

The GEM 2^p

EVERY
WEDNESDAY

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GUSSY BUTTS INTO A BOOBY TRAP!

(A diverting incident from the grand school yarn
of St. Jim's inside.)

A SPLENDID EXTRA-LONG SCHOOL STORY FEATURING—

Monty Lowther's



Burning with a sense of injustice at being expelled from the school, Monty Lowther determines to prove his innocence, and to show up in his true colours the instigator of the grave charges made against him.

CHAPTER 1. Trouble!

"WUBBISH!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke emphatically.

Breakfast was just over at St. Jim's, and Blake & Co. of the Fourth were strolling in the quadrangle. And for once those cheery juniors were looking very serious and gloomy. Obviously something had happened to disturb and depress Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth.

The previous night had been Bonfire Night at St. Jim's, and it had ended in a startling manner. On returning to his room after the celebrations, Mr. Linton had found Lowther of the Shell locked in his room. The master of the Shell had also found something else. In his bed was a guy—a remarkably lifelike, waxwork figure of Knox of the Sixth—while over the bed hung a notice suggesting that the bed now held two guys, "Linton, the Tyrant!" and "Knox, the Bully!"

Nor was this all, unfortunately. For inside the waxwork effigy of Knox was a conglomeration of fireworks which had suddenly exploded, setting fire to the curtains and bed-clothes and carpet, and causing great commotion and alarm.

Fortunately the fire had been put out before much damage could be done, but naturally such a trick was looked upon

very gravely by the authorities. Lowther had been charged with the offence, and was now in the punishment-room—with a very good prospect of expulsion before him.

And as Blake & Co. had taken a hand in helping to make the guy, though not in playing the dangerous trick on Mr. Linton, they knew they were booked for trouble.

At the moment they were not worrying about themselves, but for Lowther. And it was Lowther they were discussing when Arthur Augustus had ejaculated "Wubbish!"

The fact was that Arthur Augustus did not believe Monty Lowther guilty of the trick, while Blake, Herries, and Digby did, having in mind Lowther's reputation as a reckless practical joker. Moreover, they could not forget the fact that Lowther had been the last person to handle the effigy. After that it had most mysteriously disappeared.

"Wubbish!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "I do not believe for one moment that poor old Lowther is guilty, dear boys. I did at first, I will admit; but upon reflection I have come to the conclusion that Lowther was speakin' the twuth when he claimed that he merely went to Linton's bed-room to change Linton's candle for a jumpin' ewackah."

"Too thin, I'm afraid," said Blake, shaking his head. "We all know what Lowther is, and he was the last person in possession of the guy."

"He states that afaah takin' it ffrom Figgins, who had twied to waid it, as you know, he hid it undah the couch in his studay, and nevah saw it again until it was discovered

—TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

Masquerade!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



in Linton's bed. In my opinion," said Arthur Augustus impressively, "someone else found it there, and played the trick."

"Good for you, Gussy! That's just what we think."

It was Tom Merry and Manners who joined the Fourth-Formers, their faces showing their keen anxiety, for Lowther was their study-mate and chum.

"You mean you think that Lowther didn't do it," said Blake, staring.

"Yes. Monty didn't do it," said Tom Merry quietly. "He's said that he didn't, and that's enough for me."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners promptly. "Old Monty's played tricks before, some of them silly and dangerous, but he's always owned up and taken his medicine like a man. He denies doing this, and I, for one, believe him."

"That's it!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "Gussy's quite right; some cad found the guy in our study and shoved it in Linton's bed, and when he saw—"

"But Lowther was discovered locked in the room!"

"I'm coming to that. The cad who played the trick spotted Lowther going in, and locked him in, either out of spite or just simply to get the blame shoved on someone else's shoulders."

"Too steep!" said Herries. "Who'd do a rotten trick like that?"

"I shouldn't like to say," said Tom Merry grimly. "But that's my theory."

"I fancy I can make a vewy good guess, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "I have already worked it out in my mind. It was Knox."

"What?"

"You burbling duffer!" snorted Blake. "Wasn't the effigy of Knox?"

"Yaas, wathah! But in my view Knox did it. He found the guy, and to wevenge himself on the makers of it he

placed it in Linton's bed, knowing there would be a frightful wow, and that we should get into sewious twouble ovah it," explained Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

"Ass!" said Blake witheringly. "Think Knox would be such a fool? In any case, a prefect wouldn't play a trick like that."

"Wats! I believe it was Knox, at all events!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"I fancy you're on the wrong track there, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a faint smile. "Whoever did it, though, was a fellow who had it in for us, and for Lowther."

"Racke," said Digby suddenly. "What about Racke?"

"I may as well say that I've been thinking of him," said Tom Merry grimly. "Lowther got Racke a licking yesterday morning, and I know Racke was vowing to get even. The cad was also going it against Linton. If anybody did do it, you may bet it was Racke!"

"Phew! There's something in that," said Blake, nodding. "It was a dirty trick, anyway, and more like Racke's doings than Lowther's. Linton isn't a tyrant, and I know Lowther's got the fellow to insult him like that."

"It's a rotten business, anyway," said Herries dismally. "And we're all booked for a licking, in any case."

"I don't care what happens so long as old Lowther doesn't get sacked," said Tom Merry. "But everything looks black against him, and—well, I don't like it."

"Here's Kildare," said Manners. "After us, I bet!"

Manners was right.

"Wanted in Mr. Railton's study—all of you," said Kildare, coming up to the group. "Get a move on!"

The juniors had been expecting the summons, and they followed the captain of St. Jim's at once. Even had they not have been sent for they had all agreed to own up, in the hope of helping Lowther.

To their surprise they found Glyn, Noble, and Dane standing before the Housemaster's desk.

"Now, boys," began Mr. Railton, when Kildare had gone. "I have sent for you in regard to the outrage in Mr. Linton's room last night. Am I right in supposing that all of you were concerned in the manufacture of that effigy of Knox?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, after a glance round at his companions. "We were all in it."

"Anyone else?" asked the Housemaster briefly.

"No, sir!"

"One moment, sir," said Glyn hurriedly. "I am responsible for the making of the guy. It was my idea, sir, and these fellows and Lowther had very little to do with it."

"None the less," said Mr. Railton sternly, "I must hold them equally responsible. It was a disgraceful thing to do. Knox is a senior and a prefect. You have ridiculed authority, which is a serious matter, and for that you will be punished severely."

"Oh!"

"I will myself deal with you presently in regard to that," went on Mr. Railton grimly. "The actual outrage in Mr. Linton's room, however, is far more serious, and is for the Head to deal with. Merry and Glyn, you will follow me to the headmaster's study; and I would advise you, for Lowther's sake and your own, to tell all you know of this affair. The rest will remain here until my return."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

And Mr. Railton left the study, Tom Merry and Glyn following dismally at his heels. There was no mistaking the gravity in the Housemaster's tones, and the captain of the Shell groaned. If the authorities looked upon the manufacture of the guy as very serious, then it was certain they would look upon what had taken place in Mr. Linton's room with the utmost gravity. If Monty Lowther was found guilty—

Tom Merry shuddered at the thought.

CHAPTER 2.

The Verdict!

D R. HOLMES' stern glance rested on the two juniors as Mr. Railton followed them into the study and closed the door.

Monty Lowther was there, before the Head's desk, and his face was white and strained. The look on it made Tom Merry's heart beat fast.

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"Only the boys whose names you have appear to have been concerned in the manufacture of the effigy, sir," said Mr. Railton. "But Glyn and Merry appear to be the ring-leaders. Possibly they will be able to clear up the puzzling points in this affair."

"Very good, Mr. Railton!" exclaimed the Head. He gave the juniors a searching look. "Do you admit having taken part in the manufacture of that disgraceful effigy?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!" came the quiet answer.

"You are probably aware by now that your offence is a serious one," said the Head sternly. "You have grossly insulted a prefect of this school, and have set authority at defiance by holding it up to ridicule in this disgraceful manner. That, however, can wait for the moment. I wish to know if either of you had anything to do in any way with the more serious happenings in Mr. Linton's room last night?"

"No, sir!" said Glyn.

"We none of us know anything at all about that, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"You were not aware that Lowther contemplated such an action?"

"No, sir," said Tom Merry loyally. "And I believe he's innocent, sir!"

"I am not asking for your opinion in the matter, Merry!" said Dr. Holmes tartly. "The evidence against Lowther is almost conclusive. But before condemning him, it is my duty to investigate the matter thoroughly. To this end, I order you to tell me all you know of the happenings last evening. There are several points which I believe you boys can clear up. I am waiting."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath. Yet he knew that Mr. Railton's advice to make a clean breast of it was good advice. For Lowther's own sake it was best.

"I will tell all I know, sir!" he said quietly. "We finished the guy last evening and hid it in the cupboard in the box-room. That was the last we saw of it—excepting Lowther, that is."

"Lowther states that he took it from some juniors in the passage," said the Head. "I myself came along and found him holding a bulky object wrapped in a sheet—an object which he told me was a guy. I believed it was just an ordinary, innocent effigy, and I did not trouble to ask to see it, unfortunately. Lowther refuses to state who the juniors were from whom he took the guy."

"What Lowther says is quite true, sir," said Tom. "Those fellows took the guy from the cupboard."

"Who were they, Merry?"

Tom Merry was silent. He was anxious enough to tell what he knew; but he could not sneak—he could not give Figgins & Co., of the New House, away.

"One moment, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "I think I can guess that. Were not those boys from the New House, Merry?"

"Y-yes, sir!" said the junior captain hesitatingly.

"I thought so—their names?"

"I'm sorry, sir! I—I should be sneaking if I told you!"

"Very well!" said the Head, after a pause. "I will not press that question. There is another point that enters here, however. Knox has complained that he was attacked in the box-room last evening and locked in a cupboard there. Had you boys any hand in that?"

"No, sir!"

"Do you know who assaulted Knox in that manner?"

Silence.

"Answer me, Merry!" said the Head angrily.

"It was the fellows who raided the guy from the cupboard, sir!" gasped Tom. "They were just getting it when Knox came sneak—I mean came into the box-room. They collared him in the darkness, and locked him in the cupboard in place of the guy. Then they were just rushing away with the effigy when Lowther met them and tried to stop them. Then you came along, and they bolted, leaving the guy in Lowther's hands."

"Why did those juniors want the guy?" demanded the Head, frowning. "Did they know whom it represented?"

"Oh, no, sir! They—they thought it was an effigy of one of themselves, and that's why they were so determined to get hold of it."

"And you did not see the effigy after placing it in the cupboard at all, then?"

"No, sir! Lowther hid it under the couch in our study!"

"Did you see him place it there, or did you find it there?"

"No, sir! Lowther told us afterwards!"

"You have only Lowther's word for that, Merry!"

"Yes, sir. But it is enough for me! Lowther isn't a fellow who tells lies, sir!"

"And it was gone when you looked for it?" said the Head, ignoring the trace of defiance in Tom Merry's words.

"Yes, sir!"

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"What did you do then?"

"We rushed off to the box-room, thinking somebody might have taken it back there!" said Tom. "But the effigy wasn't there—only Knox, who was locked in the cupboard, and he chased us away."

"I see! Go on, Merry!" said the Head, pursing his lips.

"There isn't much more to tell, sir!" said Tom. "We thought then that those—those other fellows must have taken it after all, and we then got our fireworks and went down to the bonfire, meaning to try to get it back. But we soon found that they hadn't got it."

"Was Lowther with you then?"

Tom Merry hesitated, and his face shadowed.

"No, sir!" he said at last. "He left us just as we came out of the House. He told Manners that he was going back to change Mr. Linton's candle for a cracker. We believed it, and we believe it now."

"Is that all you can tell me, Merry?" demanded the Head.

"Yes, sir—excepting that I'm quite certain Lowther didn't do it!" said Tom doggedly. "Lowther wouldn't tell a lie about it, and he wouldn't play a trick like that—especially on Mr. Linton. Mr. Linton is popular with the Form, sir. Lowther didn't do it. Somebody else found the effigy, and did it, locking Lowther in the room to throw the blame on him."

"Nonsense!" snapped the Head angrily. "That is enough, Merry! I can understand your loyalty to your friend, but the facts are conclusive. It is not the first time Lowther has played dangerous practical jokes upon a master. His reputation cannot be forgotten. He was discovered in the room, and he attempted to escape on the entrance of Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton. The fact that he was locked in the room is certainly a perplexing point. Yet both Mr. Railton and myself are convinced that either someone locked him in by accident, or as a foolish trick."

"But, sir—"

"Silence, Merry! Have you anything to add to Merry's remarks, Glyn?"

"No, sir—excepting that he has spoken the truth," said Glyn.

"Very well!" said the Head coldly. "Your punishment will be severe! You may go!"

Tom Merry and Glyn left the room silently, both of them giving Lowther glances of compassion as they stumbled out. Tom Merry himself felt suddenly sick at heart—he could not fail to see that both the Head and Mr. Railton had already made up their minds as to Lowther's guilt.

As they went out and the door closed after them, the Head turned to Mr. Railton, his features grim.

"There is no necessity to go farther into this matter, I think, Mr. Railton," he said.

"None, sir, in my opinion!" was the quiet answer. "I am afraid the matter is beyond doubt!"

Dr. Holmes turned to Lowther, whose features were like stone now.

"Lowther," he said gravely, "do you still persist in denying your guilt in this matter?"

Lowther licked his lips.

"Yes, sir—I can do nothing else!" he said thickly. "I swear I didn't do it. Somebody else did it, and locked me in the room to throw the blame on me!"

"You have nothing more than that to say?"

"No, sir!" said Lowther.

"I am afraid it is impossible for me to accept your word in view of the evidence!" was the deep, stern answer. "You admit having had a hand in the making of the effigy—a serious offence in itself. You have also stated that you went to Mr. Linton's room in order to place a cracker in place of his candle. That, if true, would be a graver offence still. But I cannot accept even that statement. You have the reputation of being utterly reckless and thoughtless, and on more than one occasion I have found it necessary to punish you severely for playing dangerous tricks."

"I'm innocent, sir!" panted Lowther.

"I regret that I cannot believe you. It is quite clear to me that when I met you with the effigy in your possession you were even then about to carry out your wicked intention," said the Head, with deep indignation. "You have insulted your Form-master in a manner that cannot be forgiven, and by your reckless, wicked folly you have narrowly escaped causing a serious fire, which might easily have been attended with loss of life. It was—"

"But I swear—" began Lowther hopelessly.

