

847
"SEVEN ON THE WARPATH!" A HIGHLY-AMUSING, LONG
COMPLETE STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

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THE TELL-TALE FOOT!

Mr. Ratcliff, the unpopular master of the New House, finds that his study has been visited by the ragers—and that they are still on the premises! (An exciting incident from the grand long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. contained in this issue.)



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,—My postbag is a real bulky blessing these days. Letters reach me from all parts of the world, assuring me that the "Gem" programme is simply it—perfect in every detail. Of course, that is not enough. It never was any use sitting down to contemplate the real beauty of past achievements. It is the new endeavour that matters. As the summer comes on there will be still further treats for "Gem" readers, so look out for plenty of pleasant surprises.

"THE KIDNAPPING OF KERRUISH!"

By Martin Clifford.

Our long complete St. Jim's yarn in next week's issue is a really magnificent example of the art of that prince of mystifiers, Martin Clifford. The famous author always manages to put a new complexion on things, and in the present case he has woven a plot, which for genuine, out-and-out skill, is matchless. We have the character of Kerruish well in the limelight. Kerruish was always interesting, and whenever one reads a tale about him, there is a longing for another. In next week's story he is on the rocks, and adopts a surprising plan to adjust matters, and bring in the cash of which he is in need. A chain of the most arresting circumstances, well described, will cause "Gem" readers to say that Martin Clifford has surpassed himself. You want to see what happens to Kerruish. It will amaze you. And it all just shows how, once a certain step is taken, anybody may be swept away on the tide of events, and, as a result, find matters very uncomfortable indeed. Kerruish is in a particularly ticklish position, and on Wednesday next you will be able to form your own opinion of how he acquits himself in a situation fraught with much peril.

PERSONALITY!

Excuse me mentioning this subject. It was driven in on me, thanks to a cheery letter from York, the city the old Latins called Ebor, and where Isaac lived in Sir Walter Scott's romance. Lots of things, historic and otherwise, date from York, with its celebrated ride of Dick Turpin; but for the present purpose the Northern city is interesting because of a fine letter from a supporter who lives up there. He tells me that he prefers certain yarns to others. What more natural? The "Gem" caters for all tastes. It is just here that personality comes in. People are all different. Difference of opinion does not alter friendship, or should not. It is the sauce of life. There is no greater error than to imagine that people are alike. Everyone has a special individuality, and is here for a special purpose. We are all distinct. I believe the mistake arose as to people being alike through somebody getting an impression of a crowd—the typical, humorous crowd. But each item in the throng is a being apart, with his own likes and dislikes.

WINNING THROUGH!

My correspondent just referred to tells me a touching little story of how his people
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have worried through some rough times, and come out into smooth water at last, all thanks to hard work. Now the sun is shining again. But as to putting one type of story before another—well, that is where the "Gem" comes in, with its varied programme of features to suit all readers of all shades of opinion.

ANOTHER GRAND ISSUE!

The "St. Jim's News" is rushing ahead like an express locomotive with full steam up. Next week's number fits the situation to a nicety. This is the period of spring cleaning, and Tom Merry & Co. have got out a supplement to meet the urgencies of the case. No two people think alike as to what is an ideal home. You have only to make a few flying visits round the St. Jim's studies to get an inkling of the supreme diversity of tastes in this respect. Baggy dreams of palaces, but he does not live in one. There is much merriment, to say nothing of some useful chunks of counsel, in the coming issues of the bright little organ of St. Jim's. Long may it flourish! I am getting shoals of compliments about the popular weekly which fits into the "Gem" like a glove.

THAT FOUNTAIN PEN!

If I could have my way I would order in a few tons of fountain-pens, and send one to every reader of the "Gem." I am sure it would be an attention well received, judging from the tone of a letter to hand from a chum who won a fountain-pen in our recent competition. Moreover, it would be taken as a hint—as I should wish—to all friends that I like having letters from Genites. That is a plain fact. The more the merrier.

"RIVALS OF THE RACECOURSE!"

By Andrew Gray.

Further exciting episodes in the life of Mat Martingale can be looked for next week. This superb racing serial contains the real vim and the atmosphere of the great sport, with all its glorious uncertainties and amazing surprises. We see here the workings of an inveterate enmity, and the hard fight made for life and good name by young Mat of the stout heart.

Your Editor.



Don't Miss
 This Great
 Cricket
 Yarn!

A SON OF SOUTH AFRICA

A Magnificent New Story
 of Cricket Adventure by
 Richard Randolph.

See this week's

BOYS' REALM

On Sale Wednesday, April 30th.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPER IS PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best story yet sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke to me.

THIS WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER! EASE IT!

Professor Crum Brown, of Edinburgh, had a ready wit. One day a colleague came to him in great distress. "We cannot pass this man," he said. "He is quite illiterate." "What?" said Dr. Brown, ready for a discussion. "If the fellow can cure a sick person, are we to keep him back because he is not a literary man?" "But he can't spell," said the horrified colleague. "He spells 'proceed' with one 'e'." "From what place does he come?" "From Ceylon." At once Dr. Brown flashed back: "That explains it, then. That's the land of the 'Cingalese'!"—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to W. G. McIntyre, 53, Locknell Street, Lochgelphaed, N.B.

A BRITISH POSSESSION!

"Tell me of a British Possession in Africa," said the teacher to Tommy Jackson. Tommy thought deeply for some moments, but could not find an answer. Teacher began to get angry. "You goose!" she said. Taking this for a hint, Tommy promptly replied: "Uganda!" (you gander).—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Winifred Hawkins, 41, Trafalgar Road, Cape Hill, Birmingham.

MYSTIFYING!

"What is the matter, John?" asked the mistress of the house, to the butler, who looked worried. "I've just received a letter from the master, instructing me to send on his drawing materials." "Well, that's plain enough." "Yes," replied John; "but I don't know whether to send on his paint and brushes or his corkscrew!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Stokes, 2 Bk., 47, Tivoli Place, Lingard Street, Nechells, Birmingham.

A HARD WORKER!

Applicant for a job to foreman: "Could yer give us a job, boss?" Foreman: "I am sorry, but I can't find enough work for the men as it is." Applicant: "That's all right, guv'nor: yer'd never miss the bit I'd do!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Darlow, 28, Dudley Street, Bedford.

(Continued on page 23.)

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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 No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

Listeners never hear good of themselves. So Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the Fifth Form master, has learned to his sorrow. In this magnificent yarn the chums of St. Jim's take the matter in their own hands and fairly make the New House master sit up and take notice!



SEVEN ON THE WARPATH!

A Highly - Amusing New Long
Complete School Story of the
World - Renowned Tom Merry
& Co., at St. Jim's.

BY FAMOUS
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Mr. Ratcliff Loses His Temper!

MR. RATCLIFF frowned. That was not an unusual performance on the part of Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's. He frowned more often than he smiled. On the present occasion it was the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that called forth his frown.

D'Arcy of the Fourth belonged to the School House. And he was cheerily mounting the staircase in the New House—Mr. Ratcliff's House. Nobody but Mr. Ratcliff could have seen any harm in a fellow belonging to one House calling on a fellow in another House. But it was one of Mr. Ratcliff's ways to see harm in anything and everything. So he frowned.

Arthur Augustus did not observe the frown; he did not even observe Mr. Ratcliff. He went cheerily on his way, and tapped at the door of Figgins' study in the Fourth Form passage.

"Trot in, fathead!" said the voice of George Figgins, from within.

Mr. Ratcliff stood at the foot of the staircase, and glanced up, still frowning. After some moments of thought, he mounted the stairs.

Quite unconscious of that fact, Arthur Augustus walked elegantly into Figgins' study, and bestowed a gracious nod and smile on the three occupants of that apartment.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked at him rather glumly. The chums of the New House did not seem in their usual high spirits. Even the sight of the swell of the School House, who looked, as usual, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, did not seem to cheer them.

Figgins & Co., apparently, were down on their luck. "I've come for you!" announced Arthur Augustus. "I twust you fellows are not twowstin' in your studay this sunnay aftahnoon?"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Figgins. "It's a wippin' aftahnoon!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are not goin' to waste a half-holiday slackin' about, I hope?" "This study never slacks, fathead!"

"You seem to have forgotten that we were goin' for a spin," said Arthur Augustus. "Blake and Hewwies and Dig are weady. I am weady. You fellows don't seem to be weady."

"It's Ratty!" explained Fatty Wynn. "He's come down on us, and we're kept in House bounds for the afternoon."

"Bai Jove! That is wathah hard cheese," said Arthur Augustus sympathetically. "Watty seems weally to have a wegulah down on you fellows. I am jollay glad he is not my Housemastah!"

"You're lucky!" granted Kerr. "I wish we could change him for Ratton!"

"He is a howwid old boundah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. There was a soft—a very soft—footfall in the passage outside. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not hear it. He went on:

"We're all down on Watty in the School House. We've made up our minds to give him the kybosh, you know. Studay No. 6 is failly on the warpath. We're goin' to make Watty feahfully sowwy for himself, and fivustwate his knavish twicks, you know."

Figgins & Co. did not look "bucked" by that assurance. Perhaps they doubted the ability of Study No. 6 to make Mr. Ratcliff sorry for himself.

"We wegard it as bein' up to us," continued Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You fellows cannot vewy well wag your own Housemastah, as you are in his House, and he always has a wotten eye on you. It's diffevent with us School House chaps. We can wag the old boundah, and we're jolly well goin' to do it!"

"Better leave it alone," grunted Figgins.

"Wats! Watty is a wottah—"

"After all, he's our Housemaster," said Fatty Wynn. "You School House fatheads needn't butt in!"

"And you'll only get licked," remarked Kerr. "You haven't much brains over in the School House, you know!"

"That's so," agreed Figgins. "We ain't proud of Ratty, but, after all, he's our Housemaster, and we're not going to let School House duffers cheek him. Forget it, Gussy!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Kerr made a sudden movement. The study door was half-open, and Kerr had caught sight of a shadow that fell across the opening.

His lip curled.

Mr. Ratcliff made it a special point to know all that went on in his House. Some of his methods of obtaining information would not have won the approval of the Head. Kerr made a quick sign to his chums as he spotted that long, lean shadow at the doorway.

Arthur Augustus did not observe it. He was not a very observant youth.

"The fact is, you fellows, we've taken up this mattah in the School House," he said. "We're all in it—our studay and Tom Mewwy and Mannahs and Lowthah—and young Wildwake—in fact, all the fellows who were wagged by old Watty when you fellows stood us a spread in this House the othah day. We are goin'—Bai Jove! What is the mattah with your face, Kerr?"

"Nothing!" gasped Kerr.

"You had a most extwaordinawy expression. We have made up our minds, you know, to make old Watty sit up—Wow! What are you kickin' me for, Figgay, you ass?"

"Shut up!" breathed Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

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Figgins pointed to the door. Arthur Augustus frowned. He had his back to the door, and was unconscious of the tell-tale shadow there. He took Figgy's gesture as an intimation to depart, and he was offended.

"I do not regard that as civil, Figgy," he said reprovingly. "If I am bowin' you, I will go with pleasuah. I do not regard this as gwateful, howevah, when I am explainin' how we are goin' to make that howwid old wottah, Watty, sit up—"

The door was hurled wide open.

Mr. Ratcliff, with a crimson face, burst into the study.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spun round in dismay. Figgins & Co. looked on with hopeless looks. Gussy had done it now—there was no doubt about that!

"D'Arcy!" Mr. Ratcliff was so enraged that he seemed scarcely able to articulate. "D'Arcy! How dare you!"

Arthur Augustus recovered himself in a moment. He adjusted his celebrated eyeglass in his eye, and looked calmly at Mr. Ratcliff.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Watcliff!" he said politely.

"Boy! How dare you! How dare you apply such expressions to me!" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

"What expressions, sir?"

"You are perfectly well aware of the expressions you used!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff.

"Possibly, sir," said Arthur Augustus coolly. "But you cannot possibly be aware of them, sir, unless you were listenin' at the door. I twust that that was not the case. I should be extremely sorry to believe that a Housemastah could be capable of actin' as an eavesdrippah!"

Figgins & Co. fairly gasped.

So did Mr. Ratcliff.

"Boy! How—how dare you? I—I will take you to the Head—"

"I am perfectly willin' to go to Dr. Holmes, sir. I am quite weady to answah for any expressions I may have used, and which you may have heard, sir—unless you were listenin'. If you choose to tell Dr. Holmes that you have stooped to listen at a studay door, that is your own bizney, sir!"

"Gussy!" breathed Kerr.

Arthur Augustus did not heed. He stood with his eyeglass gleaming at Mr. Ratcliff quite fearless.

There was a pause—a terrible pause.

Mr. Ratcliff seemed hardly to breathe. Arthur Augustus waited calmly. He did not think it likely that Mr. Ratcliff would take him to the Head, and admit that he had listened at a junior study door. Neither was he likely to admit as much to Mr. Ralton, the Housemaster of the School House. As Mr. Ratcliff had no authority to punish Arthur Augustus personally—D'Arcy not belonging to his House or Form—Gussy could not see what he could do at all. He was feeling, in fact, quite safe and assured.

The pause was brief.

Apparently it had not occurred to Gussy that, although Mr. Ratcliff had no right whatever to touch him, Mr. Ratcliff might, all the same, proceed to do so!

But that was what the New House master did.

He made a stride towards Arthur Augustus, and seized him by the collar.

"Come with me!" he articulated.

"Wow! Welease me!"

Mr. Ratcliff marched the swell of St. Jim's out of the study and down the stairs. His grip on Gussy's collar was like the grip of a vice. Arthur Augustus wriggled and expostulated in vain. In the lower passage New House fellows looked on in astonishment at the sight of a School House boy wriggling in the grasp of their Housemaster.

"Will you welease me, Mr. Watcliff?" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I am willin' to go to my own Housemastah—yawwooh!—I am willin' to go to the Head—ow! You have no wight to touch me, Mr. Watcliff, and I wefuse to allow you to—yawwoooooop!"

Arthur Augustus was landed in Mr. Ratcliff's own study. There, still keeping a grip on Gussy's collar with one hand, Mr. Ratcliff reached for a cane with the other.

New House fellows gathered at the end of the corridor and listened, with awed faces.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Loud and sharp the whacking of the cane rang from Mr. Ratcliff's study. It was ringing on the elegant trousers of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy, bent over a chair, wriggled and struggled in vain.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yawwooh! Oh cwumbs! I pwotest! Yawwoop! Help! You uttah wottah, Watty! You have no wight—Yawwoooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

It was quite certain that the New House master had no right to administer corporal punishment to a School House boy. But it was equally certain that Horace Ratcliff was assuming that right, and exercising it most energetically.

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Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"My hat! He's going it!" murmured Redfern, in the passage.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" The wild yells of Arthur Augustus rang through the study and the corridor. "Oh deah! Yawwooh! Ow, ow!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"There!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, panting from his exertions.

"There, you young rascal—"

"Ow, ow! Wow!"

"Now go!"

Arthur Augustus stood panting. He was aching from that severe castigation, and his noble countenance was quite white. But his spirit was unsubdued.

"Mr. Watcliff, I pwotest—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"I considah—"

Mr. Ratcliff made a stride at him, gripping the cane. Arthur Augustus delayed no longer. Ratty looked altogether too dangerous to be argued with. Arthur Augustus went—hurriedly.

CHAPTER 2.

Seven on the Warpath!

TOM MERRY came along to the bike-shed with Manners and Lowther, and found three of the Fourth there. Blake and Herries and Digby were waiting for Arthur Augustus.

"Seen a born idiot about anywhere?" asked Blake. The form of his question seemed to indicate that Jack Blake was growing impatient.

"Not till we got here, old scout," answered Monty Lowther cheerily. "Then we saw three all at once."

Tom Merry and Manners smiled, and Blake frowned.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass," said Blake. "We're waiting for Gussy. He's gone over to the New House, and seems to have lost his way back. I'll punch him when he shows up."

"Those New House asses were coming for a spin," said Digby. "They make out that they can beat us into Wayland by a quarter of an hour. We're going to show them they can't—only they seem to have cried off!"

"Bother that ass Gussy!" grunted Herries. "We're wasting time—talking to Shell fatheads!"

"We'll race you into Wayland instead," suggested Tom Merry. "We'll beat you by twenty minutes!"

Snort from Blake.

"Not in your lifetime, you ass! The way you Shell fellows bike is enough to make a donkey chortle!"

"No objection to your chortling if you want to," said Monty Lowther politely.

Whereat Tom and Manners chuckled. Blake paused to think of an adequate rejoinder; but before he could finish that mental operation Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared in the offing.

Six juniors stared at him blankly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking ruffled and flustered, displaying no sign whatever of the repose which stamps—or, at least, ought to stamp—the caste of Vere de Vere.

His noble face was full of anguish. His brow was thunderous with wrath. Blake, as he looked at him, forgot his intention of punching his noble chum for keeping him waiting.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Ow!"

"Been ragging with the New House chaps?" demanded Herries.

"Wow!"

"Now, you know House rags are off for the present, Gussy," said Tom Merry severely. "We've made it pax with Figgins & Co. till we've scored off Ratty."

"Yow-ow! I have not been waggin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have been bwutally attacked by a wuffian!"

"My hat!"

"You've been out of gates?" exclaimed Manners.

"I have not been out of gates, Mannahs. I was seized in the New House and attacked by a wuffian—a bwigand!"

"Who?" roared Blake.

"Old Watty!"

"Well, if you cheeked him—" said Manners judicially.

"I did not cheek him, Mannahs! I should vegard it as devogatowy to my personal dignity to cheek a Housemastah, even a man whom I despise. I alluded to him as a howwid old boundah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you call that cheeking him?" demanded Tom Merry.

"He could not have heard me call him a howwid old boundah, Tom Mewwy, unless he listened at Figgy's door. He is bound, as a gentleman, not to act upon anythin' he may heah suwweptiously."

"Ratty's no gentleman, you see," remarked Dig.

"Yaas, wathah! I offahed to go to the Head, but Watty did not want Dr. Holmes to know he had been



Mr. Ratcliff made a stride towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and seized him by the collar. "How dare you apply such expressions to me?" he roared. "Come with me!" "Wow!" cried the swell of St. Jim's. "Welease me!" The angry Fifth Form master marched Arthur Augustus out of the study and down the stairs. New House fellows looked on in astonishment at the sight of a School House boy wriggling in the grasp of their Housemaster. (See page 4).

eavesdwoppin'. So he attacked me in a lawless and bwutal mannah with a cane."

"Do you mean he caned you?"

"A New House mastah has no wight to cane a School House chap, Tom Mewvy; therefore I do not mean that he caned me. I mean what I say—he attacked me with a cane!"

Arthur Augustus squirmed painfully as he stood. He was feeling, and was likely for some time to feel, the effects of that terrific whacking in Mr. Ratcliff's study.

Tom Merry shook his head seriously.

"Ratty is getting jolly near the limit," he said. "Caning School House chaps is too thick."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gussy ought to speak to Railton about it!" exclaimed Herries hotly. "Whatever he did, Ratty was bound to report him to his own Housemaster, not to lick him himself."

"He is a lawless wuffian, Hewwies. But I am not goin' to Waiton about it. I'm goin' to punish Watty myself somehow. He has thwashed me. I am goin' to thwash him!"

"What?" roared six voices.

"Thwash him!"

"You silly ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You footling chump!"

"Weally, Tom Mewvy—"

"We're all on the jolly old war trail," said Manners. "But we haven't made Ratty sit up so far. Grundy tried it, and came a mucker. Glyn tried it, and bagged a flogging. Ratty seems to have all the luck."

