, reinless and helpless.

But worse than this by far was to see a handsome motor-car entering the far end of the narrow street, all oblivious of the danger hurtling down on it.

Quite a young girl was at the driver's wheel, with a chauffeur beside her, and an elderly gentleman on the seat behind.

"Back! Go back!" yelled Mat to them, throwing himself out of his saddle, though why he could not for the life of him have told.

Better have remained where he was. It was too late now, however. Round whipped his frightened mount, and was away before Mat could make a second grab.

Now the youngster was left to tackle the runaways on foot, if he tackled them at all.

A less bold heart than his might have quailed. But the thought of that car with the girl in it, caught helpless in the

narrow lane, of the glass wind-screen, shielding her, and how she would be cut to ribbons with it when the smash came—these things steeled his courage.

No lad at Furzedown was pluckier at handling terrified or savage horses than Mat. He bided his time.

Dick Derringer he could now see, galloping along in hot chase of the wagon, whirling a rope. That he thought he was going to do with this, though, it was difficult to see.

Still, the sight of him spurred Mat's courage just when it needed it most. The leader mules of the six-in-hand team were now almost on top of him, bit in teeth, eyeballs glaring, galloping at full stretch.

"You young fool! You can't do nothing. Out of the way, and let 'em go!" screeched a voice from a window just above Mat's head.

"Can't I do anything?" panted the youngster proudly. And he straightway jumped for the flying reins.

The near-side mule stumbled promptly, and Mat felt all the bones of his foot smash to a pulp, it seemed, as it set its sharp hoof on it. He was dragged along half on the ground, but still hanging on like a bulldog.

"Bravo, younker! Who-oo! I'll scotch 'em now!" he heard Dick Derringer calling. And then, as he glanced back at him with despairing eyes, he saw what that whirling rope was for.

It was an improvised lariat which the American was swinging ready for the cast. And now, with Mat dragging at the leaders, he snapped his chance.

A final whoop, a sweeping forward throw, and out darted the noose like a snake, to fall neatly over the heads, not of Mat's pair of mules, but the ones just behind him.

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