"Kindly be silent!" said Dr. Holmes, raising his hand. "It was a wicked and cruel insult to Mr. Linton, and that alone richly merits expulsion. There can be no question as to your punishment. This afternoon you will leave St. Jim's, Lowther. I will write a letter to your parents explaining the position, and this you will take with you. Mr. Railton, kindly lock this boy in the punishment-room."

"Very good, sir!"

Lowther panted. It was useless to appeal. Both the

Housemaster and the Head had quite made up their minds in the matter. With faltering steps, his brain reeling, the condemned junior left the study, and Mr. Railton followed him out into the corridor.

A group of fellows stood in the passage, amongst them Tom Merry and Glyn. They knew they ought to have gone straight back to the Housemaster's study, but they could not help themselves. They had to wait to learn the result.

The look on Lowther's face told them all.

Tom Merry caught his chum by the arm, heedless of the Housemaster's presence.

"Monty, old man, is it——"

"Yes. I'm expelled!" breathed Lowther, and he walked on, his heart like lead.

CHAPTER 3.

Rotten!

"E"XPULLED!"

Tom Merry gasped out the word unbelievably. Though the Head had as good as promised it, and though Lowther's chums had feared it, the sentence came as a great shock to them.

"Monty——" Tom Merry called after his chum.

Mr. Railton turned.

"Merry and Glyn, you will go to my room at once and await me there!" he snapped, and he walked on with his prisoner.

"Sacked!" gasped Levison. "Lowther sacked!"

"Well, he asked for it, if anybody did!" said Gore, shaking his head. "Still, I'm dashed sorry!"

It was the general view. Scarcely anyone believed Lowther innocent of the charge; his reputation was against him. Certainly many were surprised at Lowther's insult to Mr. Linton, and many were disposed to feel unsympathetic in consequence. Yet such practical jokes were quite in Lowther's line—reckless and daring though they may be. They did not doubt his guilt in the matter.

"He asked for it, right enough!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"And if you ask me, he deserved it—not for shoving the dummy in Linton's bed, but for calling Linton a tyrant! Linton isn't a tyrant!"

"Well, that's so!" admitted Gore. "But—— Oh, my hat! Fancy, the sack!"

The news was spreading like wildfire as Tom Merry and Bernard Glyn made their way to the Housemaster's study.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Glyn. "Now we're for it, Tommy! Oh, that sack, Lowther!"

"Oh, dry up!" said the junior captain bitterly. "As if a licking matters, when old Monty's bunked!"

"Well, I'm sorry enough for Lowther!" said Glyn. "But he asked for it. I was going to punch his head if he did get off. After the way I slaved on that dashed guy, and this is all we get for it—a licking! And it may be worse! Lowther was a born idiot——"

"I tell you Lowther didn't do it!" snapped Tom Merry angrily. "Lowther might have shoved the guy in the bed, but he wouldn't insult Linton like that! He didn't do it!"

"Oh, draw it mild! Who did if he didn't?"

Tom Merry did not answer. He knew it was useless to argue with Glyn in the matter, in any case. They entered Mr. Railton's study, and joined their chums waiting there.

"Well?" demanded Manners eagerly. "How——"

He broke off. Tom Merry's face told him the answer.

"Bai Jove! It's not——"

Tom Merry cut Arthur Augustus short, with a gesture.

"It's all over!" he groaned. "Monty's sacked!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

There was a gasp of consternation.

"Sacked!" breathed Manners. "Poor old Monty!"

Manners' face paled. To think that Monty Lowther, the cheery, fun-loving joker of the Shell was to go, expelled in disgrace, and that they might possibly never see him again, filled Manners with utter, helpless dismay.

"I—I can't believe it!" he gasped. "Didn't Monty defend himself? Didn't he deny it? We know he couldn't have done it."

"The Head refused to believe him; you can scarcely blame him, either, I suppose!" muttered Tom Merry miserably. "After all, it is a jolly serious matter! The insult was bad enough, and a serious fire might easily have resulted. It couldn't have been less than expulsion. Only——"

"It wasn't Lowther!" said Manners fiercely.

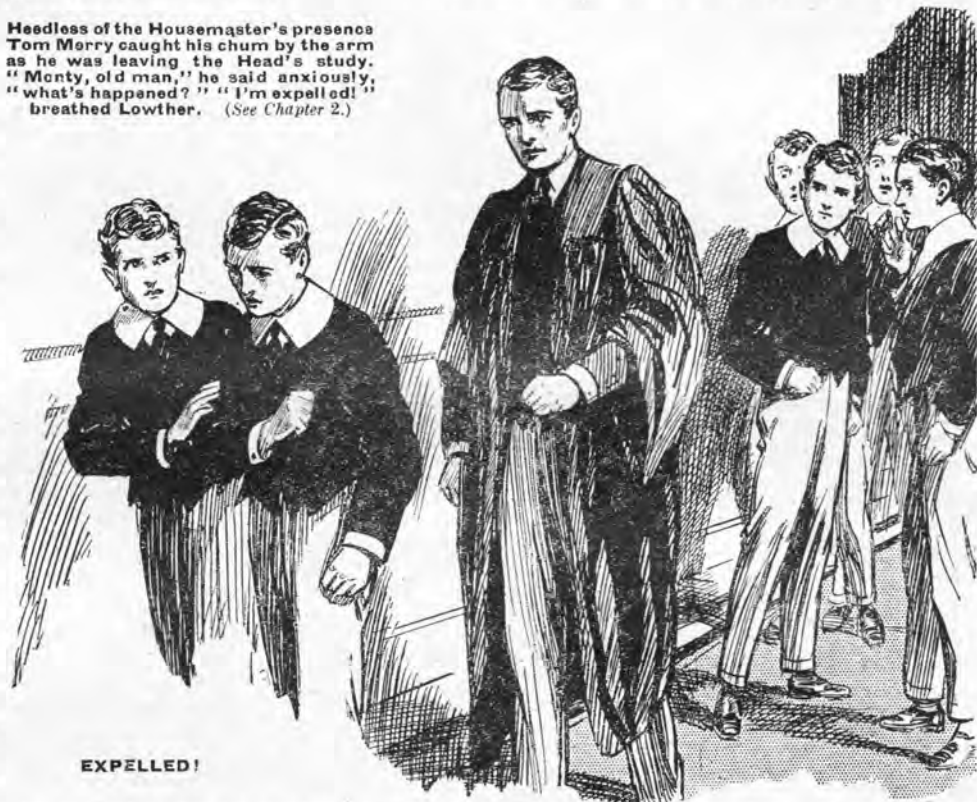
"That's it!" said Tom. "The Head——"

The entrance of Mr. Railton interrupted the speaker.

The Housemaster looked round at the startled faces of the juniors, and then he picked up the cane from his desk.

"One moment, sir!" said Tom Merry desperately. "Can-

Heedless of the Housemaster's presence Tom Merry caught his chum by the arm as he was leaving the Head's study. "Monty, old man," he said anxiously, "what's happened?" "I'm expelled!" breathed Lowther. (See Chapter 2.)



EXPULLED!

not something be done about Lowther? We're absolutely certain he didn't do it. Could the Head be persuaded to give him time to clear himself, sir?"

Mr. Railton frowned, but his face changed as he noted the misery in Tom Merry's anxious face.

"I am sorry. The matter is closed, Merry," he said quietly. "I can understand your loyal belief in your friend. But there can be no doubt as to his guilt. Dr. Holmes has gone thoroughly into the matter, and both he and myself are quite satisfied. Lowther leaves the school this afternoon. No one regrets this wretched affair more than I do."

"But, sir——"

"That is enough. It is impossible to reopen the matter. Glyn, I will deal with you first. In manufacturing that insulting effigy, you must have known that you were setting all authority at defiance, and that your punishment, if discovered, would be severe. Hold out your hand!"

Glyn held out his hand. He had been in the wrong, and he was ready to take his punishment.

It was a caning. Three on each hand the Housemaster gave the hapless inventor, and he laid them on hard. When he had finished Glyn's face was white, and he was squirming convulsively.

CHAPTER 4.

Lowther Goes!

Tom Merry's turn came next, and he had the same, as did the rest of the conspirators, who followed him in turn.

By the time Mr. Railton had finished the juniors had good cause to regret having made a guy of Gerald Knox of the Sixth, if they hadn't before. Mr. Railton laid down the cane at last, breathing hard.

"Let that be a lasting lesson to you!" he said. "In addition to the caning you will each do me an imposition of five-hundred lines. I will ask your respective Form masters to set you the subject and see that the work is done. You may go!"

The conspirators almost tottered from the study, groaning and squeezing their burning palms under their armpits. Mr. Railton had carried out his duty only too well.

A crowd of fellows had been waiting in the passage, curious to know to what extent their punishment would be. They knew now.

"Had it bad?" said Clive sympathetically.

"Yow! Three on each hand," panted Blake. "Oh, hang Glyn and his blessed guy!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Baggy Trimble, rolling up. "You fellows were asses, you know!"

"Asses isn't the word for it!" grinned Aubrey Racke, winking at Crooke. "Who are the guys now, chaps? Fancy spending weeks making a dashed guy, and getting this for it! I call it funny!"

"Do you?" snapped Blake, his face red with wrath. "Then perhaps you'll see something funny in this!"

And he tapped Aubrey Racke full on his long nose.

Racke yelped, his head striking the passage wall as he jumped back, causing him to yelp again.

"You rotter!" shouted the cad of the Shell furiously.

"We're not in the mood for your funny remarks!" said Blake, as Racke hugged his nose and glared. "And the less you say, the better for you, my pippin!"

"Give him another tap for luck, Blake!" said Levison in disgust. "He was crowing about Lowther getting the sack a moment ago!"

"I wasn't!" said Racke savagely. "I only said it served him right; and it does! He's been funny once too often, the fool!"

"That's enough," said Manners fiercely. "Say another word about Lowther, and I'll smash you, you cad!"

"I'm saying—"

"You've said enough!" said Manners, eyeing Racke's flushed face fixedly. "But I'm not so sure that it shouldn't be you for the sack, and not Lowther."

"Look here!" blustered Racke. "What the deuce d'you mean by that, Manners?"

"I mean," said Manners deliberately, "that it's more like a trick of yours than of Lowther's, Racke! Lowther didn't do it. I fancy you know a bit more about it than Lowther does, anyway."

"Steady on, old chap!" said Tom. "Come on—leave the cad!"

"He'd better!" said Racke thickly, his face white. "If he says that again I'll have him up before Railton and make him prove his words!"

"Don't talk rot!" said Tom Merry uneasily. "Come on, Harry!"

He dragged his chum away.

"Dash it all, you can't go accusing a fellow like that—just because he was crowing!" said Tom Merry. "Racke would be cad enough to do it. I know; but—"

"Who's more likely to do it than Racke?" said Manners through his teeth. "Linton thrashed him, and it was through Lowther that he got a second thrashing from Railton. He was vowing to get even with Monty. And another thing—that would be more easier than for Racke to slip out of his study and get the guy from under the couch in our study?"

"Yes; but—"

"Easy enough!" snapped Manners, his eyes gleaming. "He may have seen what happened in the passage, and he may have watched Lowther shove the guy under the couch. I never thought of it until I spotted that cad winking at Crooke just now. It made me see what may have happened."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, there's something in that!" said Blake, drawing a deep breath. "We know Racke is rotter enough for anything. By James! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you haven't hit it, Manners!"

"It's—it's likely!" said Tom Merry hesitatingly. "I don't like admitting so without any proof. But—"

The ringing of the bell for morning lessons interrupted the junior captain, and the juniors left it at that. But there was little work done that morning, by Tom Merry and Manners, at least. It was not easy to concentrate on lessons with the sight of Lowther's empty place before them, and the knowledge that he would never occupy it again filling their minds.

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"LOWTHER, old man!"

Tom Merry spoke in a whisper.

It was a grave breach of rules to visit anyone in the punishment-room at St. Jim's; but Tom Merry and Manners were not in the mood to heed or care about rules just then. Their chum was going—leaving the old school for ever—and they were determined to have a word with him before he went.

Tom Merry had asked Mr. Railton permission for Manners and himself to see their chum; but Mr. Railton had refused.

So the junior captain and Manners had gone along to Nobody's Study, determined to have a few words with their chum, rules or no rules. It was already after dinner, and they knew he was to leave the school that afternoon—though at what time they did not know.

Tom Merry rapped on the door and whispered cautiously. There was a sound of footsteps behind the locked door.

"That you, Tommy?"

"Yes—Manners and I. Monty, old man," said Tom. "We—we're sorry about this! Can we do anything?"

"Nothing!" Lowther's voice was husky. "I'd like to know you fellows believe me, though," he added. "I didn't do it! Some cad tricked me into this. If—if I knew—"

"We're certain of that, Monty," said Manners eagerly. "Of course, we believe you, old man. It was Racke—I'm certain it was Racke and his pals."

"I know—I'm certain, too!" called back Lowther fiercely. "If only I had the chance to prove it—if only I had a few more days here! But it's no good! I'm going by the two-fifteen this afternoon. But—but it's something to know you fellows can take my word, anyway."

"Of course we do, Monty!" whispered Tom Merry, his voice curiously hoarse. "It—it's rotten, old chap! But if we can do anything—if we find out anything, you can rely on us to act upon it!"

"The Head's not given me a fair chance!" said Lowther bitterly. "That locked door ought to have proved that I didn't do it—that somebody was playing a trick on me. I—I've a jolly good mind to refuse to go!"

"Monty—"

"I don't care! I've done nothing to deserve expulsion! I shan't go home, anyway!"

"Monty—" Tom Merry gasped. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you haven't seen the last of me, Tom!" said Lowther, his voice fiercer than ever. "And St. Jim's hasn't, either!"

Tom Merry gave Manners an uneasy look. But before he could answer a quick step sounded behind them.

It was Mr. Railton—Tom sighted him at the end of the passage leading to the punishment-room.

"Here's Railton, Monty. Good-bye, old man, and good luck if we don't get the chance to see you again."

"Good-bye, Tom!"

Manners just had time for a few cheering words with his chum, and then Mr. Railton came up, with a frowning brow.