"You Shell duffers aren't much good, anyhow," said Blake, shaking his head. "Better leave it to Study No. 6."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, are we going out?" asked Herries. "You ready, Gussy?"

"No feah! I feel gweatly disinclined to sit on a saddle at pwesent, Hewwies, or on anythin' else."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows, it is not a laughin' mattah. I am suffewin' wathah severely. I don't want to keep you fellows in—you wun off, and leave me to deal with Watty."

"You'll jolly well keep the peace while we're gone, then," said Blake warningly. "You know what an ass you are, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"You know what a burbling chump you are, Gussy!" Herries pointed out.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You know what a dummy you are, old chap!" urged Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"
"Now, look here, Gussy—"
"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away—rather painfully. His noble brow was corrugated in a deep frown. It was not only the pain of the castigation that worried him, severe as it certainly was. His dignity—a very important consideration with Gussy—had suffered. That was the head and front of Ratty's offending.

Until that indignity had been avenged Gussy felt, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry. He was prepared to let the sun go down upon his wrath and to rise upon it again.

Blake looked after him, frowning, and then wheeled his bike back into the shed.

"Not going out?" asked Tom Merry.

"Looking after Gussy!" answered Blake shortly. "We'll ride you Shell duffers off your legs another time. Can't let Gussy go and land himself into trouble."

And Blake and Herries and Digby, having put up their machines, followed Arthur Augustus to the School House. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther exchanged glances.

"It's too thick," said Tom. "Of course, those Fourth Form kids will get into trouble if they try conclusions with Ratty."

"Hear, hear!" agreed his chums.

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

Manners and Lowther nodded assent. And the Terrible Three, instead of getting their machines out, returned to the School House. Seven juniors of St. Jim's were on the war-path that afternoon—and Mr. Horace Ratcliff ought to have trembled had he known it. Fortunately, Mr. Ratcliff did not know it.

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Railton Puts it Plain!

"D'ARCY!"

"Yaas, sir!"

"What is the matter with you, D'Arcy?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Nothin', sir!"

The School House master stopped, and fixed his eyes on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy, in his progress towards the House, had been wriggling rather painfully; Mr. Ratcliff had laid on the cane not wisely but too well. Arthur Augustus was scarcely conscious of the fact that he was wriggling, but Mr. Railton noted it with astonishment as he watched Arthur Augustus coming up to the House. Hence his question.

"Are you hurt, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir. Nothin' to speak of."

"Come, my boy," said the Housemaster kindly. "It is clear to me that you are in pain. Have you been punished?"

"I have been whacked, sir," admitted Arthur Augustus reluctantly.

Deep as his grievance was, deep as was his indignation, Arthur Augustus had no desire to lay a complaint. He was, in fact, quite determined not to complain.

"You have not been punished by a prefect, D'Arcy?"

"I have not been punished by a prefect, sir."

"Then who has chastised you?"

"A wuffian, sir!"

"A—a—what?"

"A wuffian, sir," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I regard a person as a wuffian who has thrashed me without havin' any right to do so."

"Quite so, D'Arcy; and if this is a case of bullying, it is my duty to take the matter up," said Mr. Railton quietly.

"If you have been beaten by any person having no authority to punish you—"

"Yaas, sir, that is the case."

"Then you must give me the name of the person."

"Imposs, sir."

Blake and Herries and Digby were within hearing now. They listened quietly, rather hoping that Arthur Augustus would state the facts to the School House master. In their opinion, it was high time that Horace Ratcliff was stopped from meddling with fellows of another House. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came up, and several other fellows were drawn to the spot. Mr. Railton's expression was very serious. It was plain that Gussy had suffered severely; and from his replies Mr. Railton could only draw the conclusion

that it was a bad case of bullying. And in such a case, when it came to his knowledge, Victor Railton was wont to act promptly and effectively.

"Imposs," repeated Arthur Augustus. "We make it a wule in our steday, sir, nevah to lay complaints. If it wathah too much like sneakin', if you will excuse me, sir."

"I am quite able to respect your scruples, D'Arcy; nevertheless, I must look into this matter. When did this happen?"

"About a quarter of an hour ago, sir."

"And where?"

"In the New House, sir."

"Oh," said Mr. Railton. "If it is a matter of some rag, as you call it, with the juniors of the other House—"

"I have not been waggin' with the New House juniars, sir."

"Then tell me the name of the person who thrashed you, and whom you describe as a ruffian," exclaimed Mr. Railton, rather impatiently.

Arthur Augustus was silent. Mr. Railton waited for his reply, but he waited in vain, and the gathering circle of School House fellows looked on curiously.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton at last. "I will not compel you to speak, D'Arcy. I will speak to Mr. Ratcliff on the subject."

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Railton walked away towards the New House.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "The fat will be in the fire now!"

Which was the general opinion among the School House fellows. It was evident that Mr. Railton had, so far, not the slightest idea that it was his colleague who had administered a thrashing to D'Arcy of the Fourth; but it was certain that he would soon discover that fact.

Mr. Railton entered the New House, and spoke to Monteith of the Sixth.

"Is Mr. Ratcliff in his study, Monteith?"

"I think so, sir."

Mr. Railton walked on, and tapped at the New House master's door. A sour voice bade him enter.

Mr. Ratcliff did not give him a welcoming look as he entered. There was no love lost between the two Housemasters of St. Jim's. It was difficult for even the genial and good-natured School House master to get on with Mr. Ratcliff, who was sharp and wary and suspicious, and incessantly discovering offence where no offence was meant.

"I am a little pressed for time now, Mr. Railton," the New House master remarked, looking up from a stack of Latin exercises on the table.

"I shall not take up much of your time, Mr. Ratcliff. A boy of my House has been beaten in this House—"

"Indeed!" sneered Mr. Ratcliff. "Has he complained to you?"

"He has not complained, and refuses to give me the name of the person who ill-used him."

"Ill-used him!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes. He is evidently in pain, but he was very unwilling to answer my questions. It seems to me to be a case of bullying—"

"Bullying!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, D'Arcy—"

"Oh, it was D'Arcy?" sneered Mr. Ratcliff.

"D'Arcy described the person who thrashed him as a ruffian—"

"Bless my soul!"

"But refused to give me the name. It seems, however, that it was not a junior boy. As the affair occurred in your House, I considered it best to speak to you on the subject; it is not for me to interfere in your jurisdiction, Mr. Ratcliff."

"I should say not."

"I desire you, therefore, to take the matter into your own hands and inquire into it," suggested Mr. Railton.

Mr. Ratcliff's sallow face was growing red. He had exceeded his authority in dealing with Arthur Augustus, and he was well aware of it. He seemed to find some difficulty in meeting the calm, clear eyes of the School House master.

"There is no need for an inquiry, Mr. Railton," he jerked out.

"You mean that you know who the offender was."

Mr. Ratcliff snorted.

"There was no offender, Mr. Railton. The boy seems to have misled you. He was punished for insulting me in my own House."

"Oh!" Mr. Railton started. "Do you mean to say, Mr. Ratcliff, that it was you who flogged a boy of my House?"

"I do, sir!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

The School House master compressed his lips.

"Very well," he said. "This is not the first time, Mr. Ratcliff, that you have taken it upon yourself to interfere with boys under my authority. It will be the last, however. I shall place the matter before Dr. Holmes."

He turned to the door.

"You will do as you think fit!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

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"I uttably wefuse to let you youngstahs contwol me!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have quite made up my mind to thwash Watty!" Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances. As if moved by the same spring, they hurled themselves on D'Arcy as he reached the doorway. In the grasp of six pairs of hands he was whirled back into the study and plumped into the armchair, with a thud. (See page 8.)

Mr. Railton opened the study door and stepped out into the passage, the New House master's eyes following him with an uneasy gleam in them. Then Mr. Ratcliff called out suddenly:

"Mr. Railton! Stop a moment."

The School House master turned back.

"I do not desire a petty wrangle to be taken before the headmaster," mumbled Mr. Ratcliff.

"Probably not. That is my intention, however."

"The boy alluded to me in terms of gross disrespect—"

"For which I should have punished him adequately, had you left the matter in my hands, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master tartly. "I am quite able to keep my own boys in order without interference from this House. But the Head will decide this matter."

"One moment. I admit that I acted hastily," said Mr. Ratcliff, quivering with rage and humiliation. But he simply did not dare to let the matter go before the Head for judgment.

Mr. Railton made no reply, but he turned to the door again. The cup of Ratty's humiliation was not yet full.

"Stay!" Mr. Ratcliff's voice was almost husky with suppressed rage. "I—I am willing to say that I regret the incident, Mr. Railton."

"That is not sufficient, sir!" said Mr. Railton. "I must be assured that nothing of the kind will occur again, if you desire me to refrain from reporting it to Dr. Holmes for decision."

Mr. Ratcliff gulped.

"It shall not occur again!" he gasped.

"Very good," said Mr. Railton. "Then the matter may remain where it is!"

And with that he left the study.

Mr. Ratcliff sat and stared at the door that had closed behind the School House master; and the look in his eyes was not pleasant to see. His feeling towards his colleague at that moment were very like actual hatred. And probably his feelings would have been more bitter still had he known that two or three fellows in the passage had heard the voices through the half-open door, and were aware of what had passed. As Mr. Railton left the New House, Pratt of the

Fourth was retailing, in the Fourth Form passage, what had passed in the study—with many chuckles. And before an hour had elapsed all the New House had heard how Ratty had been put in his place; and very soon afterwards all the School House knew it as well. And it was not long after that that Mr. Ratcliff, who "nosed" out everything, knew that they knew it—and then Ratty's feelings could not have been expressed in words.

CHAPTER 4.

Looking After Gussy!

"I AM goin' to thwash Watty!"

"Gussy—"

"I am goin'—"

"Look here—"

"To thwash—"

"You thumping ass!"

"Watty—" continued Arthur Augustus.

"Now, do try to be a reasonable chap!" urged Tom Merry.

"I am goin' to thwash Watty."

Arthur Augustus seemed to consider that an incessant repetition of his statement amounted to argument. He repeated it again and again as his chums tried to reason with him, like the little maid who answered, "We are seven!" or like the celebrated Raven who perched above the poet's door and uttered the same response to all remarks.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had made up his noble mind. His comrades were glad that they had stayed in that afternoon to look after him. In his present mood Gussy seemed to require looking after.

"I have been thwashed!" he explained. "Watty held me ovah and thwashed me with a cane on my twousabs! I am goin' to thwash Watty. I wegard it as bein' up to me."

"You can't thrash a Housemaster!" bawled Blake.

"Pway do not wear at a chap, Blake."

"What?" yelled Blake.

"I have mentioned vevy often that I dislike bein' woared at."

"You—you—you—" gasped Blake.

"A weitewation of a pwonoun, Blake, is not an argument. Pway let the mattah dwop. I am goin' to thwash Watty."

"Do you want to be bunked from St. Jim's?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Certainly not. I wegard the question as widiculous."

"Do you think you can punch a Housemaster without being sacked?" asked Manners.

"I am not pwoposin' to punch a Housemastah, Mannahs. I should wegard it as a wufianly pwoceedin'. I am goin' to thwash Watty as he thwashed me."

"Great Scott!" gasped Monty Lowther. "You're going to tell Ratty to bend over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughin' mattah. I wegard it as bein' vewy sewious indeed."

"Railton's been over and ragged the cad," said Digby.

"The whole school is talking about it. Pratt and French and Thompson heard it all, and they spread it over the New House, and it's got to us. Railton made the cad apologise for touchin' a School House fellow."

"That was vewy wight and pwopah of Mr. Wailton. It does not altah the fact, howevah, that I have been thwashed."

"We're all on the warpath," said Herries. "We're going to make Ratty sit up. But you can't thrash him, ass."

"I am goin' to thwash him, Hewwies."

"And how are you going to set about it?" demanded Blake.

"I have not thought that out yet, Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh," said Dig sarcastically, "you're not going to walk into his study and order him to bend over a chair?"

"I wegard that as impwacticable, Dig. I should pwefere to do so, but it is impwacticable."

"Go hon!" grinned Dig.

"Howevah, I have quite made up my mind to thwash Watty. I considah it the only thing to be done in the circs."

"Fathead!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're not going to let you get the sack, ass!" said Tom Merry.

"I should wefuse to allow you youngstahs to contwolve me, of course. Pewwaps we had bettah say no more about it," said Arthur Augustus. "I have quite made up my mind."

The council of war was taking place in Study No. 6, in the Fourth. That council of war had been intended to evolve a scheme for making Horace Ratcliff sorry for himself. But D'Arcy had taken the bit between his teeth, as it were, and dominated the proceedings. And as Arthur Augustus had apparently made up his mind to take steps which could only end in his sudden departure from St. Jim's the chums of the School House were anxious about him. Thashing Mr. Ratcliff was quite an attractive idea, but as impracticable as it was attractive.

Arthur Augustus moved to the door.

"Where are you going, Gussy?" breathed Blake.

"Nevah mind, deah boy."

"Are you butting into the New House, ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Are you butting into the New House again?" shrieked Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would not wear at a fellow. It is weally offensive to my yahs."

"Gussy, old man—" urged Tom Merry.

"It is bettah for you kids not to know anythin' about my intentions," said Arthur Augustus. "Then you cannot get into twouble if there is a wow—see?"

The juniors exchanged glances. As if moved by the same spring, they hurled themselves on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he reached the doorway.

In the grasp of six pairs of hands, Arthur Augustus was whirled back into the study. He was plumped into the armchair with a thud. There was a fiendish howl from Arthur Augustus. The effects of Ratty's thrashing still lingered, and Gussy was in no state to be plumped into armchairs.

"Yawoooooh!"

"Now stay there, ass!" roared Blake.

"Ow! I wefuse to stay heah!"

"Sit on him!" said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"You uttah asses! Gewwoff! I wefuse—Ow-ow! Wow!" Arthur Augustus disappeared from sight. Four juniors sat on him, effectually pinning him in the armchair, while Blake changed the key of the door to the outside.

"Now come along, you fellows," said Blake. "We'll lock him in and leave him to cool off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded out of the study. Arthur Augustus bounded breathlessly from the armchair as the door slammed, and the key clicked in the lock. The enraged swell of St. Jim's dragged at the handle.

"Blake, you wottah—" he shouted.

"Ta-ta, Gussy!"

"Let me out at once, you feahful wottah!"

"Good-bye!"

"I wefuse to wemain in this studay!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps in the passage. Tom Merry & Co. departed. Breathless with wrath, Arthur Augustus hammered on the panels.

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"Hallo!" came a voice outside—the voice of Wildrake of the Fourth. "What's the row there?"
 "Let me out, Wildrake, old chap!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That wuffian Blake has locked me in!"
 "Great snakes!" ejaculated Wildrake, in astonishment.
 "What on earth has Blake locked you in for?"
 "Because I am goin' to thrash Watty."
 "What?" yelled Wildrake.
 "I am goin' to thrash Watty."
 "Then I guess you'd better stay where you are!" chuckled Wildrake, and he walked on.

Arthur Augustus hammered furiously at the door. But he hammered in vain, and he gave it up at last. Great was his wrath and his indignation; but he had to realise that he was not going to thrash Horace Ratcliff that afternoon, at least.

CHAPTER 5. Ragging Ratty!

"YOU Shell fellows had better keep clear."
 "But you Fourth Form kids will make a muck of it, you know."

There was a difference of opinion.

Arthur Augustus being safely disposed of, six juniors had turned their attention to the pressing business of the day—that of making Mr. Horace Ratcliff suffer for his sins. And while the discussion was going on they had sighted the long, lean form of Mr. Ratcliff going down to the gates. Whereupon Monty Lowther suggested a "rag" in Ratty's study while he was gone, a suggestion that caught on at once. It would be carrying the war into Africa, as Manners remarked—Manners being a fellow for classical allusions. But while the Terrible Three took it for granted that they had better handle the affair, Blake & Co. were convinced that the enterprise could only be a success in their hands.

"Six won't be wanted on the job," remarked Tom Merry. "A crowd would attract too much attention. Better leave it to us."

"Glad to, if you could handle it," said Blake. "But the trouble is that you couldn't."

"That's the rub," remarked Dig.
 "Fathead!"

"Study No. 6 being top study, we'd better take the lead," said Blake decidedly. "You fellows can go out on your bikes. You don't amount to much as cyclists, but it will keep you out of harm's way."

"You cheeky ass—"
 "Come on, you chaps!" said Blake.

Blake and Herries and Digby walked off towards the New House, thus settling the matter. Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, we're dead in this act," he remarked. "We may as well get a spin before tea."

And the Terrible Three went for their machines. With regard to the raid on Mr. Ratcliff's quarters, they hoped for the best, but they had their doubts. But Study No. 6 had to have their way.

Blake & Co. strolled carelessly into the New House, and found Figgins loafing about inside. Confinement to House bounds irked George Figgins extremely, but Mr. Ratcliff's word was law in his own House, and there was no help for it.

"Ratty's out—what?" smiled Blake.
 Figgins nodded.

"We're calling on the old scout," whispered Blake. "You might hang around and whistle if there's danger."

"Better not risk it," muttered Figgins. "Ratty's in a frightful bate since Railton jawed him."

"No risk, the way Study No. 6 does these things," Blake assured him.

And the three School House juniors, seizing a favourable moment when the corridor was deserted, slipped unseen into Mr. Ratcliff's study. Blake closed the door.

"Safe as houses!" he remarked. "It won't take us ten minutes, and then we'll get out of gates and work up a jolly strong alibi. Get going!"

The three juniors "got going."

They had ragged studies before, and the task came easy. They did their work with thoroughness.

In a few minutes Mr. Ratcliff's study was beginning to look as though a cyclone or an air-raid had struck it.

The ragers warmed to their work as they proceeded. They really forgot that they were dealing with a House-master's study, and carried on as though they were ragging Rake of the Shell or Cutts of the Fifth. In the midst of it the telephone-bell rang sharply, and Blake jumped.

"Stop it—quick!" breathed Herries.

Blake fairly bounded to the telephone and jerked off the receiver. Mr. Ratcliff being absent, he could not take the call; but if the ring was heard, it was very probable that someone would come to the room to attend to it. Blake & Co. did not want callers just then.

"Hallo!" breathed Blake into the transmitter.

"Mr. Ratcliff—"

"Ratty's out!"

"What?"

"I—I mean Mr. Ratcliff has gone out!"

"Are you sure he has gone out? He asked me to ring him up at five o'clock," said an irritated voice.

"Quite sure."

"Oh! Very well!"

The unknown interlocutor rang off. Blake replaced the receiver, and breathed hard.

"Narrow escape!" he remarked. "That might have brought somebody here. Go ahead!"

The ragers proceeded with their work.

Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might have considered his wrongs avenged had he been able to see the state Mr. Ratcliff's study was getting into.

Suddenly, from the distance, came a sharp whistle. Blake gave another jump.

"That's Figgy!"

"Bunk!" breathed Dig.

The three juniors ran to the door. That warning whistle meant danger, and probably that Mr. Ratcliff had returned. The bare thought of being caught in Mr. Ratcliff's study just then made the ragers feel quite cold down their spines.

Blake's hand was on the door, when he stopped, frozen. There were footsteps in the corridor, and a well-known voice:

"Poynings!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you heard the telephone-bell in my study during my absence?"

"No, sir."

"Oh! Very well!"

Blake & Co. exchanged a horrified glance. It was Mr. Ratcliff, and evidently he had returned to take the expected telephone call. He was almost at the door!