"Merry—Manners, what are you doing here? How dare you, after my refusal to allow you to visit Lowther!" he said sharply.

"We—we couldn't let Lowther go without saying good-bye, sir!" stammered Tom.

"None the less, you have broken the rules of the school!" snapped the Housemaster. "You are well aware of that! You will both—"

The Housemaster paused. He could not fail to note the deep distress in the faces of the two juniors. His frown of anger disappeared.

"In the circumstances I will not punish you," he said briefly. "I can understand your concern for your friend, and am only sorry that I cannot permit you to see him. You may go!"

The two juniors went, their faces downcast and miserable. The Housemaster walked away—he had merely heard voices emanating from the direction of the punishment-room and had come to investigate. Behind the door Lowther stood listening to his departing footsteps.

He realised now that his chums had been refused permission to see him, and he set his teeth. It was hard to have to go without seeing them. But—

Lowther began to pace the room restlessly, his brow wrinkled in thought. In telling his chums that they would see him again he had meant what he said.

What he intended to do he did not know—he could not think clearly as yet. Even now he could scarcely believe that it was true—that he was leaving St. Jim's that afternoon—expelled! It seemed like some horrible dream.

Yet it was only too true. And, of one thing, Lowther was determined; whatever happened he would not go home! St. Jim's had not finished with him. He would

go now—he would have to go! But he would return—though how it was to be done the junior had not the faintest idea yet. He was burning with a sense of injustice! He was innocent!

As he thought his problem out, Lowther paced the room unceasingly. He heard the bell for afternoon classes ring, and he smiled bitterly at the thought that it meant nothing to him. Then a little while afterwards the key turned in the lock and the door opened.

It was Kildare of the Sixth.

He nodded not unkindly to the hapless junior.

"Come on, kid! I've got to help you to pack, and to see you in the train," he said briefly. "Buck up!"

"Right, Kildare!"

Lowther forced a faint smile and followed Kildare from the room. It did not take long to pack his things with Kildare's help. Within fifteen minutes they were on their way to the station.

Despite his strange resolve, Lowther could not help looking back at the old school with blurred eyes. He had vowed to return—he had no intention of taking the London train if he could help it. Yet—how was it to be worked? Would he be obliged to go home, after all?

Now he was face to face with the problem, it seemed an idiotic resolve. But his mind was chaotic now; later he would have time to think things out clearly and make plans.

He scarcely spoke to Kildare on the way to the station. Several times the senior looked at him curiously—almost suspiciously. To Kildare, the junior did not seem to be worrying much about his expulsion.

"Here you are, kid," he said, on reaching the station, "cut along and get your ticket—train's in!"

Kildare handed the junior the money for his ticket, and Lowther's eyes gleamed. Strictly, Kildare should have got the ticket, but the senior did not dream of what was in the expelled junior's mind. He hurried away to see Lowther's luggage into the train—Cripps, the porter, having brought it from St. Jim's a few minutes before.

Instead of getting a ticket to his home station, Lowther got one to Wayland, and pocketed the change. Every penny would be useful to him now! He felt thankful indeed for the fiver an indulgent and wealthy aunt had sent him only the day before—not even changed yet. With that and the change—which was nearly a pound—he would manage nicely for some days.

He found Kildare waiting by the door of a compartment.

"Your luggage is in," said Kildare, holding out his hand. "Change at Wayland, remember! Well, good-bye, kid! I'm sorry you're going—dashed sorry! You were a young ass, but—well, no good rubbing it in now!"

Lowther nodded, and shook hands with the captain of St. Jim's. He had Kildare's sympathy at all events.

"All serene, Kildare!" he said quite calmly. "And thanks! We may see each other again yet! Good-bye!"

He opened the carriage door, and entered the compartment, for the guard's whistle had sounded. The train began to move, and Monty Lowther threw his case on to the rack and dropped into a corner seat.

Then he became aware that another boy of about his own age was in the compartment—a stocky youth with a snubby nose, and a flat, but homely face.

It was Toby Marsh, the School House page-boy at St. Jim's. But he was in his "Sunday-best" clothes now and not his familiar uniform.

He flushed as he recognised Lowther.

"Oh! It's you, Master Lowther!" he exclaimed respectfully. "I didn't know as 'ow you were goin' to get in 'ere!"

"You young ass!" grinned Lowther. "You've as much right in here as me, fathead! Half-day off, old chap?"

"No, Master Lowther! I'm goin' 'ome!"

"Home?" ejaculated Lowther. "Not been bunked like me, I hope?"

"Nunno! The Head's lettin' me go 'ome for a bit," explained Toby awkwardly. "You see, me mother's got to go away to look arter a sister what's ill, and I'm wanted at home to help look arter things there."

"You're leaving for good then, Toby?"

"I hopes not, Master Lowther! The Head—he's a good sort, he is—said as he'd have me back when I could come!"

That's what he said when I told 'im 'ow things was, anyway. You see, he's goin' to try to get another chap temporary-like in my place till I come back agen."

"Oh!"

Lowther gave a gasp—a strange look coming over his face. Toby eyed him rather curiously.

"But—but I'm sorry as you're leaving St. Jim's, Master Lowther!" he stammered awkwardly. "You bin good to me more'n once, and—and I'm sorry about what's happened."

"Oh! Thanks, Toby!" murmured Lowther, his thoughts evidently on something else. "You're a good kid!"

"It ain't for such as me to say nought," went on Toby, shaking his head. "But I knows you wouldn't do a thing like that—not insultin' a kind old gent like Mr. Linton, leastways. It was like what Master Racke was likely to, if you arsk me—an' Mary, the 'ousemaid, thinks same as me about it," he added confidentially. "He's no good, he ain't! Never has been and never will be. In fact, the old school would be better without him."

Lowther looked at the pageboy seriously. In his way, Toby was trying to show his sympathy—and Lowther felt grateful for it. But it was strange that Toby, and Mary, the housemaid, should suspect Racke—the very fellow he himself had suspected. It was natural enough that the servants should talk amongst themselves, and he scarcely wondered at their feelings towards Aubrey Racke, the supercilious, purse-proud son of a millionaire.

"Well, as it happens, you're of the same opinion as I am, Toby," he said quietly. "I didn't do it, anyway!"

"I knows you didn't, Master Lowther. That feller Racke would do anybody a bad turn, and he's always up to summut. Only this morning Mary found him sneaking about Mr. Linton's room when she went ter clean the mess up there. It were a mess, too—"

"Hold on! What's that, Toby?" interrupted Lowther, with a start. "You say the housemaid found Racke in Linton's room?"

"Yes, Master Lowther!" said Toby—rather hesitatingly now. "O' course, it might 'ave meant nothin'. He was crawling about on 'is hands and knees, searching like! He got all confused when Mary went in—said he'd lost summut, and thought it might 'a got kicked inside the room."

"What did he say he'd lost?" said Lowther eagerly.

"A matchbox, Master Lowther. But, as Mary says, who'd go crawling about a room for a matchbox he'd lost—especially a master's room? As Mary says it's all bunkum—"

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HERE'S A NOVEL PUZZLE, BOYS!

HIDDEN NAMES!



This week we are testing the ingenuity of our readers by giving them another difficult anagram to solve.

Each of the following sentences, when the letters are correctly transposed, will be found to form the name of a well-known character at St. Jim's.

The following classic example will show you exactly what an anagram is:

Florence Nightingale—"Flit on, cheering angel."

Now set your wits to work, and see how many names you can discover. The correct solutions will be published in next week's issue.

1. Live fran't, on!
2. We regard clean.
3. Egg for egg? I sin.
4. Flog drudge e e angry.
5. Moan—Jim's teeth!
6. German is green.
7. Hot by Ma s.
8. Sly help crime.
9. I'd tray—b o. he'r, grub.

he was up to some game. And I thinks so, too, Master Lowther!"

"When was this—what time, Toby?" demanded Lowther. "Very early—afore breakfast, Master Lowther!" said Toby, a trifle alarmed now at what he had said, as he saw the effect in Lowther's face and voice. "Mr. Linton 'ad to sleep in another room last night, you knows—his room being in such a mess with burnt fireworks an' what was left o' that there guy an'—"

"I know all about that, Toby," said Lowther eagerly. "What else? What did Racke say about it?"

"Nothin'—except as he'd lost 'is matchbox. Mary says she gave 'im a look, an' he sneaked off then."

"Oh!"

Lowther leaned back in his seat, breathing hard. It was evident that Toby and Mary attached little importance to the incident, excepting that they believed Racke was "up to some game" in Mr. Linton's wrecked room. To find him there at such an early hour was certainly likely to arouse suspicions below stairs. And his excuse that he was searching for a "matchbox" would certainly seem feeble to them, for they obviously imagined he meant an ordinary wooden matchbox.

But Lowther knew differently. Lowther had seen Racke's matchbox often enough—a valuable silver matchbox with Racke's initials on the lid.

Why was he looking for the lost matchbox in Mr. Linton's bed-room?

The answer seemed clear to Monty Lowther. Racke had dropped it there the night before; and if he had, then there was not much need to look farther for the person who had placed the guy in Mr. Linton's bed. The guilty person, whoever it was, had removed the electric light globe and candlestick; for both were missing, and the room was in darkness when Lowther had crept in the night before. It was owing to that, and the fact that Lowther himself had come without matches, that he had not discovered the guy himself until Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton had unlocked the door and found him there. It was very certain that Racke—or whoever had done it—would not do it with the electric light on. They would use matches—their own matches, most likely.

Lowther sat back, his heart beating fast now. He had learned—to his own satisfaction, at all events—who had done it, and it was the fellow he had suspected.

Nor was that all. He had also solved the problem of his immediate future—or he believed he had!

Lowther did not ask Toby any more questions, nor did Toby volunteer any further information; he was rather startled at the way Lowther had taken what he had said. But the expelled junior's face was not so gloomy and bitter now—indeed, it was almost cheery. As the train rumbled into Wayland Junction he shook hands with the astonished Toby Marsh and parted from him with a grin on his face.

He was out of the train in a flash and he hurried along to the luggage van. The guard was just putting his trunk out of the van, and Lowther calmly tore off the labels. Then he handed the trunk over to a porter, and had it taken to the left-luggage office. This done, the expelled junior walked cheerily out of the station and made his way to the Wayland Temperance Hotel. There Lowther booked a bed-room.

A little later and he was sitting down to write a letter—a letter addressed to Mrs. Mimms, the House dame of the School House at St. Jim's. But, strangely enough, the handwriting was not his own, nor was the name he signed that of Montague Lowther. If all went well Lowther was going to keep his vow to return to St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 5.

Timothy Tipple!

"HALLO! Who the dickens is this merchant?"

It was a day or two after Monty Lowther's expulsion. The chums of the Fourth, with Tom Merry and Manners, were sauntering homewards towards St. Jim's along Rylcombe Lane, having been for a short stroll before tea.

The sensation caused by the "sacking" of Monty Lowther had died down somewhat at St. Jim's. In the Upper School the seniors had probably forgotten that such a fellow as Lowther had existed; in the Middle and Lower Schools his name was scarcely mentioned. Though Lowther had been an important member of the Middle School, he was gone now, and the fellows had much more important things to think about.

But with Lowther's chums the case was different. Tom Merry and Manners missed their chum keenly, and Study No. 10 did not seem the same place without him. They missed his cheery grin, his unfailing good-humour—they

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even missed his puns and his practical joking, which were usually the cause of strife and discord in Study No. 10.

In a lesser degree Blake & Co. missed him, too—and Tom Merry and Manners did not allow them to forget him. They were discussing their absent chum as they sauntered back from their stroll in the early November dusk.

Up to the last Tom had felt—had hoped—that the Head would relent—that something would happen to save his chum. But nothing had happened; Lowther had gone.

Even after he had gone Tom Merry and Manners could not help feeling that there was hope. Lowther had certainly spoken mysteriously in saying they would see him again, and they had supposed that he had some scheme in mind.

But even that faint hope had gone now. Lowther, as Tom himself reluctantly admitted, had been speaking wildly in the heat of the moment. He had gone, and they had heard nothing from him since—he had not even written to them.

It was Jack Blake who interrupted the conversation. Happening to glance behind him, he had seen a queer figure ambling along the lane.

"Who the dickens is he?" he repeated. "My hat! He can't be going to St. Jim's!"

"Looks like it!" smiled Tom Merry. "Quaint-looking kid!"

The others thought so, too, as they glanced behind them. Strangers were few and far between in the district, and it certainly seemed as if the fellow who had attracted Blake's interest was bound for St. Jim's.

He was of about their own size and age, with extremely ruddy features, a tow-coloured mop of untidy hair straggling over his forehead, a red nose, and he wore large horn-rimmed spectacles. He was dressed in a loud, striped suit, a stand-up collar, with a gorgeous blue-and-yellow tie, and a bowler hat several sizes too big for him. The luggage he was carrying consisted of a small shabby tin trunk.

Altogether, the stranger looked a most quaint and extraordinary figure.

The juniors smiled as he ambled up behind them—they could not help it. They slowed down for him to pass them. But the stranger did not pass them.

He ranged up alongside, treating them to an affable grin.

"Arternoon!" he said in a squeaky voice. "This the right road to Sin Sam's, I s'pose?"

"Good-afternoon!" answered Tom Merry, smiling. "You mean St. Jim's, don't you?"

"That's it—I knowed it was summat like that!" exclaimed the strange youth agreeably. "You blokes belong to there?"

"Yes. Keep straight on," said Tom. "You'll see the gates when you get round the next bend."

"Right-ho!" said the youth, without attempting to move on. "I'll come along with you blokes. Might as well be pally from the start—what?"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Mebbe you blokes won't mind giving a feller a few tips," said the youth, winking at them confidentially. "What sort of place is it? Is the grub good? I took this 'ere job in a hurry—"

"Oh!" grinned Tom Merry, understanding. "You're the new pageboy? I heard one was coming to-day."

"That's it, mate. I'm 'im—Timothy Tipple's me name. I ain't never had a job like this afore. Faney me bein' pageboy in a hasylum!"

"In a what?" almost shouted Blake.

"Hasylum," said Timothy Tipple calmly. "I ain't at all sure as I oughter 'ave took on the job. I 'opes—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, my good fellow—"

"You—you cheeky owl!" said Blake wrathfully. "Why—why—"

"Steady on, Blake!" said Tom Merry hastily, with a sharp look at the innocent face of Timothy Tipple. "The kid's made a mistake. St. Jim's is a school, not an asylum, Tipple."

"Oh erikey! Faney me thinkin' it were an hasylum! But if it ain't, what are you blokes doin' there?" asked Timothy, in guileless innocence.

And he blinked through his goggles at the six juniors in puzzled wonder.

The six juniors glared at him, half angry and half amazed. Tom Merry eyed him more keenly still. It seemed like "impudent cheek," and yet it seemed impossible that a new pageboy would dare to attempt to pull their legs. And the fellow certainly looked a duffer, too innocent and harmless to pull anyone's leg. It seemed more likely that someone had been pulling Timothy Tipple's leg.

"Somebody's been pulling your leg, Tipple," said Tom, a trifle curtly. "St. Jim's is a school. We belong there, and you'll be on the school staff, and I'm afraid the authorities won't allow us to be pally. I'm not sure whether you're only a duffer or whether you're trying to be funny at our expense. But as you've asked for tips I'll

give you one. It won't pay you to try to pull our legs. If you do you'll get it in the neck, short and sharp!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, looking severely through his monocle at Timothy Tipple. "I do not desiah to be unkind, but, weally, I cannot think—"

"I knew it!" interrupted Timothy Tipple triumphantly. "It can't think."

"Bai Jove! What—"

"I was fairly stumped when I 'eard it speak!" explained Timothy, addressing the others and pointing to the elegant Arthur Augustus. "But I knowed it couldn't think. Why? 'Cause it ain't got nothin' to think with."

"Weally, you—you—"

"I've seen things like it in houtfitters' shop winders in Wayland," said Timothy Tipple, eyeing the astounded Arthur Augustus admiringly. "Only them tailor's dummies

To commit assault and battery on a humble member of the domestic staff at St. Jim's would be 'infra dig, to say the least. Moreover, it wasn't done, and whatever the provocation the school authorities would scarcely approve of it. Yet, really—

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"You—you cheeky wottah!" he gasped. "Only your position at St. Jim's pwevents me fwom thwashin' you, bai Jove! If you go on at St. Jim's at this wate, you will get into sewious twouble! My advice to you is, dwop it!"

Crash!

"Yawoooooooooogh!"

Timothy Tipple had obeyed, not as Arthur Augustus intended him to, however. He evidently mistook Gussy's meaning, for it was the tin box he dropped, one end dropping full on Gussy's elegant footwear.

Arthur Augustus yelled fiendishly. He pranced about in the road, hopping on alternate legs as he hugged each foot.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Though far from approving of Timothy's conduct,

"I've seen things like it in houtfitters' shop winders in Wayland," said Timothy Tipple, eyeing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy up and down admiringly. "But you could have knocked me down with a fevver when I 'eard this one talk!" "You—you cheeky wottah!" roared Arthur Augustus. (See Chapter 5.)



didn't 'ave winder-panes in their optics. And they couldn't speak or walk, neither. But you could 'ave knocked me down with a fevver when I seed this one walk and 'eard it talk!"

And Timothy Tipple walked round in front of Arthur Augustus and looked him admiringly up and down.

Arthur Augustus went red with outraged wrath. His chums chuckled explosively.

"You—you cheeky wottah!" roared D'Arcy, shaking his fist in the new pageboy's ruddy face. "I am convinced you are twyin' to pull my leg, you feahful boundah! If you were not joinin' the domestic staff at St. Jim's I would administah a feahful thwashin', you impudent wascal!"

"Oh crimes! 'Ark to 'im!" said Timothy, appealing to the rest of the grinning juniors. "I s'pose 'is chin works by clockwork. Ain't it lifelike?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You insolent wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Why, I—I will—"

Arthur Augustus restrained himself with a mighty effort.

whether innocent or not, Gussy's chums could not help roaring.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Timothy, staring in evident dismay at the prancing Arthur Augustus. "What's the matter with it? 'As the works gone wrong?"

"You feahful wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "Oh deah! Oh, bai Jove! I will thwash you whatevah happens now, you wuffian!"

And he made a sudden, ferocious rush at the new pageboy.

Timothy grabbed his tin box and dodged away in great alarm.

As Gussy wheeled and followed him, he dropped the box just as swiftly, however, and, unfortunately, he dropped it full in Gussy's path.

Before Arthur Augustus could stop he tripped up and fell headlong over the box. Luckily, he fell on the soft, sloping grass at the lane side, though Gussy did not think it lucky when he slid down into the ditch beyond.

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"Oh crikey!" gasped Timothy Tipple, staring at the grovelling junior. "What's it gone and done that for? Ere, I'm off! Blowed if I don't believe it's really alive! And blowed if I don't believe it's one of them lunatics, arter all. I'm off!"

And, grabbing his box again, the new page-boy bolted for his life, his tin box banging and clattering as he fled down the lane.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. roared as Arthur Augustus scrambled from the ditch and went in pursuit, his aristocratic features smeared with mud, and his noble eyes gleaming with great wrath.

But he did not catch the cheerful page-boy. Apparently the tin box was not heavy at all, for Timothy went like the wind. And after a brief chase Arthur Augustus gave it up and returned, breathing hard and crimson with wrath. He might have caught the fugitive had he kept on, but even in his towering rage Arthur Augustus did not want to be seen chasing him in at the gates of St. Jim's. It would not have done at all!

"Oh, the feahful young wascal!" he gasped, as he joined his laughing chums. "It is nothin' at all to laugh at, you cacklin' wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Isn't it?"

"I am surprised at you!" panted Arthur Augustus, glaring indignantly. "Your laughter will encourage that disrespectful young person! However, I shall seek him out the moment I awive at St. Jim's, and I will teach him a lastin' lesson, bai Jove! I am quite suah that he was pullin' my leg, and that he did it all purposely."

"Go hon!"

"Oh, wats!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "That young wuffian must be taught to be pwopahly wespctful. Oh deah! Look at the feahful state I am in! My clobber is simplay smothahed in mud. Oh, the—the wuffian!"

And Arthur Augustus groaned dismally as he scraped away at the mud and started back to St. Jim's, his chums trying hard to look sympathetic.

"Never mind, Gussy," said Blake cheerfully. "I can see Timothy Tipple getting the boot before the day's out, so that's one comfort for you."

"Bai Jove! I do not wish to see the young wottah sacked!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. "But he weally must learn to twest fellows with wespct and considewation. I intend to thwash him soundlay, and then to speak a few kindlay and seasonable words to the wottah!"

"But what if he thrashes you, old top?" grinned Herries.

"Will you still speak the kindly and seasonable words?"

"Don't be widic, Hewwies!"

"You never know, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Refusing to discuss the matter further, Arthur Augustus stalked on ahead, his noble eye gleaming. Whether he spoke the seasonable and kindly words or not to Timothy Tipple, it was certain that Arthur Augustus would attempt the thrashing.

"Poor old Gussy!" grinned Tom Merry. "Still, that kid was too jolly cheeky—though he seemed a decent sort. But he'll have to change his tune, or he won't stop long at St. Jim's."

"Rather not!" said Blake grimly. "He's booked for trouble if he keeps that game up at St. Jim's."

"I'm blessed if I can quite make him out," said Tom, wrinkling his brows. "He's either a bit potty, or else he's too much all there! And—and he seems somehow familiar to me, blessed if I can say why. But—"

"I thought that, too!" said Manners, frowning. "I'm sure I've seen the cheeky young imp somewhere before."

"At Wayland, I expect!" grinned Blake. "He mentioned Wayland, so I suppose he comes from there. Anyway, if he keeps this up we look like having some fun—until the silly chump gets the boot."

"Yes, rather!"

There was a chuckle—though Tom Merry didn't join in it. He was trying hard to remember where he had seen the queer new page-boy before. He little dreamed of the truth!

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble!

"CHEER up, old scout! Gad! You look as chirpy as a moulting owl, Aubrey!"

Gerald Croke grinned as he joined Aubrey Racke in the gateway where his chum was lounging. It was a malicious grin—Croke was a fellow who found pleasure in seeing others unhappy—even his own chum and study-mate.

And certainly Racke did not look happy. His face was long, and his eyes had a haunted look in them. For a day or two now Racke had been like that, and he had been

surly and unusually snappy and irritable even with his own pals. It was plain that Aubrey Racke had something on his mind—something that gave him a great deal of anxiety.

He scowled as Croke came up and spoke to him.

"Shut up!" he snapped.

Croke grinned again. He knew perfectly well what was in Racke's mind.

"Still worrying yourself about Lowther's affair!" he said, dropping his voice to a whisper. "Gad! I should have expected you to be as chirpy as a dashed cricket over that affair! For goodness' sake chuck it, you silly fool! The fellows will begin to suspect something if you go about with a face like that!"

"Will you shut up?" snarled Racke.

"Don't be an ass!" said Croke, unheeding. "What's the dashed good of going about like this, Aubrey? You got what you wanted—you worked the wheeze a treat, and you got your own back on both of them. And nobody has a suspicion of the truth! If you've suddenly turned soft, why not go and own up and clear your giddy conscience. You'll be no end happy then—at home!"

Racke grunted.

"You silly fool!" he breathed. "It's not that! I—I won't say I'm glad that Lowther got the sack; I'm pretty tough, but I won't go so far as that! I wanted to pay both Linton and that cad out; but I only expected it to be a flogging for Lowther—not the sack!"

"Well, no good weeping about that now," said Croke, eyeing his chum curiously. "Lowther's gone, and you're as safe as houses—if you'll only stop acting the goat like this. It won't fetch Lowther back again, and it'll only make somebody suspicious. Chuck mooning about like this and try to be chirpy, you fool."

"I tell you I'm not thinking about that cad!" muttered Racke impatiently. "It—it's that confounded matchbox!"

"Oh!"

"I asked Mary, the housemaid, about it again to-day," said Racke. "She hasn't found it yet! And the room's been pretty thoroughly cleaned out! But it's there somewhere—I know it is! I remember putting the dashed thing down somewhere in the room—where, I'm hanged if I can remember. But it's there!"

"Nothing to worry about, anyway!" sniffed Croke carelessly. "Probably one of the servants found it and kept it!"

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Racke irritably. "The dashed servants here don't pinch things, you fool! Besides, it's got my initials on it. If it had been found there would have been inquiries made. It hasn't been found; it's in that rotten room somewhere!"

"Well, where's the worry?" sneered Croke. "You awful ass! It can't incriminate you if it is found there! You can swear you don't know how it got there."

"I know I can; but it would lead to the whole thing being gone into again. Railton knows me," said Racke, his eyes gleaming feverishly. "He wouldn't believe me, perhaps! He wouldn't swallow it. He would want to know pretty thoroughly what my matchbox was doing in Linton's bed-room. It proves I'd been there! And—and he'd soon find out I've been pumping Mary and Toby about the rotten thing. That would do me—absolutely put me in the soup!"

"Phew! You're right there!" whistled Croke. "You were a silly fool to go bothering the servants about it at all!"

"I know. Mary looked at me pretty queerly this morning. I thought. But what could a fellow do—it's got to be found! If Linton finds it there—luckily he isn't sleeping in the room now, and won't be until the workmen have repaired the damage done by the dashed fire. But—"

Racke groaned.

Croke was looking uneasy now. He had not attached much importance previously to the lost matchbox. But he saw now that his chum was right. If the box was found—either by Mr. Linton or the servants—inquiries would certainly be made. Articles found by servants were returned to the Housemaster as a matter of course. And if Railton had it taken to him, he would smell a rat instantly. Mr. Linton himself would undoubtedly do likewise.

And then the fact that he had been tackling the servants about it would be brought to light for a certainty. It would come out that he himself had been found by the housemaid searching the room the morning after the fire!

That would absolutely "do it!" Moreover, it would not take the keen Housemaster long to discover his motive—that he had a deep grudge against both his Form master and Lowther!

Croke understood now, and he turned a scared look in Racke's direction. Croke felt thankful—deeply thankful—that he had refused to aid his chum in the dastardly trick. Yet he looked very uneasy indeed himself now. He knew Racke of old, and he knew that if Racke went down he

would try to drag others with him. And the very fact that Crooke had known the truth all the time and had kept silent—allowing an innocent fellow to be expelled when he knew the guilty party—would, he knew only too well, get him into trouble, not only with the authorities, but with all the fellows at the school.

"Look here, Racke!" he said, biting his lips. "We've got to find it—got to, you understand! You were a rotten fool—a dashed raving idiot to do it all! You—"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Racke. "If that's all you can say—"

"I shan't shut up!" snapped Crooke fiercely. "It's got to be found! It ought to be easy enough now Linton's sleeping in another room, you fool!"

"Is it?" sneered Racke bitterly. "You try it! I've hung about the room for hours and hours trying to get a safe chance. But either the workmen were there, or the servants, or else the room was locked up!"

"Locked up?" cried Crooke. "Why?"

"Goodness knows! I suppose because the workmen have their goods in there, and the beaks are afraid of fellows monkeying with the paint."

"Why the thump did they want the dashed decorators in?" snarled Crooke.

"There wasn't much damage done—a bit of paint scorched!"

"They've got them in, anyway. I suppose the Head decided to make a job of it, while the men are about it. I tell you it's dashed serious, Crooke! We've got to—Ow!"

Racke ended with a yelp of anguish as something came with a thump against his back, knocking him full against his chum.

It was a small, shabby tin trunk—or, rather, one side of it, and it was carried in the hands of Timothy Tipple, who had just come through the gates at a trot.

Apparently it was an accident; or so it seemed from the look of great distress on the cheery, ruddy face of Timothy.

"Oh, crikey!" he gasped. "Sorry, gents! I didn't see you blokes until I came round the gatepost. Blow me if I did!"

This was strictly true; though Timothy had had plenty of time to see Racke and Crooke since he rounded the post—a fact Racke was clearly aware of.

"You—you clumsy lout!" he howled, rubbing his back and legs furiously. "You did it purposely, you—you howling cad!"

"Ere, 'ere!" said Timothy, shaking his head reprovingly. "Don't shout at a bloke like that, you know! Accidents will happen."

"Accident!" hooted Racke. "Why—why— You dashed hooligan! What are you doing in here, anyway? Low cads aren't allowed in here!"

"They ain't?" ejaculated Timothy in great surprise.

"No, hang you!"

"Then what are you doin' in 'ere?" asked the new page innocently.