There was no escape for the ragers. They stared round the study in the hope of finding a place of concealment. Blake and Herries darted behind the screen in the corner; Digby squirmed under the table and crouched close. The door opened!

Mr. Ratcliff whisked into his study.

He stopped suddenly.

The sight of the wrecked room seemed to take away his breath. He stood and blinked at it.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

The three shivering ragers were not to be seen. Mr. Ratcliff, his face purple with rage, stepped back into the doorway. Poynings, a New House Fifth-Former, was visible at the end of the passage, and Mr. Ratcliff shouted to him: "Poynings! Come here! Call Monteith and Baker! Someone has been in my study—an outrage—a piece of hooliganism! I—I—" Mr. Ratcliff stammered with rage.

Jack Blake suppressed a groan.

There was no escape now! Deeply at that moment Blake wished that he had after all left the task of ragging Mr. Ratcliff to the Terrible Three. But it was too late to think of that.

In a few minutes there was a crowd round the doorway. Monteith and Baker, two prefects of the Sixth, stepped in. Fifth and Fourth-Formers gathered in a staring crowd outside.

"Who—who—who has done this?" panted Mr. Ratcliff.

"It—it's a rag!" stuttered Monteith.

"I can see that, Monteith! I want to know who is the author of it!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "I rely upon my prefects to keep order in this House during my absence. Apparently I can place no reliance upon them!"

Monteith coloured.

"We knew nothing of it, sir," he said. "I haven't the faintest idea—"

"It is your duty to know something of it, Monteith! The perpetrator of this—this villainy must be discovered at once!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "The—the wretches shall be flogged! This is not to be endured! Who—what—"

"Why, there's somebody under the table!" exclaimed Baker, catching sight of a leg.

"What?"

Baker shifted the table. Robert Arthur Digby was revealed to the general view.

"Digby! A School House boy!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, his eyes gleaming. "I might have guessed as much! Digby, stand up!"

Digby stood up, his face crimson. Mr. Ratcliff cast a wolfish glance round the room.

"Perhaps there are others here. Search!"

Blake and Herries stepped from behind the screen. The game was up now, with a vengeance!

"Probably there is another," said Mr. Ratcliff bitterly. "Search the room!"

But no other was discovered. The fourth member of the

Co. was, luckily for himself, locked up just then in Study No. 6 over in the School House.

"That's the lot, sir!" said Monteith.

"Blake! Herries! Digby! Follow me! I shall take you to the Head! Follow me!"

And three hapless juniors, in the deepest state of dependency, followed Mr. Ratcliff from the study and from the House.

CHAPTER 6.

Paying the Piper!

"YOU uttah wottahs!"

The key clicked in the door of Study No. 6 in the School House, and it opened. Blake and Herries and Digby trailed in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon them in wrath. With every minute of his imprisonment in No. 6 the wrath of Arthur Augustus had mounted, and it was now at boiling-point. The look he gave his chums was almost worthy of the fabled Gorgon.

"You wuffians! You wottahs! You fearful outsidsahs!"

Blake & Co. did not reply. They trailed miserably into the study, but did not sit down. The wrath of Arthur Augustus was to them at that moment a trifle light as air. They were fresh from an interview with the Head!

"I have been locked up in this studay for bouahs!" Arthur Augustus' voice trembled with indignation. "I am goin' to thwash you all wound! Do you heah?"

They did not seem even to hear the indignant tones of Arthur Augustus. They only groaned.

Arthur Augustus' look changed as he read the expressions on their faces. He realised that something was wrong.

"Bai Jove! Has anythin' happened?" he asked.

Groan!

"Have you fellows been landin' yourselves in twouble?"

Groan!

"You weally might have expected it, you know, without me to look aftah you," said Arthur Augustus. "I am weally almost afwaid to let you fellows go out alone!"

Groan!

"I must say that it serves you wight, aftah the howwid way you have tweeked me. But what has happened?"

Groan!

Arthur Augustus' wrath faded away like snow in the sunshine. He could see that his chums had suffered severely.

"I'm awfly sowwy, deah boys!" he said. "Weally, you know, I'm awfly sowwy! What is it?"

"Twelve each!" groaned Herries.

"Twelve what?"

"Head's birch!" moaned Digby.

"Gweat Scott! Have you been flogged?"

"Ow! Wow!" Blake twisted miserably. "Yes! Ow!"

And there was a chorus of groans in Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked very much concerned. There was no trace of wrath in his noble countenance now.

"Bai Jove! That's wotten! Have you been going for Watty?"

"Ow! Yes."

"And you were caught, old chap?"

"Yow-ow Yes! Wow!"

"And he took you to the Head?"

"MMMMMMMM! Yes! Mmmmmmm!"

"It's weally too bad, old fellows. It was just what you might have expected, without me to look aftah you; but I am weally sowwy. You've had a Head's floggin'?"

Groan!

"Does it hurt?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically. Blake glared at him. The question seemed to Blake quite superfluous.

"No!" said Blake, with agonised sarcasm. "It doesn't hurt! It's nice! It's so nice that we're going to ask the Head for another lot when we get over this! Ow! We're making this row because we're enjoying it, you dummy! Ow! Ow! Wow! Fathead! Yow!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Silly owl!" groaned Herries. "Chump! Burbler! Shut up! Ow!"

"Weally, deah boys, you should not allow even a floggin' to detewiwate your mannaahs!" said Arthur Augustus gently.

"Kil him somebody!" groaned Dig.

Baggy Trimble looked in at the doorway. Trimble's fat face wore a cheery grin. To Baggy Trimble there seemed to be something of a comic nature in this tragedy.

"He, he, he! You fellows had it hot?" he asked. "I saw Ratty marching you in to the Head. Redfern says you've ragged Ratty's study, and he caught you. He, he, he!"

Blake made a movement, but every movement was anguish just then. He let Trimble rattle on.

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"Must have been silly asses," said Trimble. "He, he, he! I say, you look like a lot of moulting crows, you fellows! He, he, he!"

Blake looked at D'Arcy.

"Can't you slaughter that fat villain?" he asked. "Do you call yourself a pal, you silly ass?"

"I will slaughtah him with pleasuah, deah boy, if it will give you any welief!" said Arthur Augustus.

He made a rush to the door, and Baggy Trimble vanished, without waiting to be slaughtered.

His unmelodious cackle died away down the passage.

Arthur Augustus closed the study door. Disrespectful eyes were not to be allowed to look in on the sufferings of Blake & Co.

The next hour was a painful time in Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus sympathised deeply; but the most heartfelt sympathy did not ease the anguish of a Head's flogging. Indeed, Blake & Co. seemed to find sympathy so futile that several times they told the sympathetic Gussy to dry up.

After an hour or so they were feeling rather better, but still very bad. Life did not seem, as yet, worth living.

"Bai Jove! Those Shell boundahs are comin' in," remarked Arthur Augustus, catching sight of Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther from the study window.

Blake & Co. did not heed. They were not interested in the Terrible Three or in anything else.

"You fellows feel weady for tea?" asked D'Arcy. "I will get it weady if you like."

"Blow tea!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Shut up!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Cheese it!" roared Digby.

Arthur Augustus cheered it. His chums were not yet in a mood of sweet reasonableness, that was clear.

Footsteps rang in the passage, and the sound of cheery voices. There was a knock at the door of Study No. 6, and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked in, fresh and ruddy from their ride.

"Well, how goes it?" sang out Tom Merry. "Did you rag the Ratty-bird in his giddy nest?"

"Have you made the old bird chirp?" asked Manners.

"Made a bungle of it, most likely," said Monty Lowther.

"What's the matter with you chaps? Can't you speak?"

Blake & Co. only glared dismally. Arthur Augustus kindly explained. The Terrible Three grinned; they could not help it. They sympathised; but they grinned. Study No. 6 had insisted upon handling the raid on Mr. Ratcliff; and this was how they had handled it. It was natural for the Terrible Three to grin; but grinning faces were not welcome in Study No. 6 just then.

"You sniggering chumps—" said Herries.

"Sorry!" smiled Tom. "But—"

"You gurgling jabberwocks!"

"Kick them out!" howled Blake. "What are those cheeky Shell cads butting in for? Kick them out!"

Blake and Herries and Digby made a rush. Three Shell fellows, taken by surprise by that unexpected assault, went sprawling in the passage.

Slam! The door of Study No. 6 closed on them.

"Oh, my hat!" Tom Merry scrambled up. "I—I—I!"

"Mop up the study!" yelled Lowther in great wrath.

"Come on!" gasped Manners.

Tom Merry caught his chums by the arms.

"Hold on—"

"I'm going to mop up those cheeky fags!" howled Lowther.

"They don't want mopping up, after a Head's flogging," said Tom. "Come on! Leave 'em to get over it."

And Tom Merry led his chums away. Study No. 6 were left in peace, to recover from their woeful experience. But the recovery was slow. Even at bed-time, when the Fourth gathered in their dormitory, Blake & Co. were looking very serious, not to say solemn. And they were feeling a strong disinclination to have anything more to do with Mr. Ratcliff, at least for a time.

CHAPTER 7.

Mysterious!

"IS Ratty," said Monty Lowther, "one of those forgiving chaps who never let the sun go down on their wrath?"

Tom Merry and Manners stared. Monty Lowther propounded that query on the day following Blake & Co.'s disaster. The Terrible Three were sauntering in the spring sunshine in the quad after dinner, and Lowther had been unusually thoughtful for some minutes.

"Not quite!" said Tom. "Quite the other sort. You know that as well as we do, Monty."

"Is he," continued Lowther, "the benevolent kind of gent to forget and forgive an offence?"



"You wuffians! You wottahs! You feahful outsiders!" cried Arthur Augustus. Blake & Co. did not reply. They trailed miserably into the study, but did not sit down. The wrath of Arthur Augustus was to them, at that moment, a trifle light as air. They were fresh from an interview with the Head. "I have been locked in this study for houahs!" D'Arcy's voice trembled with indignation. "And I am goin' to thwash you all wound!" (See page 10.)

"No, ass!" grunted Manners.

"Then," went on Lowther, "what do you think are his feelings towards our jolly old Housemaster, Railton?"

"Something like vinegar, I should say," answered Tom.

"Suppose," went on Monty, in a ruminating way—"suppose he saw a chance of catching Railton on the hop, and getting him into hot water with the Head? What do you think he would do?"

"Jump at it," said Tom.

"With both feet," said Manners.

"Agreed, so far," said Monty Lowther. "Do you think Ratty would be very particular in his methods, if he saw a chance at Railton?"

"No fear! He isn't particular in any of his methods," said Manners, his lips curling. "Gussy found him listening at a study door yesterday. A man who would do that wouldn't be very particular."

"Just so. Well, Ratty being as he is, I fancy I think there are ways and means of catching him out."

Lowther's chums did not look very hopeful. The campaign against Horace Ratcliff had not been, so far, a success. It really looked as if fortune was befriending Ratty. Blake and Herries and Dig were fed-up, for the time; and Arthur Augustus, though still determined somehow or other to "thwash Watty," had not yet made a move in that direction. His determination remained unchanged, but there appeared to be no means at present of carrying it out. In point of fact, tackling a Housemaster was a serious problem, as the chums of the School House realised when they fairly set their minds to the task.

They did not admit defeat by any means; still, so far, it was impossible to deny that Mr. Ratcliff had scored all along the line. He had been made to "sit up" to some extent; but floggings for the offenders had followed, and the price paid was too heavy. The Terrible Three were resolved to think of something better. But they had not thought of it yet, unless Lowther's present wheeze, whatever it was, was a

winner. And Lowther's wheezes, though many and varied, were not always winners.

Monty Lowther gave his comrades a rather indignant look. Apparently he had expected an outburst of enthusiasm.

"You fellows don't seem very keen," he remarked, with sarcasm.

"Keen enough, if there's anything in it," said Tom. "Don't propose ragging his study while he's out."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"That's a Fourth Form wheeze," he said. "Something better than that, I hope."

"I hope so," said Manners. "Well, what?"

"To catch a man out," said Lowther, "you've got to study his character. I fancy I've got Ratty's down fine. He's up against Railton for calling him over the coals and making him apologise. He's not particular in his methods. He would jump at any chance to disgrace Railton, if he could, and he would stick at very little. That's how I figure him out."

"That's his sort," said Tom. "But what are you driving at? We all know that Ratty's no gentleman."

"Well, then—"

The bell for classes interrupted Monty Lowther. The Terrible Three went in with the Shell. During class Lowther was observed by his chums to smile to himself several times, and in the intervals of smiling he looked quite thoughtful. They could guess that his mysterious wheeze was simmering in his active brain, rather to the exclusion of his lessons.

Classes over, Monty Lowther hurried from the Shell-room, and his chums followed him to the door of the Fourth Form room, where the Fourth were coming out. Lowther stopped Blake & Co.

"It's all right," he told them.

"What's all right?" grunted Blake.

"About Ratty—"

"Blow Ratty!" said three voices together.

"Leave him to me, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I am goin'!"

to thrash Watty, as I have said befoah. I have not yet thought out the details, but I am goin' to thrash him."

"Fathead!" growled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's all right," said Lowther. "I'm fixing it up for Gussy to thrash him."

"What?" howled Study No. 6 with one breath.

"I've planned it all—" said Lowther cheerily.

"You're talking out of the back of your neck, you mean," said Jack Blake morosely. "Catch you fixing Ratty. Rot!"

"Wait and see," said Lowther serenely. "Keep ready this evening for the grand tableau. That's all."

"Bosh!" said Blake and Herries and Digby.

"You'll see!"

Monty Lowther walked away with his chums, leaving Study No. 6 staring and sceptical.

"Look here, Monty, what jolly old bee have you got in your bonnet?" demanded Tom Merry uneasily.

"We're not going to let you get sacked, fathead," said Manners. "Gussy can gas about licking a Housemaster, if he likes. You ought to have more sense, old chap."

"He's going to be licked—and Gussy can lay it on," said Monty Lowther calmly. "Why shouldn't Gussy have a little harmless and necessary entertainment?"

"But it can't be done!" howled Manners. "Do you think a Housemaster will take a licking without raising Cain about it? We shall all be sacked, you ass."

"I've planned it all—"

"Oh, rot!"

"Ratty won't say a word—or if he does, it won't matter."

"Piffle!"

"Well, leave it to me," said Lowther. "I'm going down to the village now. Coming?"

"We'll come—and see that you don't get into any mischief, you duffer!" said Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther smiled serenely, and the Terrible Three walked down to Rylcombe together. There Lowther led the way into the local post-office, entered the telephone-box, and put in his pennies for his number. And, to the amazement of his chums, the number he gave was that of Mr. Ratcliff, in the New House at St. Jim's. Apparently the humorist of the Shell was going to speak to Mr. Ratcliff over the wires. A sharp, crusty voice came through, and Monty Lowther answered—in a voice that made his comrades jump. Tom Merry and Manners stood silent, as if rooted to the floor and mesmerised, while Monty Lowther carried on his talk in the telephone-box.

CHAPTER 8.

Caught on the Wire!

MR. RATCLIFF grabbed up the receiver irritably as his telephone-bell rang. Mr. Ratcliff generally did things irritably. He snapped an inquiry into the transmitter.

"Well?"

"I've been expectin' to 'ear from you, Railton, about that blooming 'orse!" came a voice through the 'phone, with a strong Cockney accent. "Look 'ere, win or lose, a man ought to stand by his bets. Wot about it?"

Mr. Ratcliff almost dropped the receiver.

The name of Railton, of course, showed him that the unknown speaker was on the wrong number; it was not an uncommon occurrence for one of the school numbers to be given in mistake for another. Young ladies at the telephone exchange, deeply engrossed in conversation on the entrancing subject of hats and spring fashions, were given to being careless in such trifling matters. There were half a dozen telephone numbers at St. Jim's, and the mistake was easily made—by a young lady deep in spring fashions. Not uncommonly did the Head take off his receiver in the School House to receive a message from the butcher, intended for the House dame. More than once had Mr. Ratcliff gone to his telephone in response to a persistent buzz, to find that it was the Head, or Mr. Railton, or Mr. Linton that was wanted.

What had happened before had happened again, that was all. There was nothing new or surprising in it.

What was new and surprising was what was said on the wires. It made Mr. Ratcliff jump.

He stood and stared at the telephone.

Ordinarily, Mr. Ratcliff would have snapped out that there was a mistake, and snapped his receiver back on the hooks. On this occasion he did not do so.

A sharp gleam came into his eyes. After the first moment of utter amazement in discovering that Mr. Railton was mixed up in betting transactions, his sharp, cunning brain worked quickly.

Taking a telephone call intended for another, on a confidential matter, and surreptitiously, was very much like opening another man's letter. But Mr. Ratcliff was not

particular on points of honour—especially when he was smarting under a well-deserved rebuke and humiliation.

Mr. Railton had humiliated him—and the smart was still sore. Any method of retaliation seemed to Ratty a good one. And now it really looked as if fortune was playing into his hands.

The Cockney voice came impatiently through, as Mr. Ratcliff stood in deep and cunning reflection.

"'Ere, Railton! Ain't you there?"

"Go on!" breathed Mr. Ratcliff into the transmitter. He was determined to know more.

"About that 'orse," went on the Cockney voice. "He's lost, and you know he's lost. I s'pose you don't want me to come up to the school, do you? You're keepin' this 'ere dark from your 'eadmaster, I s'pose? He wouldn't be glad to see Bill Loggins—what?"

"Ah! Um!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff, scarcely knowing what to say, but eager to hear more. This was like meat and drink to the New House master—he fairly gloated over the telephone. He was learning something—something that surprised and elated him. He was going to hold Victor Railton in the hollow of his hand.

"Well, if you don't want me to come to the school, Railton, you've got to come to me," went on the Cockney voice. "Got that?"

"Mmmmm!"

"Wot did you say?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Got a cold, Railton? Your voice sounds 'usky!'"

"Yes—yes, go on!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"You couldn't come along to this 'ere pub, I s'pose? Appearances to keep up, and all that." Bill Loggins chuckled. "Well, I've got to see you this 'ere evening. You know Pepper's barn?"

"Yes," muttered Mr. Ratcliff.

"You get to Pepper's barn at 'arf past eight, and I'll be there. There ain't nobody there, and we can 'ave a jaw in the porch, out of sight of anybody. You needn't be afraid of being seen—it will be dark enough. Got that?"

"Ah! Yes!"

"Well, I'll wait for you under the porch of Pepper's barn, at 'arf past eight. Mind, if you ain't there, I shall come up to the school, and chance it. Savvy? A man wants his money."

There was a pause. Mr. Ratcliff put the receiver back on the hooks and rang off. He thought that the simplest way out of the matter. He did not want Mr. Loggins to learn that he had spoken to the wrong Housemaster at the school.

He sat down in his armchair, and his eyes gleamed.

So that was the real character of Victor Railton! Mr. Ratcliff felt that he might have suspected it. He hadn't, as a matter of fact, but he might well have—he felt that Victor Railton kept up appearances—kept them up well; he was in the Head's confidence; Mr. Ratcliff was senior Housemaster, but the Head reposed more confidence in Mr. Railton than in Mr. Ratcliff. This was how the young man requited it. Under his carefully preserved appearance he was a gambling blackguard!

There was no other word for it!