Racke scowled savagely as a chuckle arose from several fellows, who, having been attracted to the spot by Racke's yell, were staring curiously at the quaint-looking youth in the bowler hat.

"Who is the merchant, I wonder?" remarked Grundy. "Cheek! Talking to a St. Jim's fellow like that! Here, out of this! Strangers aren't allowed in here."

It was like the great George Alfred to interfere in matters that did not concern him.

"Great Scott! He's brought his box, too!" said Gore. "I say, it must be the new giddy pageboy."

"You've hit it!" said Timothy, grinning affably at Gore and the rest of the staring juniors. "Pleased to meet you! I 'opes we shall be pals—exceptin' this feller 'ere," he added, digging Racke in the ribs. "He's no class—I can see that!"

"Oh, my hat!"

There was an amused laugh, but Racke did not laugh. His eyes glittered as he understood who the cheeky stranger was. To be nearly knocked down, and then insulted and made a fool of by a pageboy filled with with rage.

"So you're the dashed new pageboy, are you?" he snapped furiously. "Right! I'll remember you, my pippin! And here's something to be going on with—something for your dashed cheek, you sweep!"

And Racke lashed out with his foot, intending to plant a hearty boot behind Timothy. But Timothy was apparently too wide awake. He dodged aside, and, as he did so, grabbed Racke's foot and jerked it up.

Racke landed on the ground with a thump and a yell.

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Timothy Tipple in great surprise. "I thought he wanted to shake hands with 'is boot! Well, blow me! Fancy 'im doin' that now! 'Ere, I'll—"

Timothy did not stay to finish his remarks, for Racke was scrambling to his feet.

And apparently Timothy Tipple was not quite so innocent and guileless as he appeared to be.

The rush he anticipated came quickly enough, and he turned, hastily grabbed his tin trunk, and scudded across the quad, just avoiding Racke's furious onslaught.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Timothy vanished up the steps and through the School House doorway.

"Oh, my aunt!" grinned Levison. "That merchant's made a good start, and no mistake! The tradesman's entrance isn't good enough for him, it seems. He's gone in at the giddy front door!"

"I can see him getting booted out before he's been here many days," said Sidney Olive. "He's a funny merchant, if you ask me—not so soft as he looks!"

And the crowd broke up, discussing the extraordinary pageboy with chuckles and grins. Meanwhile, Timothy Tipple had met Mr. Railton in the Hall, and the Housemaster fairly blinked at the quaint figure as he planked his box down and stared vacantly about him.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Railton, unable to restrain a smile. "Who are you, my lad?"

"Timothy Tipple, sir!" said the youth, taking off his bowler hat and displaying a mop of unruly hair. "Is this 'ere the School 'Ouse, sir? I bin told to report to Mrs. Mimms o' the School 'Ouse."

He spoke quite calmly and humbly. But his heart was thumping violently against his ribs, had Mr. Railton known it. The Housemaster only seemed amused.

"Oh, I see!" he exclaimed, his mouth twitching a little. "I suppose you are the new pageboy. You should have gone to the servants' entrance, my lad!"

"I'm sorry, sir! I didn't know as—"

"You would scarcely know, of course," said the Housemaster kindly. "However, you need not go round. If you will follow this passage and go down the stairs at the end you will come to the kitchens. Ask for Mrs. Mimms there."

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"Werry good, sir—and thank you kindly, sir!"

With that Timothy Tipple ambled away, his tin trunk bumping and rattling against his knees. Mr. Railton coughed and walked on, smiling.

And Timothy Tipple was also smiling. If there was anyone the new pageboy—for it was none other than Monty Lowther—had feared, it was the keen-eyed Housemaster of the School House. And though Lowther had the nerve of a whole regiment, and knew his disguise was perfect and his acting excellent, he had trembled lest the Housemaster should see through it.

But Mr. Railton had not seen through it—had obviously not the remotest suspicion of the truth. And Monty Lowther chuckled softly as he made his way to the servants' quarters. Monty was an inveterate practical joker; he could not be serious for long to save his life. And though his task at St. Jim's was to be serious enough, Monty was already his own fun-loving self again, and he apparently intended to get as much fun as he could out of the situation. It was a sad failing of Lowther's, and it already looked as if he was booked for plenty of trouble if he kept on exercising his sense of humour—especially in the role of Timothy Tipple, the pageboy!

Lowther's application for the job as pageboy at St. Jim's had been successful; but the question was, would he be able to keep it long enough to carry out his artful scheme?

CHAPTER 7. Gussy Insists!

"I INSIST!"
"But, look here—"

"Wats!"
An argument was proceeding in Study No. 6 in the School House.

Tea was just over in that celebrated apartment, and as it had been quite a decent tea, all concerned should have been feeling comfortable and happy.

But apparently Arthur Augustus wasn't.

The fact was that Arthur Augustus had not yet got over the happening in Rylcombe Lane before tea. He had scarcely touched any tea, indeed, and when he rose from the table at last he was still in a state of suppressed wrath and indignation.

He had then announced his intention of proceeding forthwith in search of Timothy Tipple, in order to administer to that misguided youth a fearful thrashing, to be wound up with a serious lecture.

And for various reasons his chums were now attempting to dissuade him from his resolve.

"Chuck it, you ass!" went on Blake warmly. "Leave the kid alone. He'll jolly soon get shoved in his place without your butting in!"

"If he stays here long enough," grinned Herries.

"I insist upon doin' what I considah to be my duty!" replied Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "The boundah has tweated me with gwoss dis-wespect and wudeness. It is nessawry that he should be taught wespect, if only for his own good!"

"He seemed a decent enough kid—"

"I have no doubt he is a decent enough kid, Hewvies. None the less, he must be taught to wealise that he cannot play wotten twicks upon me with impunity!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have weflected deeply upon the mattah," proceeded Arthur Augustus, a little more calmly, "and I have weached the conclusion that it is the onlay thing to be done. A fellow must considah his dig. I wealise that the boundah is stwange heah, and does not know the wopes. For that vewy weason I am goin' to thwash him."

"Will that teach him the ropes?" inquired Digby.

"It will teach him not to

attempt to play pwaetical jokes on a St. Jim's fellow," said Arthur Augustus. "And it will do him a weal service. If he goes on as he is now, he will be gettin' the sack. I do not wish to see the fellow lose his job though ignorance of the wopes heah and a misguided sense of humah. Wathah not!"

"Well, there's something in that, Gussy," chuckled Digby. "I believe it was no accident when he barged into Racke by the gates, and he certainly pulled his leg afterwards. He's already made an enemy of dear old Aubrey, and he'll need to look out if he goes on at this rate."

"That is just my point!" remarked Arthur Augustus firmly. "It is wathah beneath my dignity to thwash the boundah; but—"

"I shouldn't worry about that yet, Gussy," said Herries kindly. "You see, he may thrash you!"

"Wats! Wubbish! I shall take good care he does not thwash me, Hewvies! Howevah, I am goin' to do it!"

"Oh, well, go your own way, you born idiot!"

"I wefuse to be called a born idiot, Blake!"

"You can refuse to be called one, but you can't help being one," said Blake calmly. "That's out of your power, old chap!"

"Wats! I considah you a wottah, Blake! If you had weally noticed the feahful state of my toppah and clobber, you would be just as indignänt against this wuffian, Tipple, as I am!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "In addition, I have to considah my dignity. I wepeat that I have no wesource othah than to thwash Timothy Tipple!"

"Are you going to do it with your chin?" inquired Blake. "You'll manage it all right, old chap! Go on, and good luck to you!"

"Wats! I considah you a wibald wuffian, Blake!"

With that frank expression of opinion the swell of the Fourth marched from the study, hanging the door after him. In a state of great wrath and indignation, Arthur Augustus started out in search of the new pageboy. In the Shell passage he came upon Tom Merry and Manners just emerging from their study.

"Hallo!" remarked Tom Merry, noting the wrath in Gussy's brow. "Whither away, Gussy? Going to slaughter someone?"

"Not us, I hope!" said Manners, in mock alarm.

"I am goin' to thwash that new pageboy boundah!" said Arthur Augustus grimly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Steady on, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "Better let the kid alone. He deserves a licking for his cheek, I admit. But you can't go about slaughtering pageboys. It isn't done!"

"Much better not!" agreed Manners. "Fellows are not allowed to scrap with the domestic staff! I am surprised at you, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"You are lookin' at the mattah in the w'ong light, Tom Mewwy!" he retorted, with dignity. "I have no intention of scwappin' with the pageboy. My intention is to give him a feahful thwashin'. If you fellows saw the state of my twousahs—"

"Awful, I admit!" said Tom Merry gravely. "He ought to be thrashed if only for spoiling your bags, Gussy. But I—"

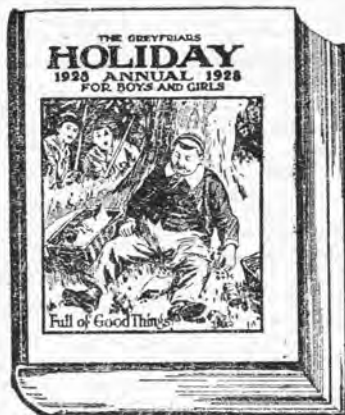
"I wefuse to be turned from my purpose," said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "I am goin' to thwash Timothy Tipple—or whatevah the wuffian's name is! I wefuse— Bai Jove, heah is the wottah now!"

It was Timothy. He had come along behind the juniors, and from the grin on his face it was obvious he had heard Gussy's heated remarks. Though he was dressed in a page's uniform now, he still looked a quaint figure, and Tom Merry and Manners smiled at him.

"Hallo, you blokes," said the pageboy affably. "Glad to meet you agen! Ow d'you like me uniform? Don't it fit a treat?"

"Bai Jove!"

WHAT BETTER CHRISTMAS PRESENT COULD YOU CHOOSE THAN THIS?



YOUR NEWSAGENT WILL BE
ONLY TOO PLEASED TO
SHOW YOU THIS GREAT
SIX SHILLING BARGAIN!

"I'm gettin' on orlright so far," said Tipple confidentially. "Mrs. Mimms has quite took to me, and I told Mary, the 'ousemaid, as she was good-lookin', and she was no end bucked, and said I was a smarter feller than Toby Marsh, wot 'ad my job afore."

"Oh, my hat! Did she?"
"Yes. Only I must 'ave upset the old gent dressed up in a gowned. I arst 'im why he was wearin' 'is nightgown in the daytime, and 'e fair glared. Said as 'ow I was insolent! 'Ow was I to know it was the 'Ead?"

"Oh crumbs! You young ass!"
"But it was orlright. He come round arterwards and talked to me like a Dutch uncle," grinned Timothy. "Not a bad old fogey. But what's this feller with the winder-pane in 'is eye glaring at me for?"

Arthur Augustus spluttered.
"I will vewy soon tell you that, you cheeky wuffian!" he said heatedly. "I am goin' to administah a feafshul thwashin'—"

"My heye! 'Ere—"
Timothy jumped back in alarm; but as Arthur Augustus rushed at him, Timothy's foot—either by accident or design

larking in the passages. Stop it, or I'll bring my ashplant along to you!"

The juniors released Gussy instantly—they did not want Kildare to bring his ashplant along. Kildare eyed them grimly and walked on. Arthur Augustus stood breathing hard. But the moment Kildare's stalwart form had turned the corner, he jumped away and flew in the opposite direction, before Tom or Manners could raise a hand to stop him.

Meanwhile, Timothy Tipple had sought sanctuary in the servants' quarters—at least he raced away to the school kitchen. To his evident joy, he found the kitchen empty, and his eyes gleamed. It was a gleam Lowther's chums had often seen when the humorist of the Shell contemplated one of his practical jokes.

On a long table under the window—the cook had obviously been called away while making pastry—stood a big basin of dough, by the side of which were bags of flour, packets of baking-powder, etc. On the table also was a big jar of strawberry jam and a large jar of syrup.

From the rack on the wall, Timothy Tipple took a tin basin, and into this he ladled first a soft mass of dough,

SINCE the rule was changed, it only requires a little inside knowledge to stop the offside business.

The praises of the North-East of England as a football-producing centre are often sung. But the Barking Town club, in the East End of London, has also a fine record. Since the War it has produced twelve players who have played for first-class clubs. Can any one junior organisation beat that?

In the old days Bob Crompton and Tom Suttie often played together at full-back for Blackburn Rovers. To-day, both of these men have a son who is on the books of the Rovers' club. Crompton's son, though, is an outside-right.

Arsenal are the only first-class club with two Indian-born players on their books—Butler being born at Colombo, and Tricker at Karachi. But they are both English, of course.

After every home match of the Blackpool club the ball is bought by the Supporters' Club and sold by auction for the benefit of the club funds. A gentleman very much interested in the Blackpool side always bids high for the ball when there has been a player in the side making his first appearance. And the ball is handed to the debutant.

The Northern Third Division clubs are supposed to be the recruiting grounds for the more wealthy sides. Yet in a recent match between Bradford and Bradford City there were six International players.

Mr. Morton Cadman, who has been a director of Tottenham Hotspur for forty years, confesses that he was the only man present at a meeting in the old days who voted against the club turning professional.

—got in his way, and the swell of St. Jim's fell over it, sprawling with a bump on the linoleum.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh, bai Jove!"
The new pageboy winked at the grinning juniors and scudded away. Arthur Augustus, almost beside himself with wrath now, scrambled to his feet, and made a jump after the flying Timothy; but Tom Merry grabbed him.

"Hold on, Gussy, you silly ass!" he said in alarm. "You can't go rushing about chasing a giddy page like that! Let him go! He'll soon find his little games are off-side."

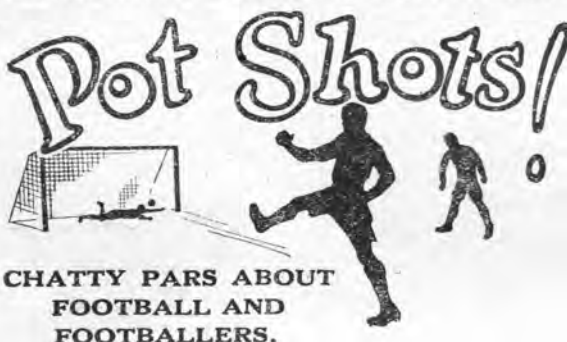
"Welease me, Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "This—this is weally too much! That wuffian is not—Welease me!"