This man Loggins, evidently a bookmaker or some such pest of the Turf, had constant dealings with Victor Railton—that was clear. Railton owed him money—lost backing a horse! That was equally clear. And what was quite as clear as anything was the fact that, should this come to Dr. Holmes' knowledge, Victor Railton would leave St. Jim's, never to return. Once that shady secret was brought to light, Victor Railton's career as a St. Jim's Housemaster was at an end.

Horace Ratcliff smiled.

In that very study Mr. Railton had called him over the coals, compelled him to apologise for his action, and to promise that it should not occur again. Mr. Ratcliff had not forgotten or forgiven. Mr. Railton would be sorry for all that when he was shown up in his true colours and turned out of the school!

"It is my duty—" So ran Mr. Ratcliff's thoughts. "It is my plain duty to open Dr. Holmes' eyes! He knows nothing of this—he does not suspect it. I never suspected it myself, though I can say that I have never wholly trusted Railton. I must see that the Head is acquainted with this before that reckless and unscrupulous blackguard brings open shame upon the school. It is shocking—shocking!"

Mr. Ratcliff tried to look shocked, for he felt that he ought to be shocked. But he could only look pleased. The man he detested, the man who had humiliated him, was—or soon would be—in the hollow of his hand! The thought was like wine to Horace Ratcliff.

"It is useless to report a telephone call to the Head! Railton would deny that he even knew the man—after what he has been guilty of a falsehood would cost him little. I could prove nothing—not even that there was anything said on the telephone. I must have proof before I speak out. Proof! Proof!"



"Wha—a—t!" Mr. Ratcliff made a sudden ejaculation as a grasp was laid on his arm. The next instant a grasp was laid on his other arm. A second more, and an arm was flung round his neck. "What—what—Loggins, you villain—Railton, you scoundrel!" spluttered Mr. Ratcliff. There was a faint chuckle in the darkness. (See page 17.)

Mr. Ratcliff ruminated.

"This man—this Loggins—is meeting Railton at Pepper's barn, the place where, I think, the juniors sometimes hold meetings. Half past eight is long after lock-up; no boys will be near the place. A good spot for a surreptitious meeting. But perhaps they will be not quite so safe from observation as they may imagine."

Mr. Ratcliff smiled.

Before he could expose Victor Railton in his true colours, he required proof; but the proof was easy to come at. He had only to be present at the meeting at Pepper's barn! The darkness would hide him, as well as it would hide the School House master and his disreputable acquaintance. He would learn all he needed to learn—he would know, after that interview, so much that no denials would be of any use to Mr. Railton. Once he had seen Mr. Loggins—and he intended to see him—he would be able to identify the man, and Loggins himself could be brought to the school, if necessary, to convince the Head. Mr. Ratcliff pictured himself hidden in the shadow of the barn porch, listening to the talk of the Housemaster and the bookmaker—listening to every word, learning the whole disgraceful story of Victor Railton's Turf adventures. After that he would follow Loggins, and learn where he lived—at least, he would strike a match and ascertain what the man looked like. With a little care he held Victor Railton at his mercy—under his thumb.

And Mr. Ratcliff's look, just then, showed how much mercy the School House master could expect from him!

Buzzzzzz! The telephone bell rang again, and Mr. Ratcliff jumped up.

"We was cut off, some'ow, Railton," said the hoarse Cockney voice of Bill Loggins. "Give a man his answer! Am I to expect you at the barn? Yes or no?"

"Wrong number!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Wot?" came the Cockney voice. "Ain't this 'ere the same number as I 'ad afore?"

"I neither know nor care. Ring off."

"Orlright! Keep yer wool on, guv'nor, whoever you are!" Mr. Ratcliff snapped the receiver on the hooks again.

He paced his study, smiling.

The bookmaker, doubtless, would get Mr. Railton's

number, and speak to the School House master. The arrangement to meet at Pepper's barn would be made. Bill Loggins would doubtless learn that he had been talking to a wrong party; but he would not know who that wrong party was, and probably would not care, or give the matter any thought. Bill Loggins could not possibly know that he had been talking to Mr. Ratcliff, and that Mr. Ratcliff was Victor Railton's enemy!

Monteith came to the study a little later, on some business connected with his duties as a House prefect. He was surprised to find Mr. Ratcliff in a smiling good humour.

Horace Ratcliff was unusually good-tempered and gracious. The Sixth-Former was more and more surprised. He could see that something had occurred to please his Housemaster very much, and he wondered what it was.

"Ratty's in great spirits," he told Baker of the Sixth, after he had left Mr. Ratcliff.

"Is he?" said Baker. "That means something unpleasant for somebody."

Mr. Ratcliff walked about his study in great good humour. During the next hour or two he kept an eye on his watch. And before eight sounded from the clock tower, Mr. Ratcliff had quietly left the New House. He was going to be early on the ground—securely concealed to watch and spy before either Mr. Loggins or Mr. Railton arrived there. His face was quite bright as he walked away from the school, and took the footpath across the dusky fields towards Pepper's barn.

CHAPTER 9.

Great Expectations!

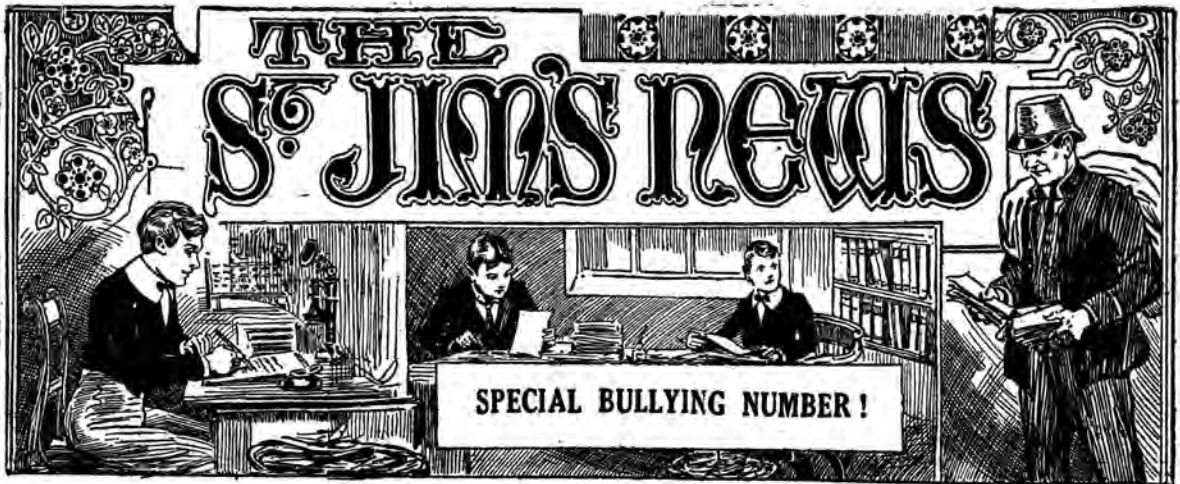
"MONTY, you ass—"

"Lowther, you duffer—"

Tom Merry and Manners walked out of the post-office with their smiling chum, still in a state of amazement, Monty Lowther's talk on the telephone had fairly taken their breath away.

"It's a cinch, as Wildrake would say!" Lowther remarked, as they strolled into the village street.

(Continued on page 18.)



EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

A BULLY is a pest and an abomination. Nobody likes him. He is never the idol of the school, though he might consider himself "cock of the walk" and monarch of all he surveys. He is very handy with his fists, but as a rule he is deficient in brain-power—or, as Monty Lowther would put it, there's a leakage in his think-tank. He believes in brawn, not brain, and he thinks that Might is Right, and that physical strength is everything.

Happily, there is a shortage of bullies at St. Jim's. We don't breed them at this school. And I don't think you will find many bullies in other schools, either. The traditional school bully—square-jawed, heavy-featured, and iron-fisted—is largely a myth. He might have existed fifty years ago, but he is now practically extinct. No longer does the timid new boy, on his arrival, have to face a ferocious-looking lout nearly twice his size, who proceeds to bash, batter, and annihilate him. No longer do we read of small boys being tortured and persecuted by the official school bully.

Why is bullying on the wane? Well, I expect the exponents of the ignoble art of bullying have found that it doesn't pay. Bullies generally come a terrific cropper in the long run. Small boys who have had their arms twisted and their ears pulled are apt to store such incidents in their memory, and sooner or later they all band themselves together, and beard the bully in his den, and give him a warm time. He is given a dose of his own medicine, and after being clumped and thumped and bumped, and left helpless on his study carpet, the bully comes to the conclusion that bullying is not worth while.

I said that bullying was practically extinct. Practically, yes, but not entirely. There are still a few fellows with bullying tendencies knocking around. Knox of the Sixth, for instance. He is far too fond of wielding the ashplant, and cuffing his unfortunate fag if the toast happens to be burnt or if the sausages are scorched to cinders. Knox is a prefect, and he believes in ruling by fear rather than by kindness. We are not afraid to show him up in public, and that is our chief reason for publishing this Special Bullying Number. Knox will be simply furious when he sees it. Can't you picture him snatching up his ashplant and striding forth in search of the editor and sub-editors of the "St. Jim's News"? He will come down like a wolf on the fold; but we shall be quite ready for him. Prefect or no prefect, if he attempts to bully our noble selves, he will go out of the editorial sanctum on his neck. In fact, there will be hard knocks for Knox! I think I shall form a Society for the extermination of Bullies, Brutes, and Beasts. Anybody care to join? Our object will be

(Continued at foot of next column.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 847.

ON THE WARPATH!

By Gerald Knox.

I'M in a towering rage to-day,
My brow is black as thunder;
Wait till young D'Arcy comes my way!

Where is he now, I wonder?

Fag! Fag! Fag!
His puny form I'll scrag!
He's broken all my crockeryware,
He simply drives me to despair.
I gnash my teeth and tear my hair—
Fag! Fag! Fag!

He gives a startled little squeak,
Then out of sight goes streaking;
We're always playing hide-and-seek:
He's hiding, and I'm seeking!

Fag! Fag! Fag!
He's played a hateful "rag."
He's turned my table upside down,
Put mice inside my dressing-gown,
And made me fume and fret and frown—
Fag! Fag! Fag!

I give him half-a-crown a year,
Also an annual outing;
Yet the young rascal won't come near,
Although he hears me shouting:

Fag! Fag! Fag!
My ashplant I will wag,
Then bring it down with fearful force,
Until he hollers with remorse.
I've got to find him first, of course!
Fag! Fag! Fag!

The cheeky, artful little guy!
His conduct's simply hateful.
A kind and generous master I,
And yet he's most ungrateful.

Fag! Fag! Fag!
The minutes seem to drag,
And yet I hear no hurrying feet:
He's safe and sound in some retreat.
Where has he got to, I repeat?
Fag! Fag! Fag!

(Continued from previous column.)
to stamp out bullying once and for all—to face the strong and help the weak, and to make tyranny a thing of the past.

Tom Merry

SCHOOLBOYS NEVER SHALL BE SLAVES!

A Vigorous Article by Wally D'Arcy.

KNOX of the Sixth is in a fearful stew. He always is! He's lost his temper, he's lost his head, and he's lost his fag!

I have gone on strike. I have risen in rebellion against orthodoxy! I'm fed-up with fagging for Knox. He Knox me about too much. (Pardon the pun.)

I'd do anything for old Kildare. He's a brick. He looks after his fags well—pays them hansom wages, doesn't overwork them, and gives them liberal outtings. Fagging for Kildare is a picnic. Fagging for Knox is a nightmare!

Let me give you some idea of the duties I had to perform. First of all, I had to wake Knox up in the morning, and take him an early cup of tea. One morning, not knowing the time, I woke him at dawn, and there was a terrible shindy! The following morning I awoke him to oversleep, and he was late for brekker, and there was another shindy! Whatever I did for Knox it was always wrong. Either he complained that I woke him too soon, or too late, or too punctually. What are you to do with a fellow like that?

After waking Knox and giving him his tea—which he always declared was lookwarm and not fit to drink—I used to have to sweep his study with a long-haired broom, and scrub it with a short-haired brush. I also had to shake and beat the carpets. If I didn't, I got shaken and beaten instead! Then I had to clean the windows and sweep the chimney—not a sootable occupation for the son of a gentleman—and dust the pictures, and do all manner of odd jobs.

During the day I was always running errands for Knox. It was "Pop down to the villidge and get so-and-so," or "Pop over to Wayland and get so-and-so," or "Pop over to the pawnbroker's and pop my gold watch!" I got sick and tired of "popping" here, there, and everywhere.

Then, of course, I had to lay the tea, and make the toast, and fry the sossidges, and so fourth. There was no limit to my duties. And Knox used to cuff me and clout me and clump me, until I felt that life wasn't worth living.

At last I rose up in indignation, and told Knox to go to Jerryco! "I won't fag for you any longer!" I cried. "Schoolboys never shall be slaves! I'm jolly well going on strike! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Knox is now without a fag, and is tearing his teeth and gnashing his hair.

On his door is pinned the following notice: "Fag wanted. Must be clean and tidy. Good wages, and an easy time. Apply in person. GERALD KNOX."

Evidently there are no takers, for someone has written underneath the notice: "Once bitten, twice shy."



DOWN WITH BULLYING!

Our contributors speak their minds on this subject.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

"I considah that bullyin' ought to be regarded as a capital offence. By 'capital,' I don't mean excellent or splendid. I think bullyin' is atrocious! When I was a fag I was often cuffed on my noble nappah, or had my illustrious ear pulled by some bullyin' beast who was twice my size. But I'm too big to be bullied now, bai Jove! If anybody twies it on, I shall push back my cuffs an' pwoceed to administrah a feafuhl thwashin'! Knox of the Sixth had bettah take warnin', for I am perfectly sewious in this mattah! Yaas, wathah!"

MONTY LOWTHER:

I don't agree that bullying ought to be entirely stamped out. The bullies themselves ought to be bullied! That's the best way to deal with them. Give them a dose of their own medicine, by Jove! I wish it wasn't a criminal offence

GERALD KNOX:

I seem to have the reputation of being a bully. I really don't know why. I'm really an awfully decent sort—as gentle as a cooing dove, and as docile as Mary's little lamb. I wouldn't harm a single hair of my fag's head. As for cuffing him, or kicking him, or chastising him—why, I wouldn't dream of such a thing! True, I keep an ashlant in my study, but it's only an ornament. I never use it. I also possess a cricket-stump, but I always use it for practice at the nets. I never wallop anybody with it. Oh dear, no! I can't think what I've done to deserve the reputation of being the Bully of St. Jim's. I am perfectly harmless. I can assure you; and even when a fag "cheeks" me to my face I never lose my wool, but simply stand and smile sweetly at him!

(Knox is evidently trying to be funny.)

The fact is, he is a bully and a bounder and a braggart; and I can call over two hundred witnesses to prove it!—Ed.)

CURLY GIBSON (Third Form):

I think all bullies ought to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and then mobbed, and then lynched, and then boyled in oil, and then flayed alive!

(Methinks they would have to be flayed dead, after going through all the previous tortures!—Ed.)

PERCY MELLISH:

I've got quite a sneaking regard for bullies. They are fine fellows, and I simply adore them—except when they start bullying ME! I'd be a bully myself, if I was bigger and broader, instead of being such a weedy specimen. It must be great fun, twisting fellows' arms until they squeal for mercy. I often regret I wasn't alive in the days of the Spanish Inquisition. What with the rack, and the thumbscrew, and all the rest of it, they used to have high jinks! People have become soft and silly nowadays. They are doing away with all the grand old forms of torture. Why don't they revive the stocks, and the pillory, and the whipping-block?

(They probably will; and if they do Percy Mellish will be the first victim!—Ed.)

DICK REDFERN:

Heard the latest Limerick?

"There's a bullying bounder named Knox

Who gives all his victims such shox

That they loudly exclaim

'It's a sin and a shame!

He ought to be put in the stox!"



The ST JIM'S POLICE COURT!

Our special representative describes the latest proceedings.

Mr. Levison: "In both, your worship. For a time, he was quite an affectionate owner. He fed them, and washed them, and combed their hair, and trimmed their whiskers, and did everything that a dutiful owner should. Then his feelings suddenly changed towards them, and he began to neglect them. For four solid days they remained in his locker, without visible means of subsistence."

At this there was a howl of "Shame!" Magistrate (in shocked tones): "Do you really mean to say, Mr. Levison, that prisoner wantonly, wilfully, deliberately, and with malice aforethought, left his white mice to starve?"

Mr. Levison, who was overcome with emotion, nodded his head.

Then up jumped Mr. Patrick Reilly, K.C., for the defence.

"Faith, an' this is all a fairy-tale, intirely!" cried the learned Irish counsel. "Prisoner certainly left the mice in his locker for four days without goin' near the little darlins. But the door of the locker was left open, an' the mice could get out an' feed whenever they wanted to."

Magistrate: "What could they have fed on?"

Mr. Reilly: "Cheese an' breadcrumbs, bedad! There was lots of stuff lyin' about in the dormitory—the remains of a

midnight feast. There was no need for the mice to starve—in fact, shure an' be jabbers, they're not starved at all!"

Mr. Levison (wrathfully): "Why, their bones are sticking through their flesh!"

Magistrate: "If they have come to that sorry pass they had better be fed to the kitchen cat." (Laughter.) "This is no laughing matter, and the next person who cackles will be put in the dock beside the prisoner! This is a grim, ghastly, gruesome business. The jury, having heard the evidence of both sides, will now retire to consider their verdict."

Mr. Richard Redfern (Foreman of the Jury): "We had arrived at our verdict, your worship, before the court proceedings began!" (Laughter.) "Prisoner is Guilty!"

Prisoner (wildly): "I wasn't—I didn't—I never—"

Magistrate: "You are sentenced to receive forty-nine strokes with the map-pole!"

The sentence was carried out; and then the body of the prisoner.

Knox Defies the Law!

There were over a hundred charges of bullying and cruelty against Gerald Knox. Prisoner failed to appear, and P.-c. Manners and P.-c. Lowther said it was not possible to arrest him, because he was a prefect, and they dare not lay hands on his sacred person.

Magistrate: "I appreciate your difficulty; but if Knox persists in his bullying ways he will be brought into this court by force, and punished with the utmost rigour—and vigour—of the law!" (Loud applause.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 847.

CRUELTY TO WHITE MICE!

Serious Charge against a Fag!

THE first case to come before Mr. Justice Merry this week, at the Box-room Quarter Sessions, was that in which Reuben Piggott, aged twelve, was charged with cruelty to a number of white mice, in that he shamefully neglected to feed them for four days at a stretch.

Mr. Ernest Levison, K.C., prosecuted on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Rodents.

"This is a shocking case, your worship!" said Mr. Levison. "The hot, scalding tears leap to my eyes when I speak of it."

Magistrate: "Cut out the sob-stuff, and get on with the washing!"

Mr. Levison: "Very well, your worship. Prisoner had a number of white mice in his possession—"

Magistrate: "In his possession, or in his locker—which?"



"But—but—" ejaculated Manners.
 "He caught on," said Lowther. "Fairly bit it—fairly chewed on it. He thinks he's got into touch with a jolly old bookmaker that old Railton's had dealings with."
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Shell fellows—rather to the surprise of pedestrians in Rylcombe High Street.

"Nice man!" went on Lowther. "He knew the call was for Railton—at least, he thought he knew it—and he listened to it all—I knew he would. Any decent man would have rung off at once, when he found he was getting hold of another man's secrets. Not Ratty! Didn't I tell you I'd studied his character?"

"Ratty's mean enough for anything," said Manners. "But—"

"Mean isn't the word!" said Tom Merry, in disgust. "He had no right to listen to a word that wasn't intended for him. It's rather thick, even for Ratty."

"You see, he's so jolly keen to jump on old Railton," chuckled Lowther. "He thinks he's caught Railton out!"

"But I don't quite catch on," said Manners. "Ratty's spoofed all right. But what's the next item on the programme?"

"The next item is at Pepper's barn. Do you think Ratty will lose a chance like this? He will spy on Railton there."

"But Railton won't be there!"

"Fathead! Ratty thinks he will be there, meeting that mac Loggins. He doesn't know that Bill Loggins' real name is Monty Lowther!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unless I'm jolly well mistaken Ratty will be on the spot to spy," said Lowther. "He thinks he's found Railton out now. But what's the good of that without proof? He wants a tale to take to the Head, and he's got to have something definite to go upon. I'll bet you ten to one in doughnuts that Ratty goes to Pepper's barn to see the meeting!"

"And there won't be any meeting," chuckled Tom Merry. "I think you're right, Monty. He'll go. And he'll have the walk for his trouble."

Monty Lowther sniffed.

"That isn't all," he said. "Think I'd have taken all this trouble simply to give Ratty a stroll on a fine evening? Somebody's going to be there to meet him—seven somebodies, in fact."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"Six of them will collar Ratty in the dark, and the seventh will whack him with a cricket-stump."

"What?" yelled Tom and Manners.

"That's the programme!" said Monty Lowther complacently.

"But—but—but—" stuttered Tom dazedly.

"He will never know who did it. Of course, he will know that his leg was pulled, and that Railton hadn't anything to do with it, and there never was a Bill Loggins! But he couldn't know more than that. Even if he guessed—"

"He might!"

"Well, then, how could he own up to it that he listened to a talk on the telephone that he thought was intended for Mr. Railton, and went to the barn to act the spy?" said Lowther. "If he could show Railton up as a betting black-guard, well and good. But when he knows that that's all moonshine, he wouldn't dare to tell the story. He would be laughed out of the school. And you can fancy what the Head would say to him, too!"

Tom Merry and Manners regarded their astute chum admiringly.

"Blessed if you haven't got a head on you, after all, Monty!" Tom Merry admitted.

"The only one in our study!" said Monty affably.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"It all depends on whether Ratty rises to the bait!" he remarked.

"Ten to one in doughnuts that he does!"

"No takers!" grinned Manners.

The Terrible Three sauntered back to the school with smiling faces. They strolled into the School House, and looked in at Study No. 6 in the Fourth. Blake & Co. were at tea.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 847.

"Twot in, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hospitably.

The chums of the Shell trotted in.

"Thrashed Ratty yet, Gussy?" grinned Manners.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I have not thrashed Watty yet, Mannabs. But I am goin' to thrash Watty! I am wesoled on that. It is quite impos for me to ovahlook his wotten, wuffianly conduct. But I quite realise that I shall have to be vewy careful."

"All serene," said Monty Lowther. "Didn't I tell you I was fixing it up? You're going to thrash him this eyening, Gussy."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Pick out a cricket-stump."

"Wandering in your mind?" asked Blake pleasantly.

"I really think there's something in it," said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Monty's worked it out like a giddy problem. Spin the yarn, Monty."

Monty Lowther spun the yarn. Study No. 6 listened with amazed faces. Then they shook their heads in concert.

"Ratty won't go," said Blake. "Bound to smell a rat!"

"Admitted—if you fellows had tried it on," said Lowther blandly. "You'd naturally expect a failure. But this little affair was handled by the Shell—quite a different matter."

"Oh, don't give us any Shell swank!" grunted Herries.

"I don't believe Ratty will go."

"The proof of the giddy pudding's in the eating. If he goes to Pepper's barn, are you fellows on?"

"You bet!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall have to get out of bounds," said Tom. "But it's fixed for the time we should be in the studies at prep, so we're not likely to be missed."

"What about pwep, though, deah boy?"

"I suppose we can miss prep, for the sake of getting even with Ratty!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Oh, yaas! I'm quite willin' to chance it!"

"That's all right," said Dig. "My hat! I hope he'll go! Hold on, though. How shall we know if he goes? It's dark long before eight!"

Monty Lowther smiled pityingly. Lowther had thought it all out, and he proceeded to enlighten the lesser brains.

"It will be after lock-up," he said. "The gates will be closed. If Ratty goes out, he will let himself out by his key to the masters' gate. We shall be outside the walls, watching that gate. If he comes out and starts for Pepper's barn—"

"If!" murmured Herries.

"When he does, I mean, we shall know that it's all right, and we take the short cut, and get to the barn ten minutes before he does. We shall be ready for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Study No. 6 still expressed doubts. They really could not believe that a wheeze, planned wholly by the Shell, without assistance from their study, was likely to be a success. But they were willing to play up if there was a chance; they were quite agreed on that. After tea, Arthur Augustus selected a cricket-stump; doubting, but fervently hoping that it would be required for the purpose of "thwashin' Watty."

Soon after dark, seven juniors slipped out of the School House one at a time, unobserved.

They gathered by the school wall in the gloom, where the slanting oak assisted climbers. Soon afterwards they were gathered outside, taking cover in the shadows, and watching the wicket used by masters and prefects at times when the big gates were closed.

They were very early on the spot, and the vigil seemed a long one to them. But just before eight o'clock a key clicked in the gate, and it opened. The juniors crouched back in the shadows with baited breath.

A long lean figure emerged, and the gate clicked shut behind it.

It was Mr. Ratcliff.

He did not pause for a moment, but walked briskly down the road, towards a stile that gave admittance to a footpath. That footpath led direct to Pepper's barn.

Monty Lowther pressed Tom's arm ecstatically.

"How's that?" he murmured.

"All serene!" breathed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!" whispered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It seems to be all right!"

"Mind, not a word!" breathed Blake. "He mustn't be able to recognise anybody's voice. Get moving."

Mr. Ratcliff's lean form had disappeared into the darkness. Tom Merry & Co. crept through a hedge, and vanished across a dark field. They ran hard—they knew every inch of the way, and they arrived panting at Pepper's barn before Mr. Ratcliff had covered half the distance by the footpath.

Crouching in the thick gloom of the porch, they waited, breathlessly. Footsteps came to their ears in the darkness—footsteps approaching the barn!

CHAPTER 10.

Flogged!

MR. RATCLIFF advanced slowly in the gloom. The old barn loomed up shadowy before him. There was no sound in the stillness of the evening. It was only a few minutes after eight o'clock, and the New House master had plenty of time before him.

There was a bitter, malicious smile on his face. His task—repellent enough as it would have been to a man of finer feeling—was not distasteful to him. Watching and listening did not come as new experiences to Mr. Ratcliff. And he tried to think that he was actuated by a sense of duty. It was difficult to believe that it could ever be any man's duty to spy and listen; but Mr. Ratcliff had his own ideas on that subject.

Within the next hour he would know enough to drive Victor Railton in disgrace from his post at St. Jim's. So long as that came to pass, Horace Ratcliff did not care very much how it came to pass.

He reached the old barn at last. As the meeting was to take place in the old timber porch with which Mr. Pepper had adorned his building, Mr. Ratcliff intended to place himself by the side of the porch. There were many openings in the old woodwork through which he was certain to hear all that was said.

He groped his way along the timber in the dark. His hand struck something suddenly. For a second Mr. Ratcliff did not know what it was, only that it moved under his touch. Then he realised that it was a human head!

He started convulsively. "Wha-a-t—" he ejaculated. His ejaculation broke off suddenly as a grasp was laid on his arm. The next instant a grasp was laid on the other arm. A second more and an arm was flung round his neck.

"What—what—what—Loggins, you villain! Railton, you scoundrel—" spluttered Mr. Ratcliff. He could only suppose that the meeting had taken place earlier than planned, and that he had run into it.

There was a faint chuckle in the darkness. But not a word was spoken. Two or three more pairs of hands were laid on Mr. Ratcliff.

He dizzily realised that these would not be the hands of Mr. Railton and the unknown Loggins. Into whose hands had he fallen? Was it some gang of footpads whom he had surprised by his sudden appearance in that dark and lonely spot?

Yet surely footpads would never have acted in this way. For Mr. Ratcliff, jerked along in the darkness, was held face down over a knoll, with three fellows grasping his hands and wrists, and three grasping his ankles. And then another fellow swished something in the air.

Whack, whack, whack! Mr. Ratcliff gasped and spluttered and wriggled wildly. He was being flogged!

Flogged! It was incredible! It was beyond belief! But there it was. Steadily, rhythmically, the whacks descended.

Whack, whack, whack, whack! Just as Mr. Ratcliff had flogged D'Arcy of the Fourth—just as Blake & Co. had been flogged by the Head—just so was Mr. Ratcliff taking the same medicine!

He wriggled and struggled and roared. "Help! Yooop! Help! Ruffians! Mercy! Police! Yarooooooooooooooo!"

Not a word—not even a chuckle! Silently, steadily, the unseen avengers proceeded with their task.

Whack, whack, whack, whack! "Whooooo! Yoooop! Yowp! Yawwww! Oh!" Mr. Ratcliff yelled frantically.

He knew now that this could not be Mr. Railton's work—that the Housemaster was not there, and could not be there. He knew that the hands that grasped him were boyish hands. Whose, he did not know; but he knew they belonged to St. Jim's fellows. Figgins & Co., of his own House, perhaps—

or perhaps Study No. 6 of the School House—perhaps the Terrible Three—perhaps Levison & Co.—he could not guess; but he knew that there were many, many fellows who disliked him and had cause to punish him if they could.

"Help! Yooop! Oh! Mercy! Stop it! Release me! Whooooop!" raved Mr. Ratcliff, wriggling in many hands.

But the hands held tight, and the Housemaster was powerless. And the steady whacks of the cricket-stump descended, hard and harder.

Often and often had Horace Ratcliff whacked hapless youths; hard had he whacked them. But he had never quite realised what a whacking was like, before this. He was being enlightened now.

Whack, whack, whack! He heard the whacker breathing hard. Gussy's exertions were beginning to tell upon him. Still more severely did they tell upon Horace Ratcliff!

The New House master exerted his strength. But six pairs of hands fairly pinned him, as in a vice. He struggled, but he scarcely moved as the flogging descended. He did his best; like a deponent verb, Mr. Ratcliff was passive in form, but active in meaning! But he was helpless, and he went through it till Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was tired.

Then—all of a sudden—Horace Ratcliff found himself released. He rolled over, sprawling on the ground, breathless, panting. In the silence and darkness there was a faint sound of scurrying feet. It died away at once.

Mr. Ratcliff sprawled, panted, and gasped, and spluttered. His brain was in a whirl. He could scarcely believe that this had happened! But it felt as if it had!

From the distance he heard the half-hour chime. It was half-past eight—time for the meeting he had planned to spy upon. But he did not move—he could not. He sprawled, gasping, while the minutes passed. And slowly it came into his mind that there was to be no meeting at the old barn—that it was all spoof—that the telephone message from the supposed Mr. Loggins had been part of the game, to catch him in that solitary spot, and give him his punishment. He realised it, and he staggered up, and took his homeward way to St. Jim's, white with rage.

Long before he reached the school, seven juniors had scuttled into the School House by back windows, and had scattered to their studies. They were hard at work on prep when the hapless Housemaster arrived at his House. And that evening seven juniors had smiling faces—and the brightest of all was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had, at long last, succeeded in "thwashin' Watty."

Tom Merry & Co. wondered whether Mr. Ratcliff would raise "Cain" on the subject.

He did not. Reflection convinced him that silence was golden.

He could not have "raised Cain" without letting all the circumstances become known—his miserable suspicions of Mr. Railton, his eagerness to hear and believe evil of his colleague, his unscrupulous methods of gaining surreptitious information. Mr. Ratcliff had no desire to explain all that to the Head—since he knew, now, that there was nothing in it, that Bill Loggins had no real existence, and that Mr. Railton was above suspicion.

Ratty writhed, but was silent. He made secret and surreptitious attempts to trace out the offenders, but only learned that they could not have belonged to his own House—which was just as well for Figgins & Co. And Figgins & Co., who had been told the story, chuckled loud and long over it.

Their wrongs had been avenged! The campaign against Ratty had been a success. And when Mr. Ratcliff ragged and nagged and rapped and snapped, Figgins & Co. remembered that he had been flogged for his sins, and were solaced.

THE END.

(Next week's magnificent yarn: "THE KIDNAPPING OF KERRUISH!" by Martin Clifford, is extra-thrilling, so don't miss it, chums.)

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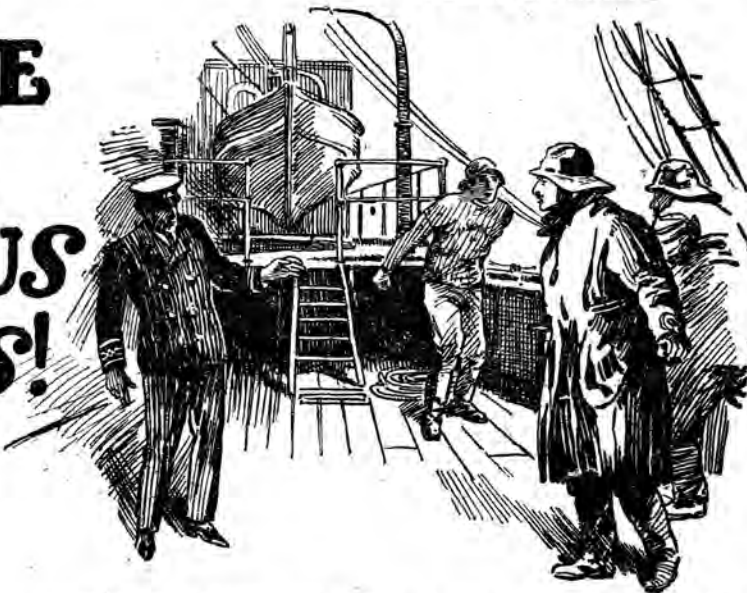
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CHAPTER 1.

Ziglio Sends a Message!

JENNIFER PETTIGREW WREN'S secretary and aide-de-camp, Robertson, came into his chief's study one Wednesday evening at nine o'clock. Six feet three inches of towering manhood gazed down upon the recumbent form of Wren upon the couch.

"Just got a message from Groome," he said. "Read!"

He pushed a piece of notepaper into Wren's outstretched hand.

"Radio, per s.s. Sebastopol," the detective read. "The grass is green, but will be cut early. Collect mower twelve noon, number 7 wharf. Zebras dangerous. Meat 7 1/2 lb. Friday night."

"Sounds very complicated," murmured Wren. "But how extraordinary obvious. A child could pick that up and tell it was code. Groome always was a first-rate idiot." The detective sighed and handed the message back to Robertson. "The Sebastopol must be a day early," he said.

"Praps you'd be good enough to explain what that jumble of bilge means?" said Robertson shortly. "Wish instead of trying to be clever Groome 'ud stick to the recognised code."

Wren laughed. "My interpretation of it may be wrong. In fact, I'm rather flattered that Groome credited me with sufficient brains to decipher an altogether new system. Still—" He rose off the couch to his feet, and, standing by the side of Robertson, re-read the mystic message. "The grass is green, Groome says," he continued. "By which he means, I take it, that everything is going well."

"But will be cut early?" quoted Robertson, adding, in disgusted parenthesis, "I wish Groome's idea of humour wasn't so crazy."

"Presuming that Groome is alluding to himself as the grass," said Wren, "he means by that that he is leaving the Sebastopol early. Probably he has got permission to quit on the pilot boat."

"With the stuff?" queried Robertson. "That even I cannot say," said Wren. "When young men do things like this on their own initiative, they generally

leave unsaid the only important thing. Still, we must hope for the best."

"What's he mean by this mower?" demanded Robertson. "Collect mower twelve—"

"I take it to insinuate that we are to meet the man who is with him." "Eh?" gasped Robertson, his eyes goggling.

"A mower," pointed out Wren patiently, "has something to do with grass, you will admit, Rob. It is, in effect, a not unnatural corollary thereto."

"Jumping Jehosophat!" muttered Robertson in despair. "I give it up after that."

"To conclude," continued Wren, "he makes a horrible pun on the word 'meet,' 7 1/2, standing for 7.15 on Friday night. That's the only construction that I can put upon it."

Beads of perspiration stood out on Robertson's brow.

"And that man," he said in an awed whisper, "is entrusted with the care of two hundred thousand pounds worth of diamonds. Gosh!"

Wren shrugged his shoulders.

"He must be capable. His firm believe in him implicitly," he said. "The only thing is that I cannot quite see why they want to waste two thousand pounds in asking me to superintend the safe arrival of the gems. As far as I can see, Groome has taken the affair into his own hands entirely. We are in the position of pawns that he moves at will."

"Zebras," muttered Robertson, still scanning the message. "Zebras dangerous. Groome's been to British East Africa. What's he mean by 'zebras dangerous'?"

"Ah, yes! I forgot that," said Wren. "Why, Rob, I can only take it that alludes to Dr. Ziglio. Ziglio's on this stuff, as you know."

Robertson folded the message up, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Let's hope you're right, chief," he said.

Wren ambled over to the fireplace and stood with his back to the blazing logs.

"As a matter of fact," he said, as he carefully pared the nails of his left hand, "it doesn't matter much one way or the other. I intend to board the Sebastopol early to-morrow morning, before the break of day. I don't like receiving a

fee of two thousand pounds and not making certain myself that everything will go as it should do. Groome will be able to do very little damage."

At this juncture there came a knock at the door, and a moment later Augustus appeared, bearing on a silver salver a visiting-card.

"Gentleman to see you, sir. Says it's most important."

A look of annoyance passed across Wren's face.

"You didn't say I was in, Augustus?" he queried, as he took the card from the salver.

"I said as you'd said you was out, sir, but I'd go and see," returned Augustus.

"A Mr. Cutcliffe," said Wren, reading. "Know the name, Rob?"

Robertson wrinkled his brow.

"Seem to remember it from somewhere," he mused.

"You're thinking of the Booth-West case," said Wren, with a slight smile.

"Cutcliffe murdered West, if you remember rightly, only they couldn't prove it. A tool of Ziglio's. Yes, Augustus, although I detest being disturbed at this hour, show Mr. Cutcliffe in."

"Very good, sir."

Robertson, when he had gone, strode over to a desk in a corner of the room, and, pulling open a drawer, extracted from it a revolver.

"Nothing like a bit o' blue steel to quieten these beggars down if they get obstreperous," he said; and plunged it into his right hand pocket. Incidentally he kept his right hand on the butt.

Almost the next minute the door opened again, and Augustus ushered in the visitor. Cutcliffe was a man of medium height, greying at the temples, with a pointed nose and eyes of a nondescript colour set close together. His face was ashen white, and his jowl sunken.

"Come in, Mr. Cutcliffe," said Wren affably.

Cutcliffe complied with the invitation, and accepted the detective's outstretched hand hesitatingly.

"You know Robertson, I think," said Wren.

The two acknowledged each other. Then Cutcliffe said:

"Mr. Wren, I've got to tell you something."

His voice quavered unnaturally, and he seemed to be terror-stricken. Wren,

who had known him in former years as a rising young barrister, knew that the man was labouring under great mental distress. His heart was laid bare, his very self-respect had gone.

"Sit down!" said Wren.

Cutliffe drew up a chair, and slid rather than sat, into it.

"Mr. Wren," he said, leaning across the table, "I have come direct from Dr. Ziglio. I have brought from him a letter to you. It is a warning!"

"A warning?" queried Wren.

"A warning from him to you to stop operations against him," returned Cutliffe, nodding.