Arthur Augustus struggled furiously; but Manners lent a hand. Like Blake and the others, they felt that thrashing a page-boy—either for his own good or otherwise—would not do at all.

"Hold on, Gussy—for your own good, you know!" grinned Tom. "We're saving you from a licking, if you only knew it. Oh, my hat! Look out!"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came striding along the passage.

"Enough of that, you young asses!" he called. "No sky-



"Fanny" Walden's first wages as a professional footballer were five shillings a week. Not much, of course; but many millionaires didn't get more out of their first job.

Stoke were one of the original twelve clubs which started in the Football League in 1888. Since then they have had many ups and downs, and were once completely broken up. That led to Tottenham Hotspur getting into the Second Division.

Jack Bennett, a nineteen-year-old player who recently joined Leeds United, has had a remarkable experience. As a lad he could scarcely walk, and had to have one of his legs in irons. It was suggested that he would always be a cripple, yet now he is a real footballer. You never can tell.

Not once in the last thirty-two seasons have Bolton Wanderers started the season with two wins. But they have often come with a rush at the finish, as witness their two Cup successes since 1923.

How's this for a contrast? Aston Villa have won the First Division championship more times than any other club. Birmingham, who play in the same city, of course, have never finished in the first three.

Ninian Park, where Cardiff City now play, was formerly a dumping ground for rubbish. Even after it had been converted into a playing-pitch it was often dangerous, because bits of broken glass would work through the grass. This has all gone now, of course.

W. H. Minter, the St. Albans centre-forward, once scored seven goals in a match, and yet was on the losing side at the finish. Surely a unique experience.

and then a quantity of syrup and jam. This done, Timothy hastily stirred the concoction, one ear alert for footsteps as he did so.

He was naturally unaware that Tom Merry and Manners had detained Gussy; he was rather surprised that Arthur Augustus had not turned up yet. But Timothy Tipple—otherwise Monty Lowther—knew Gussy too well to believe he had given the chase up.

"He'll be along soon!" he chuckled. "Dear old Gussy—if he only knew!"

And, with a deep chuckle, Timothy carried a chair to the door. Then, closing the door to within a few inches, he rested the basin containing the mixture carefully on the side of the door, one side resting against the top of the door-frame.

"It's an old wheeze!" he murmured philosophically. "But it's none the worse for that! I hope the ass hasn't given it up!"

And Timothy peeped through the slightly opened door anxiously.

But he need not have worried. In his present frame of

mind restraint was only likely to make Arthur Augustus low more determined than ever.

Having got free from Tom Merry and Manners, he had made a beeline for the servants' quarters, and scarcely had Timothy peeped out when footsteps sounded and the swell of St. Jim's came pelting along the passage.

Behind him came Tom Merry and Manners, who had decided to see the thing through.

As he glimpsed Arthur Augustus, whose noble eye was gleaming behind his monocle, Timothy chuckled, and flew across the kitchen to the opposite door. He waited there a brief second, and in that second Gussy arrived at the door.

He fairly flung it open and dashed in, and then—

Flop! Rattle, rattle! Crash!

"Yooooooooo!"

Arthur Augustus howled fiendishly as the basin of sloppy pastry descended on his aristocratic head. Then the basin rattled to the floor, while its contents flowed gently over Gussy's hair, dripping down his features, and down the back of his neck.

"G-g-gwooooooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

What had happened D'Arcy scarcely knew for some terrible seconds—he only knew that something had struck his head a fearful crack, and then something else—horribly sticky and wet—was trickling down his face and neck.

Tom Merry and Manners roared.

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus gasped beneath the sticky mass.

"Groooogh! That—that frightful wuffian! He has planted a wotten booby-twap, and— Gwoooogh!"

Tom Merry rushed into the kitchen. It was very funny; but the new pageboy was overdoing it in Tom's opinion. And Tom was prepared to explain that to him forcibly.

Arthur Augustus, however, did not trouble about the practical joker just then—he was not in the state to go hunting for the author of the booby-trap. And he tottered away in search of a bath instead—he needed one badly. And he went in a state of mind not to be envied.

It was really too bad. Though Arthur Augustus had been fond enough of Monty Lowther, and had been deeply distressed at his going, he could not help a feeling of relief in one way. While at St. Jim's, Monty Lowther's one object in life seemed to be the pulling of the noble leg of Arthur Augustus. And now he had gone it seemed that his mantle had fallen upon Timothy Tipple, the School House page!

Had Gussy only known it, this was scarcely to be wondered at.

Arthur Augustus did not go hunting the new page again that evening. He had had enough.

CHAPTER 8.

Up Against Timothy!

"AND now for that low cad of a pageboy!" said Aubrey Racke, rising from the table.

"Eh? What d'you mean?" said Crooke, blinking at him in astonishment.

"I mean what I say!" said Racke, his eyes glinting. "D'you think I'm the fellow to take what happened by the gates this afternoon lying down? The low brate made a dashed fool of me before a crowd, besides making me come a cropper! I tell you I'm going to make the funny merchant squirm, Crooke!"

"Oh, chuck it, Racke!" said Crooke. "Why not report the young fool? He's bound to get the sack soon enough at this rate! You can't go knocking a dashed servant about, Racke!"

"I shan't report him!" said Racke savagely. "He'd only say it was an accident, and the beaks would only lecture him as he's new here. That won't suit me!"

"Finish your prep, old chap!"

"I've finished mine," said Racke. "You chuck your muck away, too! You've got to help in this!"

Crooke looked uneasy; but he obediently put his books away. Crooke was a slacker, and he was always ready enough to dodge prep—though he had almost finished, as it happened.

"What's the game?" he demanded.

"Just this," said Racke. "We're going to get that young sweep here, and we're going to lam him until he howls for mercy. We'll give him a lesson once and for all that should teach him how servants should treat their betters."

Crooke looked more uneasy than ever.

"Look here!" he said, in a growl. "Chuck that rot, you idiot. It'll only mean trouble for us."

"You rotten funk!"

"I'm not; only it's a silly game! We can easily pay the

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cad out some other way, not so risky! Chaps aren't allowed to handle servants, you fool!"

"I'm going to, anyway!" said Racke, setting his teeth. "I'll make the sweep wish he hadn't been born before I've finished. I'm not the fellow to be insulted for nothing. That cad Lowther found that out to his cost. This low cad Tipple's going to find it out now."

Crooke scowled at his chum. Racke was a regular "Hun" where hating was concerned. He was also a very vengeful fellow, and never rested until he had "paid back."

But Crooke's experience was that "paying back" brought only more trouble to the payers in the end—especially where Aubrey Racke was concerned. Aubrey Racke was always plotting and scheming. But somehow all his plots and



"So you're the new pageboy are you?" snapped Racke, furious. The cad of the Shell lashed out with his foot, intending to plant a hearty kick. He did so, grabbed Racke's foot and jerked it. Aubrey Racke (See

schemes seemed to end in disaster. Only this Lowther affair had "come off"—and Crooke only wished he could feel certain that that affair was over and done with!

"I don't like it, old man," he said at last. "Let the fool rip—for now, at any rate! We'll find a way of getting even with him soon enough."

"I'm not waitin'! I tell you I'm goin' to deal with the cad to-night!"

"What d'you want me to do, anyway—fetch him here?"

"No. He's seen you with me and might smell a rat. Here"—Racke took a shilling from his pocket—"give this to Trimble. Tell the fat rotter to find Tipple and tell him he's wanted in Study No. 7 in the Shell."

"Yes; but will he come?"

"Fool! He doesn't know who digs here—he'll just find

the number on the door, and will suspect nothing! Cut off! We'll handle the cad easily between us!"

"But—but supposing he reports us afterwards? He's bound to!"

"He won't dare, I fancy. We'll tell him what to expect if he does, in any case. But—he can if he likes. We'll just deny it. Dash it all, the beaks are bound to take our word before a dashed servant's!"

Gerald Crooke did not feel at all sure about that. But he nodded and rose to his feet. He knew better than to refuse to obey his study-leader. And, in any case, Crooke was almost as mean and spiteful as Racke, and a little bullying—with the odds of two to one with them—was not displeasing to him.

AUBREY RACKE ASKS FOR IT—AND GETS IT!



"Here's something for your dashed cheek then, you sweep!" The boot behind Timothy Tipple. The pageboy dodged aside, and as he landed on the ground with a thump and a yell. "Yaroosh!"

He took the shilling and left the study. Racke rose slowly, and, with an unpleasant grin on his hard features, he took a fives bat from the corner and laid it on the table in readiness.

Presently Crooke came back, and he nodded as he entered the room and closed the door after him.

"All serene!" he said. "Trimble's gone! He'll find Tipple downstairs, I expect! Well, what—"

"Nothing," said Racke coolly, "excepting that when he comes in we collar him. Then we stuff something in his mouth to stop him yelling, and while you hold him over the table I'll lam him!"

"He—he may be a tough nut, for all we know."

"Oh, dry up, you funk! You saw him, didn't you? A hopeless-looking dud! Anyway, I could handle the duffer myself, only—"

"Only you daren't!" grinned Crooke. "I don't believe he's quite such a duffer as he looks, Racke. Still, we'll handle him!"

"We're going to!" muttered Racke, his eyes gleaming.

He stepped to the door and took up his position behind it. He had scarcely done so when a shuffling footstep sounded in the passage. Then came a timid knock on the door.

"Come in!" called Racke, grinning.

It was Timothy Tipple right enough. He walked into the room, his ruddy features beaming as usual. Obviously he had no suspicion of a trap—or so it seemed to Racke and Crooke.

As he walked in Racke kicked the door shut, and then he leaped at Timothy from behind, intending to bring him down with a crash.

But just at the critical moment Timothy happened to move to one side, and Racke blundered past him. As he did so—again quite innocently, it seemed—Timothy happened to shove his foot out.

Over the foot went Aubrey Racke headlong, to sprawl in the fireplace with a crash.

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Timothy, staring down at Racke. "'Ow did that 'appen now? Is this 'ere an acrobatic performance, young gents?"

Crooke stood motionless. He had been about to leap to his chum's aid, but the sudden downfall of Racke made him pull up, uncertain how to act. It seemed an accident, and yet—

Aubrey Racke scrambled to his feet, fairly panting with rage.

"Go for him, Crooke, you fool!" he spluttered, flinging himself at the blinking, solemn-faced pageboy. "Come on—smash him!"

There was no doubt as to what happened next being an accident or not. Timothy Tipple simply ducked, and then he drove his fist under Racke's chin.

It was a hefty smack, and Racke lurched back and sat down in the fender again.

"Crash!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Crooke.

It was plain—only too plain—that Timothy was not a dud, nor had he come to the study unsuspecting of a trap.

"Oh lor!" murmured the page, looking at Racke in great surprise. "How blinkin' unfortunat! He 'appened to run right agen my fist!"

"Crooke, you funk!" yelled Racke, scrambling up again. "Go for him! I'll smash you afterwards if you don't help! Down the cad!"

He went for Timothy again—more carefully this time, however. And at the same time Crooke advanced, nerved by his chum's savage threat. Racke took another smack in the chest, and Crooke howled as a hefty fist smacked home on his teeth. Timothy was evidently not inclined to be gentle with Racke & Co.

But the cads of the Shell were in a rage now, and they returned to the attack. Before Timothy could register another bit they were upon him, and the pageboy went crashing down with Racke and Crooke on top of him.

There was a brief struggle on the carpet, and then quite suddenly Timothy seemed to collapse and all his fight left him.

As a matter of fact, it had suddenly occurred to Lowther that the scrap had gone far enough. If his false mop of hair happened to come off, or his horn-rimmed spectacles were dragged away, the game would be up with a vengeance.

So Timothy ceased to struggle suddenly, his assailants little dreaming of the reason.

"Got the brute!" gasped Racke. "I told you we'd handle him, Crooke! Gad, we'll make him squirm for this! Get that cord, Crooke—I've got him fast!"

Crooke scrambled to his feet and got the cord, while Racke sat on Timothy's many-buttoned chest, pinning him down.

But Timothy did not seem at all alarmed. He grinned up quite cheerfully at Racke's savage face.

"What's this game, you blokes?" he asked. "Can't you let a feller alone?"

"You'll soon see the game!" said Racke through his teeth. "You made a fool of me this evening, and you're going to pay for it, my pippin! You're going to get the lickin' of your dashed life, you sweep!"

"Better not, Master Racke!"

"Oh! You know my name, do you?" gritted Racke.

"And why not? If you're thinking of reporting this—"

"Not this, Master Racke! But you'd better let me alone."

"And why, hang you?" said Racke, suddenly uneasy, for there was a significant note in the page's voice.

Timothy Tipple—otherwise Monty Lowther—did not

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answer for a moment. His brain was working swiftly. He had guessed at once why Racke wanted him in Study No. 7, and he had walked in the trap deliberately, feeling equal to dealing with both of the shady schemers of the Shell.

But he had quite forgotten his disguise—that a scrap would most probably cause his discovery. He probably could have got the better of them, but the risk of discovery was too great. He realised he was in an awkward position.

CHAPTER 9.

The Silver Matchbox!

MONTY LOWTHER'S brain worked rapidly, and at last an idea occurred to him.

"Why not?" he repeated, with a meaning grin. "Why, 'cos you might be sorry for it, Master Racke! You ain't found that there matchbox yet, you knows."

"What?" Racke jumped. His face went suddenly pale. He glared at the pageboy—and his eyes gleamed with sudden fear.

Timothy Tipple grinned again. Racke's fear was quite enough to clinch all his suspicions now.

"Better let a bloke get up, Master Racke," he suggested. "No knowing what a feller might let out! And it might be awkward for you about that there matchbox!"

"Good gad!" Racke slowly rose from the buttoned chest of the new pageboy, his eyes still fixed fiercely upon him.

"You—you cad!" he breathed. "How—What do you mean? I—I know nothing about a matchbox!"

"Then it won't matter if I 'appears to let it out, will it?" said Tipple blandly, and he walked towards the door.

"Stop!" Racke was after him in a flash, his hand claspings his shoulder almost feverishly.

"Stop, you fool!" he repeated hoarsely. "Look here! What do you mean? Who told you about a—a matchbox?"

Timothy Tipple grinned.

"I ain't bin 'ere long," he remarked. "But I likes to 'ear all the gossip, an' when I 'eard Mary, the 'ousemaid, talkin' to Mrs. Mimms about that there matchbox I asked her what it was. And she told me! She was tellin' Mrs. Mimms as you asked 'er again about it this mornin', Master Racke."

Racke bit his lower lip savagely. Again he blamed himself bitterly for leading the servants to suspect—as they obviously did suspect. There was no mistaking the meaning look in the goggled eyes of the new pageboy. Timothy Tipple was no fool, and he obviously knew something of what had happened on bonfire night.

Timothy seemed to read his thoughts. "I ain't a fool, Master Racke. It was queer 'ow that silver matchbox come to be in that bed-room just the very mornin' arter the fire, weren't it?"

"It—it—" Racke paused, realising the futility of denying it.

Tipple grinned again. "You ain't goin' to lick me now, are you, Master Racke?"

"No!" breathed Racke, with an effort.

"I knowed as you wouldn't. Well, you can lay on me not torkin'—so long as you treats me as a pal, o' course!"

"A—a pal!" gasped Racke, his face crimsoning.

"Yes, Master Racke! We're goin' to be pals, ain't we? And p'r'aps I'll be able to find that there matchbox for you. If I does—"

"Hush, you fool!" hissed Racke.

There was a sudden tap on the door, and a moment later Tom Merry looked in. Behind him was Manners and two more Shell fellows.

"Hallo, what's going on here?" inquired Tom. "We heard someone yelling—sounded as if— Oh!"

Tom had suddenly sighted Timothy Tipple. He also noted the rage in Racke's face, and he thought he understood.

"Oh, so this is the game, Racke!" said Tom, entering the room. "If you've been bullying that kid—"

"I haven't!" snarled Racke. "Get out!"

"Just a minute!" said Tom. "I know why you are trying to get your own back, Racke, and I know your ways of doing it. You leave that kid alone. If you've got anything against him, it's your job to report it to the proper quarter."

"Thanks for nothing!" said Racke. "Now get out!"

Tom hesitated. He glanced from Racke's savage, haggard face to the cool and grinning countenance of Timothy Tipple. It certainly did not look like a case of bullying.

"It's alright, sir!" said Timothy winking. "This bloke

ain't bullyin' me—no bloom'in' fear! 'Im an' me's pals! Ain't we, old feller?"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors stared—expecting the supercilious snobbish Aubrey Racke to fly at the impudent page. But Racke didn't. He stood still, his fists clenched, his eyes glittering with rage. But he said nothing.

Timothy Tipple wasn't satisfied.

Lowther, despite his light, joking manner, was burning inwardly with bitter, intense indignation and rage against the cad of the Shell. He knew now that it was Racke who had done the trick. Racke had trapped him in Mr. Linton's bed-room after placing the effigy there, and had thrown the blame on him—had parted him from his chums, and had possibly—ruined his life by getting him expelled from his school.

Lowther was thinking of this now, and he was not inclined to have mercy on the cad—though he had to play his part through safely.

"Go on, Aubrey!" he said cheerily. "Tell these blokes as you and me is pals—so as there'll be no mistake!"

Racke gritted his teeth. But there was a note in Timothy's voice that alarmed him—he dare not risk refusing.

"Y-es!" he whispered. "Get—get out of my study, you interfering cads!" he added, turning in a rage on the intruders.

"Shall I chuck 'em out, Aubrey?" asked Timothy kindly. "We'll get out, don't worry!" grinned Tom Merry.

Though he simply could not make head or tail of the situation he was quite sure the new pageboy had Racke under his thumb in some way. And, in the circumstances, he did not feel inclined to interfere—even by booting the cheeky Timothy out. "Come on, chaps! Leave dear old Aubrey to his pals!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

And the juniors went out, chuckling. Racke turned a blazing face to the new pageboy.

"You—you frightful cad!" he hissed.

"'Ere, what 'ave I done now?" asked Timothy innocently. "Ain't you admitted as you're my pal?"

"You—you—"

"You take no notice of those blokes!" advised Timothy. "I knows 'ow to keep my mouth shut, Aubrey! Look 'ere, I reckon as you'd like to find that there matchbox, Aubrey. I s'pose it would be worth summut to you to get it, what?"

There was a hint in the page's last remark that Racke could not fail to note.

He stared fixedly at the page, his eyes smouldering. There was more in this queer-looking cad than he had suspected! So that was his game—blackmail? At least, it looked as if the new page hoped to get something out of his knowledge.

Yet he could not shut his eyes to the danger. If it got to Railton's ears—or even to Tom Merry's—about the lost matchbox, they would very quickly put two and two together. They would make inquiries, and they would learn quickly enough that he had searched Mr. Linton's bed-room the morning after the fire, and had questioned the servants about it.

Why? The answer would be obvious to them! If he had had nothing to hide—if his conscience was clear in the matter he would ask boldly for the lost matchbox and report his loss as anyone else would do.

Racke shivered.

Yet, if it could be found it would make all the difference. If only he could get the chance!

The thought occurred to Racke that this fellow would have ample opportunities of searching—would easily be able to get the key of the room at any time. He might be useful—more than useful.

"Yes," said Racke, his eyes glinting. "It would be worth something to me, Tipple! It would be worth a quid to me! If—if you'd search for it—if—"

He paused meaningly.

Timothy Tipple grinned and winked.

"I'm on!" he murmured. "Mum's the word, Aubrey! Only I reckon you'd better do the searching, Master Racke. A quid if I bring you the key? 'Ow's that?"

Racke breathed hard, and then he rodded.

"Yes," he said. "Bring me the key, and there's a quid for you. Can—you get it to-night?"

"You jest wait," grinned Timothy. "I knows where it is. You 'old 'ard a bit, old feller!"

And with another wink Timothy hurriedly left the room.

Racke breathed hard when he had gone. Crooke eyed his study-mate in a scared way. That junior had remained silent through it all—he had no intention of being mixed up in the affair any more than he could help.

"Think he'll get it?" said Crooke. "I knew there was more in that chap than there seemed. I can't help feeling I know him somehow—have seen him before. But—but why didn't you make him do the risky work—not just get-

ting the key? He could easily search the room when he liked—times when you couldn't!"

"Why? Because I'm not a fool!" said Racke, through his teeth. "Can't you see his game—hush money? If he gets his hands on that matchbox—"

"Oh!"

Racke flung himself into a chair, his head in his hands. He felt there was a chance now—much as he feared this queer new pageboy. If he got the key, then it would be an easy matter to go downstairs in the night and search thoroughly. He was absolutely certain the thing was there—in the room somewhere.

There was silence for some minutes, Racke biting his nails and scowling at the carpet, his face dark and troubled. He had had his revenge on Lowther; but he was finding anything but pleasure in its results.

A sudden tap sounded on the door, and it opened to admit the new pageboy, his face beaming, and one hand in his pocket.

"You've got it?" breathed Racke, jumping to his feet.

"What-ho!" grinned Timothy. "Ere you are, old sport! What about that quid?"

Timothy handed over a key, and after a glance at it Racke crammed it into his pocket, his face showing his relief. Without a word, he took out his wallet, extracted a pound-note, and passed it silently to Timothy Tipple.

"Thanks, Aubrey!" grinned the youth. "One good turn deserves another—what? And supposin' as you don't find that there matchbox and I do—what then? I reckon it'd be worth more than a quid."

"If—if you find it there's a fiver for you!" breathed Racke. "Now clear out!"

And Timothy Tipple pocketed the pound-note and cleared out, a broad grin on his ruddy features. But the moment he got outside the door his grin faded, and a hard look came over his face.

He walked along the passage, down the stairs, and into the hall. On the wall of the hall was a poor-box, placed there for contributions. Timothy Tipple glanced round him to make sure that the coast was clear, then he drew the pound-note from his pocket and slipped it into the poor-box.

"It isn't often Racke's money does good, but this will," he remarked to himself. "Better than Racke spending it on cards, and fags, and gee-gees, anyway."

And with that Timothy Tipple—otherwise Monty Lowther—went back to the servants' quarters. But his eyes were gleaming now. Though he seemed determined to have some fun out of his daring impersonation, Monty Lowther had by no means forgotten the reason for it. He had come to clear his name—he had returned to St. Jim's to prove his innocence, and he meant to do it. The few days recently had showed him more than he realised what the old place meant to him. And now he saw, at last, a way of doing it—a plan was already forming in his mind. And he meant to show no mercy—no consideration—for the fellow who had done his utmost to ruin him, and who had been the cause of his being expelled.

He mustn't show his hand yet—not even to his old chums. He was risking nothing from now on. He was there to play the detective, and he meant to play it without scruple—within reason, at all events. Racke had the key of Mr. Linton's bed-room now, and Monty knew perfectly well that he would not delay an instant longer than he could help in his attempt to find his lost matchbox—the matchbox that was the only clue to his guilt. And Monty Lowther set his lips with the determination that he would not be far away when the cad of the Shell began his search.

CHAPTER 10.

At Dead of Night!

AUBREY RACKE spent the time before bed-time in a state of feverish anxiety. More than once he was on the

point of risking everything in a search of Mr. Linton's old bed-room; but each time prudence prevailed. He could not search the master's room without showing a light. And that would be madness.

Crooke, his study-mate, was helpful—very helpful with suggestions and advice. But that was as far as Crooke was prepared to go. He refused point-blank to accompany Racke on his expedition downstairs that night, and the two nearly came to blows over it before bed-time.

As a matter of fact, Racke funk the expedition. The thought of roaming about the silent school alone at dead of night filled him with fear. He did not like the idea at all, and did his utmost to persuade his study-mate to accompany him.

But Crooke was adamant! To put it plainly, Gerald Crooke funk the task, even with Racke! Moreover, there was the risk to be considered on top of the unpleasantness. Crooke had no intention of being caught searching Mr. Linton's room at dead of night.

So Racke had to face the alternative—going alone. He dreaded it, but he was determined—sheer desperation gave him determination. He realised more than ever the danger that threatened while the wretched matchbox remained unfound.

There was nothing else for it.

Racke went to bed, trembling with fear and excitement. He could not sleep. Eleven boomed out from the clock-tower, and he waited for the half-hour. It came after what seemed an eternity, and then he slipped from the sheets and began to dress.

It was pitch-dark in the dormitory, a thick November mist stealing in through the slightly-opened window. Racke shivered, and, buttoning his jacket over his pyjama coat, he left the dormitory. He waited a moment, listening, and then he started to feel his way downstairs. Here and there a faint gleam from a gas-jet helped him, and he reached his study at last.

He vanished inside, meaning to get his electric torch, little dreaming of the pair of sharp eyes that had watched him as he came along the passage, stopping at every shadow, and obviously in a state of sheer funk.

But as he vanished into his study another dark form emerged from a study higher up—Study No. 10. It was Monty Lowther—still in his page's uniform, but without his huge spectacles now.

Under his arm he carried a small, oblong box. Had Manners of the Shell seen that box under the new page's arm just then he would probably have had a fit. But Manners was asleep peacefully in the Shell dormitory, blissfully unconscious of the fact that Timothy Tipple had helped himself to his camera—and something else besides.

It was a strip of magnesium wire!

With the wire in his pocket and the camera tucked beneath his arm, Timothy Tipple watched Racke vanish into his study, and then he slipped past like a flash and hurried downstairs, making no sound in his socks. He had only waited to make sure Racke would turn up, and now his one desire was to get into Mr. Linton's study first.

It was not likely to prove a difficult matter—simply because Timothy had taken good care to unlock Mr. Linton's room door before handing Racke the key—a little fact that would have made Racke writhe had he known it.

Moreover, Timothy had already been in the room to make his preparations—which were not many. He had merely opened Mr. Linton's screen, which he had found folded up, and he had placed this carefully across the far corner of the room after tearing a hole ruthlessly in it with his knife.

Reaching the bed-room now, Timothy quietly opened the door and went inside, closing it after him. What Racke would think when he found the door unlocked he neither knew nor cared. The room was pitch-dark, but Timothy felt his way across it and behind the screen.

A folding step-ladder stood there—left by the decorators—

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and the pageboy slung the strip of magnesium wire from the top. Then he crouched behind the screen and waited, the camera close by and the matches in his hand.

He was just in time with his final preparations. A soft footfall sounded, and then came the soft grating of a key in the lock of the door. Timothy grinned and waited.

The grating went on, and then suddenly came the sound of the knob turning, and the door opened, and Racke crept into the room.

"The cad!" Timothy heard Racke mumble. "The dashed door wasn't locked, after all!"

There was a tremble in Racke's voice, and then came a cautious flash from a torch. Timothy grinned as he peered through the hole in the screen and watched the trembling hand that held the torch. Racke was obviously in a state of blue funk.

He stood a moment staring round the room, and then he started his task. It seemed hopeless on the face of it; for the carpet was up, and most of the things in the room were piled in the centre, with sheets over them. It seemed impossible, if the matchbox had been lost there, that it had not been found by someone.

Tipple read that thought in Racke's face as a pale glimmer of misty moonlight, shining through the uncurtained window, lit it up for a moment.

Keeping his light carefully below the level of the window, Racke stooped and crawled under the bed. The bed stood in a corner of the room, and Racke evidently hoped that if the lost matchbox had dropped there it might have been overlooked.

But he soon came out again, and after a moment's hesitation he went to the fireplace and examined the grate. But it was empty. Then, as if seized with a sudden idea, he went back to the bed and dragged off the sheets. Resting his electric torch on the head of the bed, he started to turn the bedclothes back. It had evidently occurred to him that the box might have fallen among the clothes that night.

It was then the watching "detective" decided on action. Scraping a match gently across the box, Timothy applied the flame swiftly to the hanging strip of magnesium wire.

It was then that Aubrey Racke got the shock of his life. As the flame touched the end of the coil there was a brilliant flash, a sudden soft sizzling sound.

The next instant the camera was ready in Timothy's hand. Click!

The faint click of the camera shutter had scarcely sounded when the brilliant light went out and darkness fell, save for the light from the torch on the bed and the glimmer through the window.

A gasp sounded in the room—a terrified gasp. Timothy softly lowered the camera and peered through the hole. He could only see Racke's vague form, for the beam from the torch only lay across part of the bed. But he could hear his hard breathing, and he knew his enemy was terrified out of his wits.