"Dr. Ziglio has issued such warnings before," said Wren, with a smile. "It seems to be a habit with him. If he is not careful, it will become a vice."

Wren's light-hearted sally found no billet in Cutliffe. Rather, it seemed to terrify him the more, for he looked round apprehensively, as though he more than expected to see Dr. Ziglio's sinister face peering at him from behind.

"Mr. Wren," he said, turning back slowly, "Ziglio means death this time!"

"More interesting than ever!" murmured Wren lightly. "When a man makes a hobby of murder it's positively exciting to find that one has been selected as the next victim!"

Cutliffe brought his hand down flat upon the table with a crash.

"For Heaven's sake, take heed of what I say!" he croaked. "You see before you a broken man. Ziglio has crushed me! He saved me from the gallows—yes; but he condemned me to a living death! How he has tortured me! I have seen things going on in his house of evil that have made even my blood curdle—the blood of a murderer! And to-day I have seen something which—No, no; I cannot recall it!"

Cutliffe buried his face in his hands, working his fingers furiously into his eyes, as though to dispel the awful vision that haunted him.

"Come, come!" said Wren, in a kindly tone. "Control yourself, Cutliffe. Tell us briefly what decided you to see me personally, and omit mention of the gruesome details that forced you to your decision."

Cutliffe looked up once more.

"Ziglio gave me a letter to bring to you," he said, taking it out of his breast-pocket. "And the event which occurred to-day made me feel that anything would be preferable to going on as I have been going on. I am prepared to die, if only Ziglio himself is brought to book for his crimes! He has driven me mad! I can help you. I can give you information that you want. I—"

Cutliffe's words died away into a dry, ugly cackle in his throat.

He sprang to his feet, clutching wildly at the air. His eyeballs bulged from their sockets; a thin, yellowish froth flecked his lips. Robertson sprang across the room, but even before he reached his side the man collapsed to the floor, a ghastly death-shriek resounding through the study.

Bending down, Wren loosened the man's collar and opened his shirt. Then the detective placed his hand over his heart.

"All life has gone," was his verdict. "Ring up Williams, will you, Rob?"

While they awaited the arrival of Dr. Williams, Wren opened and read the letter which Ziglio had given to the ill-fated Cutliffe.

"I am sending you this last warning, Wren," it ran, "partly because I have a tremendous respect for you, and do not wish to see a brave man die a violent death at my hands, and partly because

I want you to realise to the full extent how I deal with those whom I regard as obstacles in my path. I gained the idea that Cutliffe intended to betray me, so I poisoned him. I hope his body is causing you no inconvenience. In any case, it is a long-delayed act of justice. So, my dear Wren, will you not take my advice? Keep your hands off my preserves, and I will keep my hands off you. You know where you can communicate with me.—ZIGLIO."

Wren looked at his watch.

"Oh!" he snapped out. "It's time for me to get off. If I'm not sharp I shall miss the Sebastopol, and our illustrious friend would more than likely lay his long fingers on those diamonds. Attend to Dr. Williams for me when he arrives, will you, Rob? If I want you I'll communicate here."

CHAPTER 2.

The Ship of Mystery!

ROGERS, the second wireless officer of the s.s. Sebastopol, which throbbed her way steadily through a moderate sea, tapped on the door of the skipper's cabin, and in response to the summons, entered.

Eight bells in the middle watch had just gone. Streaks of grey were beginning to lighten the black eastern horizon.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir," said Rogers, "but there's a message come in from Mr. Jennifer Wren."

The skipper, who knew Wren well, sat up in his bunk. He was still in his clothes, having been on the bridge all night.

"Wren's a nuisance," he said, "doing this sort of thing on me at this unholy hour. Thanks!" He took the radio from Rogers, and cast a quick eye over it:

"Should appreciate courtesy if you allow me to come aboard 5.30 this morning. Matter most urgent. My submarine will be alongside at that hour."
"WREN."

The skipper grunted.

"Got a nerve, has Mr. Wren," he said. "What with Groome intending to go ashore on the pilot-boat, and now Wren's cool request, this vessel might belong to a musical comedy company! However"—the skipper reclined himself once more—"I was slowing down, in any case. Radio back: 'All's well, but will run you down if I possibly can.' And you might tell the chief I'll be on the bridge again in half an hour, will you, Rogers?"

"Right, sir!" said the second wireless officer, as he took his leave.

Almost an hour later, with a bitter wind blowing, and the whole sea looking dull and sullen under a clouded, half-lighted sky, a watcher on the taffrail of the s.s. Sebastopol might have observed the long grey shape of a submarine cleaving through the water. She had been running for a good seven hours, and her deck was awash fore and aft. Standing on the conning-tower was the figure of a man, who, perceiving two of the crew dropping a rope-ladder over the port side, waved in grateful recognition.

Ten minutes later the long grey shape drew alongside, and the man on the conning-tower, with the help of others who had appeared from below, swung himself from the submarine on to the ladder, and went up the side of the ship.

A few minutes later he was shaking hands warmly with the skipper, who had come off the bridge to meet him.

"Can't tell you how grateful I am," he said. "Hope it hasn't caused you much inconvenience, Jack?"

Commander Jack Robinson grunted.

"It has; but it's only what I expect when I come round your quarter!" he returned gruffly. "But it's too cold to talk here. Come up and have some coffee!"

Wren turned, and took one final glance at his submarine, which was already sinking off into the cold grey of the dawning day.

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seven hours," he said proudly. "Not bad going, eh, Jack?"

"I hope your engines burst next time!" returned the skipper of the *Sebastopol* politely.

Ten minutes later, just as Wren had finished his second cup of coffee in the skipper's cabin, there came a frenzied knock at the door, and the chief steward burst into the apartment, without waiting for any ceremony.

"What the dickens—" began the skipper angrily.

The chief steward, whose face was ashen white, interrupted him.

"Passenger been murdered, sir," he said breathlessly. "Tomkins tells me that he found him knifed to the heart in his bunk. I went straight along there—saw him myself—and came straight along here to you, sir."

The skipper and Wren had sprung to their feet at the first mention of the chief steward's startling and gruesome news.

"Who's the passenger?" demanded the skipper.

"It was Mr. Groome, was it not?" queried Wren quietly.

The skipper swung round on the detective like a flash.

"How the—!" he blurted out.

Wren held up his hand.

"Was it Mr. Groome?" he persisted.

The chief steward, his eyes bulging, admitted the fact. Then he started to gibber. The horror of the tragedy, and now this awe-inspiring magician, were proving altogether too much for him.

"Hold your tongue!" commanded the skipper peremptorily.

He went over to a cupboard, opened it, and, pulling out a bottle and a glass, proceeded to mix the chief steward a strong potion.

"Here," he said, holding out the glass, "drink this. It'll pull you together."

The chief steward drank it thankfully.

"Now, we'll go below, and have a look at things," said the skipper.

"You didn't tell anyone else, Trimmer?"

The chief steward shook his head emphatically.

"Did you leave Tomkins with the body?"

"Case of gross insubordination, I'm afraid, sir. Tomkins said he'd come and tell you, whilst I stayed below. But when I said I'd tell you, he refused absolutely to remain in the cabin alone. So he's waiting outside it."

The chief steward, upon whom the stimulant was having the desired effect, snorted disgustedly.



Cutcliffe clutched wildly at the air, his eyeballs bulged from their sockets, and a thin yellowish froth flecked his lips.

They had, by this time, reached the promenade-deck, and were passing through the first-class saloon en route for the central stairway that led down to the cabins below. Suddenly the chief steward stopped dead in his stride.

"Did you hear that, sir?" he muttered.

Apparently whatever it was that the chief steward had heard, Wren had heard it, also, for he shot ahead and down the stairs at a terrific pace.

The others followed quickly.

The detective's sense of sound, which was intensely acute led him round to the left as soon as he reached the bottom of the stairway, and then along the starboard side passage aft.

At the third-berth alley he stopped and looked down.

What he saw was the figure of a man, in black trousers and a white coat, sprawled face downwards upon the linoleum, an ugly dark-red splotch in the middle of his back, oozing blood.

He stepped forward quickly, bent down, and turned the man over.

As he did so the skipper and the chief steward arrived, together with two other stewards, who had also heard the cry.

"Tomkins," gasped the chief steward, in abject horror. "Is he—"

"Dead," said Wren quietly—"dead as a doornail! Quick; help me to get him into the cabin with the other one!"

Within a couple of minutes they had got Tomkins into the cabin wherein lay the murdered body of Groome. Whilst Wren made an examination of the latter, the skipper addressed the three stewards.

"You understand," he said, "that absolute secrecy must be maintained over this business. I put you all on your honour. I doubt very much if anyone else heard him cry—it's too early yet for many people to be up. You understand, however, that these are my strict orders."

"You may rely on us, sir," said the chief steward.

"Ask the doctor to come immediately," said the skipper finally.

When they had gone, Wren straightened himself from the task of bending over Groome, and glanced at his watch.

"It's ten minutes to six," he said.

"What time does your pilot come aboard, Jack?"

"Half-past," returned the skipper shortly.

"Good!" Wren laid his hand on the skipper's arm. "This is a terrible thing for you, Jack. I thought I should be early enough to avert anything of this sort."

"I can't grasp it at all," said the skipper dully, passing his hand across his brow.

"I know; it is rather staggering. However, we have the consolation of knowing that the murderer of these two men is on board. And I think we can get him. He had evidently not made allowance for my arrival."

"I'll have every man-jack aboard lined up—" began the skipper.

"Not you," said Wren consolingly.

"You'll come along to the purser with me, and see if there is anyone on the ship of Melese nationality. If so, he is our man, and you can use your prerogative and arrest him on the evidence I will give you."

"Melese nationality?" queried the skipper. "They're a—"

"Powerful tribe, living in Tibet," returned Wren. "I know them well. And they kill as these two men have been killed. Their dexterity is marvellous. There is not a sixty-fourth of an inch variation between Groome's death wound and that of Tomkins'. Can we see the purser now?"

"We can," vowed the skipper.

As they stepped out of the chamber of death Wren paused.

"I should like this locked," he said.

The skipper went to the end of the alley and looked down the passage.

The chief steward was standing some distance down, talking in hushed whispers to the two others. The skipper beckoned to him.

"Lock berth number one-six-four," he said.

The chief steward produced his master-key, and, not without a certain amount of superstitious aversion, did as he had been bid.

The skipper and Wren then made for the purser's cabin.

CHAPTER 3.

Detective Wren Gets Busy!

IT transpired from the purser's passenger list that an olive-skinned man by the name of Hundin was travelling second-class. He had come aboard at Port Said, and was bound for Franktown.

The purser was flabbergasted with the events of the evening.

"Terrible shock for Warrington," he said—"the chap travelling with Groome, you know, Mr. Wren."

"By Jove, yes!" quoth Wren. "I'd forgotten all about him in the excitement of the moment. What's his berth?"

"Two-seventy-one, on the port side."

"Must see him at once."

At the door Wren paused.

"You have the gems in your safe, have you not, Mr. Purser?" he asked.

The purser shook his head.

"Groome took them out last night, as he was leaving early this morning," he returned. The significance of this did not appear to strike him.

"Groome took them out?" gasped Wren, genuinely astounded.

The purser nodded.

"I advised him not to," he said, "but he insisted."

Wren recovered from his surprise, and a little smile played round his lips.

"The case," he said, "assumes a most interesting aspect."

He left for Warrington's cabin.

Had John Warrington slept soundly on the previous night he assuredly would never have awakened on this earth.

As it was, the crumb that the steward had carelessly left in the bunk, and which had been subconsciously worrying John Warrington all night, finally achieved its object, and woke him up. And the moment he opened his eyes his brain began to work calmly and collectedly.

What his eyes saw was the figure of a man bending over a box—a box that he distinctly recognised as the one that contained many thousands of pounds' worth of diamonds—a large, black, steel box.

So, with that coolness that has long characterised the British race, he put his hand under his pillow, drew out a revolver, and shot the man straight through both ankles.

Then he got out of his bunk and looked down upon the man, who lay on the floor writhing in agony. He was an olive-skinned gentleman who had boarded the steamer at Port Said. He was bound for Franktown.

"I'm sorry," apologised John Warrington; "but that box is valuable, you know, and I didn't like the look of your back."

At that moment Jennifer Pettigrew Wren entered the cabin, and a few

minutes later they found on Mr. Hundin's person a wicked-looking knife.

"You're a lucky man, Warrington," said Wren, as he turned the weapon round in his fingers. "This man's killed Groome and his steward this morning!"

The s.s. Sebastopol stopped her engines at six-twenty-five, and the pilot-boat drew alongside at six-thirty. The officer on the bridge, and the two members of the crew who had lowered the rope-ladder, were surprised to see not only the pilot, but four other men leave the boat and swarm up the side of the ship. This, as a procedure, was distinctly unusual, but it had all happened so suddenly that they were taken by surprise, and before a protest could be lodged, the pilot and one of the others had set foot on the promenade-deck.

The first words the pilot said were quite astounding, too.

"Don't utter a sound if you value your life! Stay where you are!"

And the muzzle of a revolver protruded perhaps half an inch from between the folds of his son'-wester.

The three other men joined him. The officer on the bridge, who was the chief, instructed the second officer to go and look into things.

Just then Wren appeared through the door leading to the first-class lounge. The pilot approached him.

"Put your hands up, Wren," he said between his teeth. "I warned you to be careful, didn't I?"

Wren, covering up his astonishment with supreme self-control, looked into the evil face that peered at him from under the black macintosh cowl.

"Dr. Ziglio, or I'm a nigger!" he said. "Well, well, this is a pleasant surprise! The one man I wanted to see!"

"Lead me downstairs, Warrington's cabin!" said Ziglio quickly. "I'm very desperate, Wren! I'll kill you if you try any tricks!"

The criminal's veneer of culture had left him entirely. Wren smiled amiably.

"You've said that before," he pointed out. "However, there's been enough murder on this ship for one day. I'll show the way."

Inside ten minutes Dr. Ziglio and his party were on deck again, and with them was the black steel box that had been in Warrington's cabin. An amazed and furiously exasperated ship's crew stood around, not daring to move lest one of them received a bullet through the heart. The two men who had lowered the ladder were both married and had families.

"I want Hundin," said Ziglio to Wren and the skipper.

The skipper's language was by no means polite.

"Out of the question, Ziglio," said Wren. "And, I might add, every minute you spend arguing here lessens your chance of escape. My submarine comes back almost any minute for me. You don't generally worry over your tools, Ziglio. Are you afraid Hundin will talk?"

Ziglio swung himself over the side. He saw the force of Wren's argument.

"Shooting's too good for you, Wren," he said; "but we shall meet again, I assure you."

"The pleasure will be mine," said Wren.

Within fifteen minutes the commandeered pilot-boat was well away toward the range of hills that had loomed up on the horizon, now that the mist had lifted.

Wireless messages flashed like wildfire, broadcasting the news of the daring hold-up. A message from the pilot-station was picked up, stating that the disarmed crew of the pilot ship itself had arrived back in a motor-boat, after having been

boarded by an armed party, who had called upon them, by means of flying a Government pennant, to halt.

Three destroyers put out from Franks-town Harbour full speed ahead. The s.s. Sebastopol lay to pending the arrival of a pilot. In case of further trouble, the skipper armed himself with a couple of revolvers, and bade his officers do likewise. It might be added that when the real pilot actually arrived he was covered by Skipper Robinson from the time that he placed his foot on the rope-ladder till the time that he set that same foot on the deck and proved his identity.

Wren, in company with Warrington, went below to interview Hundin. They found this worthy well handcuffed, and chuckling to himself. As Wren closed the door of the ship's cell behind him Hundin spoke.

"Ziglio gone?" he queried.

"Yes," returned Wren.

"Did he take the box in Warrington's cabin with him?"

"He did."



Warrington's eyes opened wide, and he saw the figure of a man bending over the box. Withdrawing a revolver from under his pillow he levelled it at the intruder!

Hundin laughed hoarsely.

"Then he'll go to pieces in a few minutes. That box was meant for you."

"Explain."

"You knew that Groome wasn't straight, didn't you?" said Hundin.

"I had my very shrewd suspicions," said Wren.

"Well, his idea was to clear off with Ziglio and the valuables on the pilot-boat. But Ziglio had other ideas. That's why he sent me aboard, curse him. He didn't want Groome knocking around to share the proceeds. So I was to knife him. I did. But I wasn't able to tell Ziglio that I hadn't been able to get that box with the stuff in it from Groome's cabin, so he took the one that was meant for you. It was a bomb, timed to go off at one p.m. to-day, but I altered it to go off at seven this morning, just to make sure that it would get you all. That's what I was doing when you shot me up," he added to Warrington.

"Then the diamonds—" shouted Warrington.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" murmured Wren.

"The diamonds. I'd forgotten them. The diamonds, Warrington, are not on this ship at all."

"Eh?" gasped Warrington.

"No," admitted Wren apologetically.

"They arrived yesterday on the City of Bristol. I thought it so much safer than trusting them to anyone like Groome. You see, I was paid two thousand pounds

to see that they arrived safely. And the firm, at my advice, sent Groome on the job just to see what his real views on life were. That box in his cabin contains a quantity of broken glass, beautifully packed. Also, I couldn't resist another tilt at Ziglio." He looked at his watch. "Seven o'clock, you say? We might as well go on deck, Warrington, and see the display."

Warrington was too flabbergasted for words. Hundin was gibbering in his

chagrin. Up on the deck Wren and Warrington gazed at the pilot-boat, fast growing smaller in the distance. Wren had his binoculars glued to his eyes.

"There's a motor-boat approaching them!" he cried. "It's up to the side now. They're leaving the pilot-boat. What's the time, Warrington?"

"One minute to."

"Carramba!" quoth Wren. "They're leaving the box on board! Ziglio must have opened it! That's the last man out. They're putting away. Ah, there she goes!"

A deep boom vibrated across the dividing sea. The pilot-ship seemed to heave itself out of the water. A column of the latter spouted heavenwards. Pieces of wood and iron shot out in all directions. Then smoke settled down on the whole, and when it had cleared away the pilot-boat was almost below the surface, just one bare, stark mast protruding at an angle of thirty-five degrees.

The motor-boat, with Dr. Ziglio and party on board, could be seen scudding across the sea at a terrific pace.

Wren smiled.

"For the space of five minutes," he said to Warrington, "I thought that Dr. Ziglio and I would never meet again. But now—now, Warrington, I am convinced that I was wrong."

(Don't miss next week's thrilling episode, chums, it's full of breathless situations.)

Mat Martingale battles against great odds in this splendid full-of-thrills sporting story!



Rivals of the Racecourse!

BY
**ANDREW
GRAY.**

The most thrilling tale of the Turf ever told!

A Smart Wheeze!

DICK DERRINGER reined in his own horse, and braced himself for the shock.

The sudden jerking of the brutes' heads together as the noose tightened proved their downfall.

They crashed to earth, dragging the leaders back on their haunches, and bringing the wheelers tumbling after.

The wagon came ramming into the heap last of all, and, canting over, went crashing on its side. Old Tom's guy was spilled to the pavement, while Scarfe was shot head-over-heels into a chemist's shop, which was the best place for him.

It was a terrific smash. The worst of it was Mat was lying pinned under one of the mules, which looked every instant as if it was going to kick his brains out.

Fortunate it was for him that he had such a pal as Dick Derringer to depend on. The fellow was all around and in and out that plunging heap like a terrier.

He noosed the kicker's hoof single-handed in less time than it takes to write, and, by his own unaided strength, dragged the brute clear for Mat to crawl away.

Then, when the youngster climbed on his legs, hopping about on his uninjured foot, Dick raised a regular cowboy whoop "Hurrah! Bravo, sonny! Begosh, that was a run if you like! And we just did it to the tick."

This was true enough. There was the motor-car they had saved from disaster, and there were the foremost mules with their heads almost under its wheels.

And there, too, were the girl and the old chap scrambling out, scared and white now that the crisis was over.

"Good gracious! Why, bless my heart, what's this?"

Mat turned instantly as he heard the voice. The motorist had removed his goggles now, and stood revealed.

"Lord Dungarrin!" cried Mat, for it was the same good friend that had come racing after them yesterday to give his father a word of cheer in his distress.

"Why, yes!" cried his lordship. "And it's young Martingale, who's saved our lives for us, dashed if it isn't!"

"Here, Phoebe!" he called to the young lady who had been driving. "Come here! Shake hands with this

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 847.

boy! He's old Tom Martingale's son. Never saw a pluckier act in my life than when he jumped at those brutes' bits.

"And you, sir—" He went rattling on, turning to where Dick Derringer had been standing at his elbow.

The American, however, was back at the mules again, getting them on their legs. So, catching sight of the craven chauffeur slinking about in the crowd, Lord Dungarrin borrowed a stick from a bystander and gave the poor wretch a sound hiding instead.

"And now—much obliged, sir!" panted the fiery old gentleman, returning the borrowed stick with a bow. "Tell me, young Martingale, how all this has happened. What's that guy that I saw shot off the cart just at the last?"

Some of the bystanders had obligingly propped up the dummy against the chemist's shop, within which Scarfe was being brought round from his faint.

The placard "Warned off—by Order of the Sandown Stewards!" slung round the effigy's neck told Lord Dungarrin all that he wanted.

"The scoundrels!" he roared. "The slandering blackguards! So that's it, is it? I heard there was trouble at Furzedown, and I was coming over to see. But where are the wretched skulkers responsible for that libel—eh?"

"Dad," expostulated his daughter, though with a compassionate look at Mat, "you should remember yourself. This is the public high-road."

"Public high-road!" yelled the old peer. "And isn't this a public libel perpetrated on a good fellow, who I—they—he—"

His rage got the better of him, and he had to suggest the rest by shaking his fists under the noses of the crowd.

"Anyhow, whatever your miserable worms may say, or think, or do," he roared, "I know old Tom Martingale, and believe in him. And if he is warned off it is a cruel miscarriage of justice, I'll swear, and I'll stand his son's friend."

"Do you hear me?" he demanded, flourishing his fists again so fiercely that the Hon. Phoebe had to hold him back by the coat-tails. "You may think this lad is alone in his trouble, so that you can jeer and sneer at him, but he isn't. I'm behind him, and the next man who tries these tricks again has to reckon with me! Heh! Bah! Pish! Poof!"

He snapped his fingers in furious contempt of everyone and everybody. Then, as the mule team had been sorted out by this time, and Mat's runaway hack captured, the old chap literally kicked his trembling chauffeur back into the car again, assisted his daughter in after him, and proceeded to drive himself.

"I'm going on to Furzedown ahead of you," he told Mat. "I want a chat with you over business. And there's that race of Whiplash's to-morrow. You're going to run him, I suppose, to spite these curs?"

"Why, yes, sir," answered Mat.

"Good! That's the way, boy," said his lordship, with savage glee. Then, starting his car, he charged through the crowd as if he would have liked to have felt the wheels bumping over a few of their carcasses. A moment later he was gone.

Mat had refused his proffered lift. His foot was mighty painful, but he could not leave his pal to steer such a mob of animals single-handed.

He could have wished the mules to the deuce, but Dick had still to reckon with their rightful owners. So they set off amid such a crowd of jumble that Mat's original vow of vengeance was clean forgotten.

Scarfe, whom he had sworn to kick from one end of Epsom to the other, was left in the chemist's shop. His faint was only a sham. He recovered his senses quickly enough once he was sure his enemy had departed.

But he had heard every word that had been said.

"Ah, so the young prig means to run Whiplash to-morrow at Windsor, does he? Just to show the world that he's not knocked out yet!"

"Well, so he may!" Scarfe chuckled, with a savage grin. "But let him look out, or p'raps his precious colt may come a smeller, too, like Rackstone's. And then p'raps we'll get them both warned off before we've finished. Hee, hee!"

A moment later, however, Police-sargeant Widgin came sailing in to take Scarfe's name and address for a subsequent summons, so the leader of the Furzedown strikers had to change his tune pretty quick.

Meantime, Mat and Dick had got back to the training-stables at last, and there

found Lord Dungarrin and his daughter awaiting them, amazed at the desolate silence over the place.

"What a cruel—cruel shame!" was the Hon. Phoebe's verdict when Mat briefly related the beginning of the strike and his chum's smart rescue of him from certain death.

He told his lordship, too, of Sir Roger's visit and the subsequent outbreak of fire. But Miss Phoebe's eyes, he noticed, were all for handsome Dick Derringer, who was busying himself about the yards, and taking no more notice of his lordship and his daughter than if they were pedlars buying rabbit-skins.

Nevertheless, Dungarrin had found time to do him a good turn as well as Mat.

"You can tell him," he said, "if he's fretting about those infernal hairwash people and the coach and six, that that's all settled by me. I've phoned them, and bought the whole turn-out as the quickest way out of the trouble. And now you can do with it what you like."

Mat was overjoyed. He wished the mules at the bottom of the ocean, but his chum was righted, and that was everything. He tried to sing out to Dick to come and thank their benefactor, but he had disappeared.

So it was left at that. Mat had told Lord Dungarrin everything—both his fears and his hopes. The old peer was highly tickled at the notion of a kid like him applying for a trainer's licence.

"But you'll just do it, my boy," he said gleefully, "and I'll back your application up for all I'm worth. I shouldn't wonder if we can work it!"

"And if we succeed, I'll tell you what I'll do," he went on. "I was never an owner before, as you know, but I'm dashed if I don't start a string just to keep you in business."

Mat tried to thank him, but the old boy cut him short.

"Tut, tut! All the thanks are to you for saving my little daughter so pluckily," he said. "So farewell once more, and we shall see you to-morrow first past the post, I hope, with Whiplash, at Windsor."

A moment later, with a cheery wave, Miss Phoebe and her father were in their motor and away.

"You surly old bear!" cried Mat, as he came upon Dick again. "Why didn't you come out and be nice to our visitors? I could see the lady's eyes following you about as if you were a lord in disguise. At any rate, she knows that it was you who saved the smash-up, and not me."

"Crumbs!" said Dick. "I'd never have got up with the brutes in that narrow street if you hadn't pulled them down as you did. You're a real good plucked 'un, kid, so sit and rest your foot while I get on with the work. There's another mob of horses to be got ready to go off this afternoon."

"And Lord Dungarrin is going to get Philper to send over help from his stables for that," Mat told him. And even Dick Derringer heaved an intense sigh of relief.

Philper was another big trainer not a mile across the downs, and he rallied to young Martingale's aid nobly, for the sake of auld lang syne.

And well he did, for the two alone could never have coped with the work. Telegrams came in all day from nervous clients withdrawing their horses, and by nightfall Furzedown had scarcely a dozen racers left, and these only platters, for the most part, worth little more than the corn they were eating.

Poor Mat's feelings, as he saw all the horses his father had taken such pride in being ridden away in half-dozens, can be imagined.

At last row on row of stables stood empty and silent. The merry click of hoof was hushed. Dick Derringer's foot-fall as he still plugged away sturdily "clearing up," was almost the only sound.

"Well, younker," he said, in a kindly voice, "think of to-morrow, that's the best thing to do. Think of you landing Whiplash home at the head of a thumping field, and your friends cheering you, and your enemies looking sicker than a row of cows with the tummy-ache."

Mat tried to. But there was his foot. It was so swollen that he would never be able to get his riding-boots on.

"Then just wear one of your old man's," was Dick's prompt advice. "But, anyway, buck up, old sonny-my-son—buck up!"

At the office they found still another telegram awaiting them. It was from Sir Roger, peremptorily ordering that a second saddle of the Stunt's, also stirrups, that had been made specially for Scarfe, and other belongings of his, should be packed ready to be called for in the morning.

"That means that Scarfe's going to ride for him," said Mat. "Well, he'll score a win this time, I suppose, and perhaps Sir Roger will be able to square his losses out of it."

Dick Derringer looked up, as if the mention of that name had struck a slumbering chord.

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 "guc'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.

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 Dick Derringer, an American, 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.

Tom, in company with Dick Derringer, is leading a "string" to the station, when he meets a procession of Furzedown strikers with Derringer's missing mules. A scene follows, and the mules take fright. To avert disaster Tom jumps for the flying reins, while Dick sends an improvised lariat flying through the air, to fall neatly over the neck of one of the team.

(Now read on.)

"By the way," he said, "what became of that young waster? We clean forgot him after the smash. He was in that chemist's shop all the time your high-toned lord was slamming it out about you running Whiplash to-morrow. I wonder whether he heard?"

"You mean, you wonder whether he'd be likely to try another dirty doping trick to crab us if he did? Surely he wouldn't have the nerve!" said Mat.

"I dunno," retorted Dick, none so sure. "With the stables virtually deserted as they are, why shouldn't he? Who's to stop him, anyway?"

"Why, we can, by keeping watch, of course!" groaned Mat, who was simply aching to get to bed.

Dick laughed.

"You don't want to sit up? Well, you sha'n't, and neither will I. I reckon I'll just fix up a little man-trap the boys out in Montana used to set when the 'rustlers' were out. A rare little trap it is, and you only want a rope, a sack of sand, and a few sticks out of a hedge to make it. We'll rig it now, I reckon, before we forget."

It was about all Mat was fit for. On his legs since five in the morning, and now with a foot purple as a mulberry and swollen to twice its proper size, he only got a hazy notion of what this contrivance was that his pal was arranging.

But he saw him fill a big sack with sand, and then hoist that to the top of a wall-crane above the stable loft. The slack of the rope he led to Whiplash's door close beside, and rove the end into a running noose.

Next, several small twigs like catapult forks had to be stuck in here and there with great nicety. Over these the noose was looped, and at last all seemed finished.

"Now, if Mr. Scarfe can walk through that to git at the colt, he goah, he's welcome, I reckon," chuckled Dick, surveying his handiwork. "But if he can't, I hope he'll holler loud enough to wake us. Otherwise, when we come round in the morning I shouldn't be surprised if we found him sort of kind of dead perhaps."

Mat got scared at this, but his pal only laughed again.

"Never you mind, sonny. I'm sleeping with both ears open to-night. Still, I'll fix a patent burglar-alarm just to make sure. You cut off now, and get to bed."

So utterly worn out was Mat, and so content to have a friend like Dick Derringer to lean upon, that, long before the latter came up to bed after a last look round, the youngster was as sound asleep as a log.

How long that lasted, though, Mat had not the remotest notion. It might have been the middle of the night, or the middle of next week for that matter.

But suddenly into his deep dreams burst a frenzied shriek and an appalling crash from the direction of the stables, as if a hundred empty pails had been tossed into the air, to come clattering down on the cobbles again.

"Help! Mercy! Murder!"

Still the yells came thick and fast. Mat was out of bed gasping with terror. In the passage outside Dick collided with him as he also went rushing down stairs.

"Hallo, younker!" cried Dick gaily. "Sorter sounds as if my little mouse-trap caught something, don't it? My, ain't he a whooper just. It hasn't snapped him by the neck, that's clear. Come on, and we'll scotch the varmint!"

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A Rat in a Trap!

"**W**OUCH! Murder! Help! I'm hanging!"

Mat was so scared and sleepy still that for the life of him he could not think what was happening, even when Dick Derringer talked about their "mouse-trap."

The yells and screeches from the direction of the stables were bloodcurdling.

Then Mat suddenly recollected the setting of the snare outside Whiplash's stall, and away he hobbled gamely in pursuit of the American.

Some sneaking marauder had been caught evidently, but where? The long alley between the rows of horse-boxes was empty, if not silent. All round, though, were scattered stable-buckets by the dozen, showing what had caused that first shattering explosion which had brought Mat bounding out of his dreams.

But at last a blurred object, kicking and plunging high, up against the pale stars, attracted his attention.

"Good gracious! Is that where he is? How did he get there?" he gasped, for his chum was eyeing it, too.

"Why," answered Dick, with a wink, visible even in that stygian darkness. "I reckon he must have unhitched the rope holding that sandbag somehow, and so got sorter yanked aloft like poor Tom Bowkag!"

Dick looked up at the figure overhead, which had now grown suddenly rigid and still.

"Say," he sung out, "say, you, whar've you come from, stranger? Dropped out of an aeroplane, or climbed up there stealin' apples, or what?"

There was no answer. Mat began to get scared, but the American knew pretty well how his quarry had been snared.

He might have adjusted his snare to hang his thief by the neck straight away if he had chosen. As it was, he had arranged it to noose him by the knees.

And this was exactly how it had caught their victim, as it proved. The fellow, after picking the lock of Whiplash's door, had trodden into the loop, kicked the trigger, and released the rope by which the sack of sand was suspended.

Down this had rushed, jerking the noose tight round the marauder's legs, and whipping him up into the air more dead than alive.

"Why, great Scott, it is Scarfe, after all!" cried Mat, in furious astonishment, when the suspended body was allowed to bump earth again. "The treacherous waster! After all his dirty work, this is how he treats us again. Search him and see what he's after!"

He flung himself down on the traitor, planting his knees in his ribs with such effect that Scarfe could pretend insensibility no longer.

"Ouch! No, don't touch me! I'm dead already!" he groaned, screwing himself up into knots to prevent Mat getting at his pockets.

The American, however, soon settled that. Lugging their captive into an empty stable by the heels, they turned him upside down and inside out, to the light of a stable lantern.

"I've got it!" cried Mat at last. "A paper packet—some filthy, doping mixture he was going to give Whiplash for to-morrow!"

"It's a lie!" protested Scarfe, wild now with terror.

"Then what are you doing here at all, you young skunk, if you don't mean

mischief?" demanded Dick Derringer. "And how does the colt's door come to be open, when I locked it myself last thing?"

The questions were unfortunate, for they gave Scarfe the cue to the only possible line of defence that he could take.

"I came here to—to get some of my things that were left!" he spluttered. "I daren't come by daylight, or you would have kicked me out."

"I certainly should. I'd have kicked you into the middle of next month, you rat!" answered Mat, setting his teeth.

"Very well, then," said Scarfe. "That's why I'm here now. But as I came along this row of stables I saw some man, I tell you, breaking the lock of Whiplash's door. I watched him go in, and then, forgetting I didn't belong to the stable any longer, I rushed after—"

"Ho, ho! The other chap missed the trap, but you stepped into it—eh? That's what you'd have us believe, is it?" scoffed Dick. "Then how about this yar powder?"

"That's for myself. I got it at the chemist's," vowed Scarfe.

"Then will you eat it now if we give you the chance, and let you go free?" demanded Mat.

Their prisoner looked concerned. His face went white, then green.

"That's done him, begosh!" laughed Dick. "He says it's only medicine. I reckon we'll jolly well stuff it down his throat, and kick him out—eh, sonny?"

"What, and let him go free!" retorted Mat. "Not much we don't. He's been caught red-handed, and I'll see he suffers for it. Let's tie him up for to-night, at any rate, and we'll drive him into Epsom police-station in the morning."

"No, for mercy's sake don't do that!" whined Scarfe, like the coward he was. "I didn't mean to do any harm, really. It was only a joke I betted the others I'd play on you—"

"Oh, indeed! Now we're getting at the truth, are we?" laughed Mat. "All that just now about seeing a man breaking open Whiplash's stable was a lie."

Scarfe saw he had given himself away, and relapsed into snivelling silence. He tried to make some sort of fight for it when they started to tie him neck and crop. But the two were more than enough to manage him.



In the light of the stable-lantern Scarfe was turned upside down and searched!

They lashed his wrists and ankles, and then roped him down in a manger, where they left him for the night.

The colt was a good deal startled, but Mat soon smoothed him down, and then, wrapped in horse-rugs, he curled himself up on a bale of hay, determined to risk no more chances.

"I say, Dick, here's a notion," he said, with a sudden chuckle to his chum, who was also keeping watch and ward.

"Well, sonny, let's have it. What's tickling you?"

"Why, you know that wire of Sir Roger's asking for his saddle and all his belongings to be put in a box to be called for to-morrow? Do you think Scarfe himself might be included in the catalogue?"

"How so? I don't follow you."

"Why, supposing we stuff him in the packing-case, with his packet of poison beside him," said Mat. "No note would be needed. We'd just leave Scarfe to explain how he came there himself."

Dick hailed the scheme with glee. It was a "cracker," he said. He had the very box in his eye for the job. All it would want would be a few air-holes bored in it.

So next morning, after feeding and watering the remnants of their charges, the packing-case was fetched out, and Sir Roger Rackstone's belongings put in. Last of all, Scarfe, now gagged as well as bound, and looking half dead with terror, was folded up and tucked in.

"We'll put his packet of filthy doping mixture just down opposite his nose, so he can sniff it all the way," said Mat. "Then perhaps it will help him to think up some fresh lie to account for his being included in the consignment."

"That's right," he finished, with a satisfied chuckle, as the lid was lifted on. "Now, Scarfe, you low-down beast, do you hear me? When you're unscrewed again it'll be in the Windsor saddling-room, for all to see. I sha'n't say a word until you are there, and then look out. So ta-ta for the present!"

They were only just in time with their preparations, as it happened. Five minutes after the case was roped and labelled a van arrived with Sir Roger's orders to take it away.

When it had gone Mat had to fling himself down in some straw and roll and yell with laughter.

"I can see the waster's face, can't you, when they fish him out?" he choked. "Gracious, but it looks as if my poor dad is not going to be the only one 'warned off' over the Stunt. They'll pull Scarfe for this as sure as eggs."

Philper, the neighbouring trainer, like the good sport he was, rode over that morning to see how Mat was going to manage.

Until then it looked as if Dick Derringer must stay behind and look after things, leaving the youngster to get Whiplash to the course himself as well as ride him—and this with a swollen foot that he could not put to the ground.

The friendly trainer, however, promised to send a reliable man to take charge, and in due time Mat and his pal set out.

For all the trouble, Whiplash's training gallops had not been forgotten, and the gallant two-year-old looked, and was, as fit as a fiddle.

They got him to the pretty Windsor racecourse without a hitch, though Mat looked ready to faint once or twice from pain.

Taking Dick's advice, he had brought with him an old riding-boot of his dad's, though even that was not nearly big enough for his inflamed instep.

"Still, we'll scrub along somehow," said Mat pluckily; "and, anyway, Sir Roger's packing-case has arrived all safe, I see. Looking forward to seeing that opened will keep me going till my race is over."

There was the case, sure enough, delivered in the saddling-room, and Sir Roger was eyeing it with a scowl. He was wondering how it was Scarfe, his jockey, had not put in an appearance yet, for the saddling-bell had already rung for the first race on the card.

"Have you seen him, you young whelp?" he demanded savagely of Mat, whom he found tending Whiplash in his stall.

"Seen whom? Your dirty catspaw, do you mean—Scarfe?" inquired the youngster, without a blink.

"Yes!" rapped Sir Roger. "And look here, I'll have none of your black-guardly insinuations, or I'll run you up before the stewards as well as your father!" he spluttered, as the sting of Mat's words sank in.

Mat only laughed in his face, making the baronet more furious than ever.

"Where is he? I want to know!" he roared.

"How should I tell you?" answered Mat. "You know the cad went on strike with the rest, and I kicked them out. I should have thought, since you were engineering the trouble, they would have come running to you."

"I engineered it?" quoth Sir Roger, turning as black as thunder. In another second he would have grabbed his youthful enemy by the neck, and given him the thrashing he was longing to.

Where is Scarfe?

As the baronet raised his gold-handled cane to bring it down with a swipe on Mat Martingale's shoulders, to his fury he found it neatly clutched from behind and jerked out of his hand.

When he spun round to recover it, it was already broken in halves, which Dick Derringer was holding out to him with a mock bow.

"By Jupiter! You insolent hound! You grinning cheap-jack!" choked Sir Roger, recognising the driver of the Kitchy Koo coach. For a moment it quite looked as if he were going to have a fit.

There were all the stable-hands round, though, staring in amazement, and laughing at the idiotic figure he was cutting.

There was something, too, in the American's cold, unflinching eyes that made Sir Roger think better of attempting to avenge himself just then. Off he swung with a curse, leaving Mat roaring with laughter.

Lord Dungarrin and his pretty daughter came up to the box a moment later, attracted by the commotion.

"Hallo, boy, you two still at each other's throats, I see!" said the peer, cocking his eye after the retreating Sir Roger.

"It was he that started it, sir," protested Mat. "Sir Roger had the cheek to ask me if I knew where Scarfe was, as he's riding the Stunt again to-day."

"Well, don't you?" asked his lordship. "Everyone is dunning him to know where his jockey is, so that I don't wonder he's losing his wool. Don't you know whether Scarfe is on the course even?"

Mat broke into a broad grin, much to his lordship's astonishment.

"Why, yes, sir, he's on the course."



Martingale, his father. Such is human gratitude.

Whiplash still carried the famous Rip-lade colours, "forked lightning" stripes of black and scarlet. The effect was weird, and made weirder still by the

As Martingale peered through the window he saw the lid of Scarfe's box being wrenched back, and saw the astonished bystanders recoiling, horror-stricken at the sight that met their gaze!

I'll tell Sir Roger that much," he admitted. "And now let him jolly well go and hunt him out himself!"

The baronet was still within earshot, and caught the words. He darted a startled scowl at the boy, then turned away to resume his anxious quest.

Certainly Scarfe seemed to be cutting it very fine. A sudden hush descending upon the crowd proclaimed that the horses for the first race were ranged up ready at the starting-gate.

Mat could feel his gallant two-year-old twitch and quiver as the roar of cheering echoed from the course. Whiplash turned his proud head to the stable door, drinking in the sound. He was like the warhorse-scenting the battle from afar.

"Good lad! Good old boy!" said Mat, hugging his glossy neck in boyish ecstasy. "For the dad's sake, for honour's sake, and the sake of the stable, only land me home first to-day, and I'll never forget you!"

Whiplash's answer was a loud, eager whinny. He had seemed to realise from the first how much depended on him, for, instead of showing the usual "nerves" he had been as docile as a lamb all day.

Dick Derringer—who had a curious way, Mat noticed, of sliding off whenever Lord Dungarrin came on the scene—now returned to relieve him, and let him get away to the dressing-room.

Mat got into his riding kit seething with rage. No one addressed a single word to him; all out him dead. Yet there were famous jockeys there, ex-apprentices of Furzedown, who owed everything they knew to old Tom

odd "tops" Mat was seen to be wearing. His dad's old boot was like a yard of crumpled stove-pipe on his slim leg.

A howl of laughter greeted him when he stood up; and when he hobbled across to pick up his saddle the rest simply guffawed the louder.

Then Sir Roger Rackstone came bursting in with the clerk of the course. Mat could see trouble in every line of their faces.

"Here, stop one minute!" cried the baronet, gripping Mat's arm. "This is the young waster! Now, didn't I hear you telling Lord Dungarrin a few minutes ago that you had seen my jockey, Scarfe, on the course?" he demanded, dancing with rage and anxiety, for the saddling-bell for Mat's race had already sounded, and the Stunt's came next. So things were critical, unless a substitute was to ride.

Mat flung off the detaining grip.

"Here, steady on!" he said hotly. "Don't man-handle me. I never said I had seen Scarfe on the course; I only said that I knew he was here somewhere."

"Here somewhere!" echoed Sir Roger, with a splutter. "Well, isn't that the same thing? Tell me where he is, or, by Jupiter, I'll make you!"

"I'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Mat. "Why should I? You jolly well find out for yourself!"

"But—" protested Sir Roger, glaring wildly round, as if hoping to see his missing confederate up, in the ceiling or under a table.

On tenterhooks, in case he thought of looking inside the packing-case, Mat slid out, and made his way to the weighing-room.

This ordeal was soon over. He hobbled through to the paddock next, where Dick Derringer was parading Whiplash before an admiring crowd. The whole sporting world were keen to see again the horse that was already looked upon as a certain Derby winner.

"Well, sonny, how is it going?" asked Dick a little anxiously, for, truth to tell, he was beginning to wish now that they had handed their capture of last night straight over to the police.

"Oh, all right!" answered Mat, though none too confidently either. "Sir Roger's rooting the whole place up, and I believe he smells a rat. But so long as they don't tumble to it until after my race, I don't care."

They were stripping Whiplash with all speed, and clapping the saddle on his back. Mat heaved on the girths, and the next instant Dick had given him a hoist into the saddle.

From this altitude he could see now right into the windows of the dressing-room.

There was Sir Roger and half a dozen more, working like fiends to prise open the packing-case. They were on the true scent at last.

"All ready? Get to the post," commanded the clerk of the course, coming back into the paddock just then.

The candidates for the Chobham Two-year-old Plate filed out of the gate one by one. They went out at a sedate walking pace, as is the correct thing.

Unfortunately, Mat looked like being the last to get away. He was on tenterhooks. He would willingly have spurred to the front with a rush, for a last glance through the window showed the lid of Scarfe's box being wrenched back, and the astonished bystanders recoiling, horror-stricken at the sight of what looked like a dead body within.

Then up went Sir Roger Rackstone's fist, as if calling on the skies for vengeance, and round and out he dashed, bent only on laying Mat Martingale by the heels.

"Hi! That young whelp, Martingale—stop him!" he panted, as he came tearing into the paddock.

Arrested on the Course!

MAT was just steering through the gate then. Another second would have seen him free; but here he was caught, as it apparently looked.

However, at all hazards he meant to ride the race. One touch of his spur was enough. As Sir Roger came flinging himself, like a fool, to lay hold of his reins, Whiplash gave a little side-long spring, cannoning into him half-way.

Mat's knee met the baronet's nose, as a matter of fact. His immaculate topper flew into the air, up flew his heels likewise, and backwards he went into a whole crowd of racing swells, cutting their legs from under them, and bringing them down like ninepins.

Mat never waited, needless to say. Out shot Whiplash on to the course, and away with his now cantering competitors.

"There he is! Here's Whiplash!" rose the shout instantly, for the Derby favourite was the cynosure of all eyes wherever he went. A roar of welcome ran all along the course.

"By Jove, can't he move—eh? Look at his stride! But what a pity it is they haven't got a decent chap to ride him!" said one drawinglance.

"Decent chap! What do you mean?" demanded his neighbour, not thinking. "That youngster can ride him, at any rate."

"Yes, but he's only young Martingale, you see, son of old Tom, of Furzedown, that's just been warned off. Didn't you hear about it?"

Fortunately, Mat missed this sweet tit-bit, otherwise he would have lashed the speaker across the face as he went by. But the lie was in the air everywhere, and on everybody's tongue. A regular storm of cheers greeted Whiplash, but there was also an ominous undertone of hisses hurled at his rider.

"Now, then, play the game straight

to-day, if yer knows 'ow to!" shrieked Cockney voices after him.

At last they reached the starting-gate, and faced the tapes. Being a race for two-year-olds, trouble was expected, and did not disappoint.

The youngsters backed and plunged, lashing out with their heels. Mat kept Whiplash well back from the line until things settled a bit, and then was just moving forward to his place when up flew the tapes and the race was started.

The youngster had been caught napping, but it was his own fault. Half the time he had been scanning the direction of the grand-stand for any signs of pursuit.

Even now he had no fear, though one of his rivals was the redoubtable Bonnybrake, to whom Whiplash was conceding three pounds.

Bonnybrake had jumped away second, with Killclaw cutting out the pace. A furious one it was, too, far too hot for the ruck.

At three furlongs the field had already begun to tail away. Whiplash came forging through like a torpedo-destroyer amid a fleet of tramps. Nevertheless, Bonnybrake held the lead of him still. Then Killclaw shot his bolt, and his jockey had to ease him down.

The race now lay between Bonnybrake and the favourite, and had Mat not been suffering such agonies with his smashed foot he might have helped his gallant mount more.

As it was, he could have flung himself headlong from his saddle with the agony of it. The stirrup-iron had wedged over the unaccustomed boot, pressing right on the injured instep. He could not kick it free. Unspeakable torture was inflicted with every stride.

"Quick, boy! Get me home, or, by jimmy, I believe I'll faint!" cried Mat, urging Whiplash on.

Bonnybrake's jockey heard him. He had been watching the youngster as they galloped, wondering to see him rolling so in the saddle.

Mat's lips, too, were bloodless, and his eyes glazed. His rival fetched Bonnybrake a cut, and shook him up for one grand burst.

"Young Martingale's done!" he chuckled to himself gleefully. "Doped himself this time, by the look of it. Anyhow, I've got him set!"

"Bonnybrake has it! Bonnybrake! Bonnybrake!"

"Bonnybrake wins!" rose the yell as they swept along the crowded rails.

Mat heard them, but felt utterly helpless. Pain almost blinded him. He knew he was riding in a way that would certainly see him hauled up before the stewards; but if they hanged him for it, he could not help it.

"Booh! Watch 'im! 'E's at it again! Furzedown! Furzedown! Yah!" hooted the larrikins in derision.

And who could blame them? Whiplash was dropping inches at every stride, and all because of his rider. Even Dick, who should have remembered, watched, thunderstruck.

Mat groaned and swayed again. His head was up and his shoulders back, instead of crouching low over his mount's withers.

"Booh! Mark him! Grr-rr-rr! 'Ss-ss-ee!" hissed the yelling crowds. To cheer Bonnybrake was superfluous.

And then suddenly Mat seemed to rouse himself to all this. It was as if water had been dashed into his eyes. He shook himself, and crouched to his work.

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There was just a chance yet. Gallant Whiplash responded nobly.

"Now, boy—now, boy—now, boy!" exhorted Mat, timing his voice to every bound.

His rival was but a length ahead, and there was still a furlong to go. Any other brute as highly strung who had been ridden as Whiplash had been ridden would have grown sulky before this.

But Whiplash's great heart seemed to grasp what was wrong. Mat was his chum, and he meant to pull him through. Now that he was steady in the saddle again he could do it, too.

But only just! The groans had ceased; it was all wildest cheering again.

"Bonnybrake! Whiplash!" The rival shouts met and mingled with a clash and a roar. The stand shook to the trampling of feet.

"Whiplash wins! He's level—he's ahead!"

"Whiplash! He's won by a neck! Hurrah!"

Yes, by a neck only; certainly no more.

The crowd, with all their money on the favourite, were delirious with delight. Twenty seconds ago it looked all the Bank of England to a bad ha'penny that they had been sold; but now everything was forgiven and forgotten. The rush was for the rings.

When Mat saw out of the corner of his eye the winning-post flash past he straightened up, and the next instant was nearly over his mount's tail, and on the back of his head.

That was the wrench of his tortured foot. However, he just clung on, gasping with pain; and then, as Whiplash slackened, half a dozen figures made a rush to assist him.

"Quick, Dick! Help me! My bad foot—jammed in the stirrup! For mercy's sake get it free!"

But, to his dismay, Dick Derringer was not to be seen. They were all stalwart bobbies who had closed on him. A horse-policeman caught the reins, and the next instant Mat was swung out of the saddle. One last ghastly wrench, and he was free.

He collapsed, though. They had to carry him along, and, being policemen and he but a boy, they handled him as tenderly as nursemaids, even though he was arrested.

"Arrested!" It was Mat who echoed the word, with a gasp of horror, when he at last grasped what they said. "What ever for? It must be a mistake. Why am I arrested?"

"Well, I dunno!" answered the sergeant in charge. "It looks precious like murder, if you ask us. So you'd better keep your mouth shut, young 'un, till you've heard the charge."

Murder! Mat was so thunderstruck that the pain of his foot was forgotten. He tried to think. Whoever on earth could have been murdered? And by him!

And then he thought of Scarfe doubled up in the packing-case. They had found him, and jumped to the conclusion that he was a corpse.

"Oh, the fools! Why didn't they un-gag him and ask him?" laughed Mat, hugely tickled.

"It isn't no laughing matter, so I warn you!" growled the sergeant. "And then Lord Dungarrin came up."

"Here, I say, young man, this is a bad job you've been up to, isn't it?" he said, eyeing Mat with a look that brought the youngster to his senses with a gasp. "Was it a joke? If so, it looks like being a dashed serious one for you!"

"Why, I don't understand, sir! You mean that Scarfe has been found, I suppose?" demanded Mat.



As Mat Martingale flashed past the winning-post a mounted policeman dashed up to him and caught hold of his mount's reins!

"Found—yes. Come and look at him!" said his lordship, with a snort.

Mat was assisted through the dense crowd now surrounding the saddling enclosure. Ladies shrank away askance as he passed. He grew more and more dismayed.

Then at the door he found Dick Derringer, also in the hands of the police.

"Why, Dick, what's this all about?" cried Mat, aghast.

"I don't quite know, sonny. It beats me all to a frazzle. Go forward and look at him!" was his chum's ominous reply.

A few more paces, and Mat was face to face with the traitor apprentice. He recoiled in horror, for there he lay on a shakedown bed on the lockers, senseless, white as marble, his face and limbs convulsed with terrible twitchings. A doctor was attending to him.

"Great goodness! How ever did he get like this?" cried Mat.

"One minute, young man!" cautioned a police-inspector. "Before you say any more, I must warn you that any words of yours may be used in evidence against you."

"But I don't understand! We merely tied him up and stuffed him in the box," said Mat. "He was all right then, and he could not possibly be suffocated. So how does he come like this?"

"How? He's been poisoned—that's how!" was the doctor's grim reply.

"Poisoned!" Mat hobbled forward to look inside the big chest. "There was a paper packet that we discovered on him when we found him trying to dope Whiplash last night!"

"Dope Whiplash!"

It was everyone else's turn to show astonishment now.

"Yes; he broke into our stable, and we caught him," Mat ran on. "But that's neither here nor there just now. There was a packet of something, I say, that we put inside the box with him. Where is it now? Has no one seen it?"

The faces all around were blank as paper.

"There was no packet in there, I swear, when we opened it, for I lifted everything out myself!" said the dressing-room attendant.

"Then, by hookey," gasped Mat, a sudden thought bursting upon him like a bombshell. "I know what's happened!"

But tell me first—had he the gag still in his mouth?"

"No. He had managed to wriggle it out."

"Then," cried Mat, "he's swallowed the doping mixture himself, so that it should not be discovered! We put it right down under his nose on purpose to—"

But here a vicious laugh cut him short. It was Sir Roger Rackstone, livid with hate.

"Stuff, you young liar! Don't try to gammon with such bunkum! Listen! I happen to know all about these two," he said, turning and addressing the now-crowded room. "Scarfe was a witness against this lad's father at the Sandown inquiry, and ever since then young Martingale has been vowing vengeance on him!"

"And that's false!" protested Mat. "It was he who swore vengeance on me because I told him I knew he had doped the Stunt, and that you had bribed him to do it, you black-hearted traitor!"

"Steady, sonny—steady!" cautioned Dick Derringer soothingly. "No good drawing red herrings across a track that's quite difficult enough as it is. That can come later. Still, it's absolutely true what this youngster says about catching this feller last night in Whiplash's stable and finding the packet on him," he assured the bystanders. "I helped to search him; and when we found it the galoot pretended it was medicine he had bought for himself; but when we allowed that if he swallowed it we'd let him go he jibbed, and wouldn't take the contract on. Now, it seems, he's thought better of it."

"Indeed!" sneered Sir Roger, showing his teeth. "So even you can think of no better lie than that! But I'll tell you what the real truth of the story is—and, by George, I'll prove it! You and this brat inveigled my jockey into your stable, and deliberately poisoned him to wreak your vengeance on him and to spite me!"

Dick Derringer did not answer.

"Do you hear, you scoundrelly cheap-jack, whoever you are?" he cried. "I charge you with it. I charge you both with attempted murder, and I demand that you be taken into custody at once!"

The inspector had already been making

up his mind without this. He advanced and clapped a hand on both their shoulders.

Mat, utterly stupefied by this fresh calamity, started as if the fingers had been claws of steel. He turned in despair to where Lord Dungarrin was standing.

The old peer, however, was as dazed as he. Truth to tell, he had been wondering whether he had not been making an utter fool of himself with his public declarations about standing 'his lad's friend.' So he turned away his head.

A groan of utter misery and despair broke from Mat's lips when he saw himself thus cast off.

If they took both Dick and him to the police-station now, who was to see after Whiplash, or the horses at Furzedown stables, either?

"You can't do it. It's all a mistake, I tell you!" he protested. "Charge me, if you like, but you must let us go now. Think what it means! You're simply playing into that fiend's hands!" he cried, pointing to Sir Roger, with shaking finger. "He has sworn to ruin my dad and me, and drive us out of Furzedown; and now you're just helping him, every one of you. You're making all the world against one helpless boy!"

There was a ring in this last passionate appeal, that must have struck an answering chord in every heart except Rackstone's.

He merely burst into mocking laughter, which in its turn made his listeners wince with shame.

"Go on, inspector! Enough of this whining! I'll undertake to prosecute if you do your duty. March them away!"

The inspector signed to two of his men to take Dick Dorringer. But the latter seemed to have awakened to what was happening at last.

With a spring he snatched up a chair and set his back to the wall. There he faced them, his grey eyes blazing, and such wild savagery in every feature and muscle of his lean, lithe frame as would have made a whole crowd of Montana cattle-thieves skip, much less a crowd of racing swells in peaceful England.

"Stand back!" he rapped, swinging the chair above his head. "Hands off, or, by George Washington, the first darn fool to touch me will get this across his skull—wallop! See?"

(There will be another thrilling instalment of this powerful serial next week, chums. Don't miss it!)

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"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

(Continued from page 2.)

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A very fat man, waiting in a railway-station, decided to find out how much he weighed. Two small urchins stood by and watched him as he struggled on to the weighing-machine. Unfortunately, the machine was out of order. The indicator moved slowly, refusing to go beyond five stone. "Crumbs, Bill!" exclaimed one of the urchins. "'E's 'oller!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Thomas Lynch, 97, Fitwilliam Street, off Mill Lane, Bradford, Yorks.

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Two lady friends having tea together one day were discussing the possibility of another famine, and little Elsie, aged five, who was deeply interested, suddenly asked: "What is a famine, mummy?" "Well, Elsie, it means we will have no food in the house," Elsie opened her eyes very wide, and, to the surprise of all, said: "Oh, how lovely, mummy! We shall be able to go out to tea every day!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Norman Dyson, 32, Lisburn Lane, Tue Brook, Liverpool.

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