In that instant a brainwave came to Lowther. Swiftly tearing off his mop of false hair, he grabbed his handkerchief and rubbed his face vigorously. Then he popped his head round the screen, against the edge of which was lit up by the misty beam of moonlight from the window.

What followed was half expected by Lowther, but startling enough none the less.

A stifled yell escaped the trembling Racke. He had been in a terrible state of "nerves" and funk before; but that amazing flash of light from behind the screen had almost made him faint with fright.

What it meant he could not imagine—he was not in a state to think, in any case. Nor had he heard that faint click which might have given him a hint of the truth; the beating of his own heart seemed to smother all sounds.

And then, as he stood transfixed, his heart thumping madly against his ribs, that face, looking strangely white and ghostly in the beam of moonlight, had appeared from the darkness.

It was the face of Monty Lowther—the fellow he had driven from the school by his treachery!

To Racke's terrified senses it seemed to float in mid-air; and his own conscience and state of sheer funk did the rest.

With a stifled yell of fright, the cad of the Shell awoke to sudden action and jumped blindly for the door. His madly-groping hands found the knob, and he tore the door open, and flew down the passage for dear life.

Timothy Tipple gave a soft chuckle, calmly walked to the door, and closed it; then, changing the key from the outside to the inside, he locked it.

"Couldn't be better!" he murmured. "Racke may tumble to what's happened, but he won't dream it was little me! And a team of horses wouldn't drag the dear old funk back again, in any case. Good! He's left me the giddy torch. Now for that matchbox. If dear old Aubrey leaves his little

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bed like this to search for the thing it's pretty certain he knows it's here. Here goes!"

And with that Monty Lowther proceeded to search in real earnest. He followed Racke's example and searched the bed; but, though he did it thoroughly—even looking beneath the mattress—he did not find the matchbox. He went round the room, trying every possible and impossible place, even searching among the bits of coal in the coalscuttle.

But the matchbox was not found. Then an idea struck the new pageboy. The matchbox may have been shoved into a drawer unnoticed. He tried the drawers which were unlocked, and in the bottom drawer of the dressing-table found a mass of articles bundled together.

At the top was a pair of bed-room slippers—one of them burnt slightly, and both of them looking as if they had been recently drenched in water.

As he took them out something fell to the floor. The sound it made as it dropped was enough for the investigator.

He grabbed the electric torch and shone it on the floor.

The beam of light showed up the silver matchbox and the engraved initials on it.

"Phew!" breathed Timothy. "Well, I'm jiggered! No wonder the dashed thing hasn't been found before!"

Timothy understood just how it had happened now. The matchbox had obviously fallen into the slipper, which had possibly been on the floor by the bed. And one of the slippers had been slightly burnt in the fire, while both had been drenched with the chemical liquid from the fire appliance. This obviously explained why Mr. Linton had not taken them with him when he moved to his temporary bed-room. They had been shoved carelessly into a drawer—either by Mr. Linton or by Mary, the housemaid—not knowing what one of them contained.

Timothy Tipple grinned, and slipped the matchbox into his pocket. Then he replaced the sheets over the bed and the dressing-table, collected the camera, folded up the screen, and softly left the room, leaving the key in the outside of the door so that Racke should see it there if he came to look in the morning.

Then Timothy Tipple—wearing his false hair and spectacles again now—crept away and went to bed, feeling quite satisfied with his "investigations"—though not before he had replaced Manners' precious camera back where he had found it! There was a surprise in store for Manners in the morning for all that—and a surprise for Tom Merry and his other chums also.

CHAPTER 11.

A Deep Mystery!

"NO letter from poor old Monty?"

"None!" said Tom Merry, in deep dejection.

"I can't understand it at all. Monty promised to write as soon as he got home. It's four days since he left now! It's rotten!"

"I wonder what his people think about it?" said Manners. "Still, Monty might have written—though goodness knows he must be still feeling down in the mouth."

"He didn't seem so upset as one would have expected," said Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows. "I must say he's surprised me over this. I—I—"

Tom paused.

"Well?"

"I had hoped," said Tom slowly, "that his people would have kicked up a fuss, and perhaps tried to get the Head to change his decision. It was a pretty faint hope, but—it was a hope! That's gone now, though!"

"No doubt about that! It's rotten!"

To Tom Merry and Manners it was rotten indeed. They could not forget their chum—his empty place in the Form-room was a continual reminder. And Study No. 10 seemed desolate without him. They sadly missed his cheery face, and would have given anything to get him back again.

But that was impossible. Lowther had gone—for good.

The juniors left the letter rack in the hall and went upstairs. Breakfast was over, and they had their books to get from the study for morning lessons. On the Fourth passage they met the chums of Study No. 6.

"Any news from old Lowther?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. I can't understand it!"

"It's queer," said Blake. "But—well, I suppose he's not feeling cheery enough to write to his old pals. Rotten!"

Tom and Manners went along to their study—they did not feel like stopping for a chat at the moment. The first thing Tom Merry sighted as he entered the room was a letter lying on the table.

There was no address upon the envelope, just two words: "Tom Merry."

As he picked it up and looked at it, Tom gave a violent start.



Racke stood transfixed, his heart thumping madly against his ribs, as a face, white and ghostly in the moonlight, appeared from the darkness. It was the face of Monty Lowther—the fellow he had driven from the school! (See Chapter 10.)

He knew that handwriting—it was Lowther's!

"What the dickens—" he gasped.

He showed the envelope to Manners, and then he tore it open.

"Phew!" breathed Manners. "But how—"

Tom Merry was reading the letter. He read it slowly, blank amazement in his face. For the letter read as follows:

"Dear Tommy,—If you want to see your old pal back again in the study, will you ask Manners to develop the film at present in his camera as soon as he possibly can. Tell him to take great care of it, and to keep it for me. I mean to have tea with you fellows in Study No. 10 this evening, so I hope you'll have a decent spread ready at the usual time! I hope Manners will have the print ready by then. Don't bother about the why and wherefore of this—just wait for me in the study. Above all, don't think of coming to the station to meet me or any silly old thing like that. Just wait in Study No. 10 and I will appear! Cheerio!

"Your old pal,

"MONTY."

In dumbfounded silence, Tom Merry passed the letter to his chum. Manners almost yelled as he read it.

"What the dickens does it mean?" he gasped. "How did this get here, and how—"

"Let's take it along to Blake and the other chaps, and see what they think about it!"

"Good egg!"

In a state of great amazement, Tom and Manners hurried along to Study No. 6. Blake & Co. were still there, and the junior captain showed them the letter without comment.

The Fourth-Formers were as dumbfounded as the two Shell fellows.

"But what's it mean?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! It is weally vewy mystewious indeed,

deah boys! Lowthah must have got somebody to bwing that in."

"He may still be in the neighbourhood," breathed Manners. "You—you remember what he said—that St. Jim's would see him again! He's going to keep his word!"

"The—the beaks won't allow it," said Herries, frowning. "It—it wouldn't be quite the thing for an expelled chap to come back on a visit, would it?"

"You—you know what a beggar he is for practical jokes!" murmured Digby. "He can't be playing a joke—"

"Rubbish!" said Tom, his lips set. "This means something, chaps—something jolly queer! Look, there's no doubt about it. It's to-day's date on the letter. And it's Monty's handwriting right enough."

"We'll be ready for him!" said Manners.

"But how will he get into the school?" asked Blake. "Old Taggles won't admit him without orders, I suppose!"

"I've got it, I fancy!" said Manners after a pause. "You know what a beggar he is for impersonations. That's his game. He'll come here disguised!"

"Phew! That's it!"

"Yaas, wathah! The vewy ideah, deah boys! Bai Jove! Lowthah was wathah a wuff wottah, and he had no wespect for a fellow with his pwactical jokin'. But I should be vewy glad to see him heah again for all that—if only for an hour! I shall be vewy pleased to contribute to a weally wippin' feed in his honah, deah boys!"

"That's the idea!" said Blake. "It—it may be only a joke or something. But if you think it's genuine—"

"Of course I do!" said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "He means it—he'll be here at tea-time right enough. And we'll give him a jolly good feed if we can give him nothing else."

"Yes, rather!"

"But—but the film part of it—what's he mean by that?" demanded Manners. "Look here, I'm going to jolly well see to that right away!"

And Manners rushed from the study. He would soon prove whether there was anything in it or not.

And he did!

Manners was very late coming into the Form-room that morning, and he got a severe reprimand from Mr. Linton in addition to a hundred lines. But Manners did not seem to mind. His eyes were gleaming with excitement, and he gave Tom Merry a meaning nod as he dropped into his seat.

It was not until morning break that the chums had an opportunity of speaking together. But as they left the Form-room Tom Merry eyed his chum questioningly.

"Well?" he demanded eagerly. "Anything in it?"

"Yes!" breathed Manners. "But it's no end of a blessed mystery. Somebody's had my camera right enough, and they've taken a snapshot. I'll be able to get a print out after dinner. We'll have to wait until then, because I can't quite make out what it means yet. You'll see!"

Blake & Co. were just as keen for information, and they walked down to the quad with the chums of the Shell, eagerly discussing the mystery. For the remainder of the morning they could scarcely restrain their eagerness and curiosity.

It was just before afternoon class when Manners got his print done, and he rushed into Study No. 10 with it, his face curiously flushed.

"Well?" demanded Tom.

Manners placed the print on the table. Tom Merry and Blake & Co., who were with him at the moment, crowded round the table. Tom picked up the print, and as he scanned it he blinked in puzzled wonder for a moment, and then he gave a jump.

"My hat!"

"Catch on!" said Manners. "There was something in it after all—something that beats me hollow. Who took that dashed snap, and when? It's easy to see where it was taken!"

"I should just think so!" breathed Tom Merry. "It's been taken in Linton's room—since the fire. And—and that's Rake!"

"Bai Jove!"

It was an excellent print—clear and unmistakable!

The bed was clear, and stooping over it was Aubrey Racke. His face, half turned, showed the sudden terror upon it. It was the face of a fellow caught suddenly in a guilty act. There was no mistaking the expression.

"Catch on!" repeated Manners. "That's been taken by flashlight. It must have been taken late at night, after everybody had gone to bed. It's Racke, and he's in Linton's room searching for something!"

"Why?"

"Goodness knows! But don't you think it's fishy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Why should Racke be searching Linton's room at dead of night?" asked Manners, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "You can see the electric torch at the head of the bed! And he's got a jacket over his pyjamas!"

"Bai Jove! But why—"

"Think it out!" said Manners. "Supposing, for instance, that Racke had played that trick on bonfire night—Lowther suspects him and so do we—and supposing he dropped something there that night—something that might incriminate him? He wouldn't go and search for it openly, would he? He'd go down at night, likely as not!"

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"But who took the snapshot?" gasped Blake.

"That's the mystery!" said Manners. "That's probably what we shall find out this afternoon at tea-time. It beats me—unless Lowther's got somebody in the school playing the detective for him!"

"Well, there's something in that!" said Tom Merry. "Though I should think Lowther, if he had any theories, would get us to help him before anyone else. It's a blessed mystery!"

It certainly was a deep mystery to the juniors. They simply could not understand it. And they went into the Form-room that afternoon seething with excitement, and longing for tea-time to come. And despite themselves Tom Merry and Manners could not help their glances straying towards Aubrey Racke. The cad of the Shell noted them—little dreaming of the reason, however. Nor did they dream of the reason for Racke's strained and haggard face.

If ever a fellow looked wretched Aubrey Racke did that day. He had scarcely slept a wink all night, and now looked like a fellow in a dream. What he had seen in Mr. Linton's room he could scarcely have told; he wondered now whether he had not imagined the whole thing, frightened as he had been to begin with. Yet he had seen something—something had happened, and the more he thought about it, the more he began to suspect that he had been the victim of trickery; though how, and by whom, he could not guess.

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As he caught the constant glances of Tom Merry and Manners the suspicions grew in Racke's mind, and he gritted his teeth with rage at the thought that they might know something about it.

Not for one moment did he suspect Timothy Tipple, however. He had spoken to Timothy once that day, and the pageboy had expressed great amazement at learning that he had found the door of Mr. Linton's study unlocked after all. And he had also shown sympathy at the fact that Racke had failed in his search. And Racke, knowing he would never dare to tackle the job again at dead of night, had urged Timothy to find it for him—reminding the new pageboy of the five "reward" for its recovery. And Timothy had winked and promised to do his best that day; Racke little suspecting that the "blackmailing cad," as he called him to Crooke, had the matchbox in his pocket at that moment!

But Timothy had; though the time was not yet ripe for him to return it to Aubrey Racke!

CHAPTER 12.

The Tea-party!

"B AI Jove! There's the feahful wottah!"

"Eh? Who, fathead?" demanded Blake.

It was tea-time at last, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were just leaving Study No. 6 en route for Tom Merry's study, for the time was now due for Lowther to make his sensational appearance, unless the whole thing was spoof!

And Blake & Co. did not feel that it could be spoof, amazing as the whole affair seemed.

In suppressed excitement the juniors had looked forward to the time.

Then, just as they were emerging from their study, all of them carrying various paper bags, filled with their contributions towards the welcoming feed, Arthur Augustus had startled them with that remark.

"Eh? Who?" repeated Blake, glancing along the passage. "Oh, you mean that merchant Tipple! Blow him, you awful ass! Leave the kid alone, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard as he sighted the form of Timothy Tipple approaching from the stairs. It had taken him the best part of the previous evening to remove the conglomerated mess of the pageboy's booby-trap from his person, and he had gone to bed fairly sizzling with outraged dignity and towering wrath. He had allowed the sun to go down on his noble wrath, and he had allowed it to rise again upon it, so to speak.

That booby-trap Arthur Augustus felt he could never forget or forgive! Even now Gussy had not quite got rid of the sticky dough—or he felt he hadn't. And all that day Arthur Augustus had been seeking the new pageboy.

But evidently Timothy Tipple was "wise" to Gussy's intentions, and he had carefully kept out of his way.

Now, however, he was in sight; and apparently he had not seen Gussy, or else did not suspect hostile intentions. He came up the stairs and along the passage, a quaint figure in his tight-fitting uniform, his unruly hair standing up on his head like the bristles of a mop.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and glared.

"Have you forgotten the beastly booby-trap, Blake?" he retorted, in a voice trembling with indignation. "Do you suppose for one moment that I shall allow my clobber to be ruined with impunity? I am determined to administer a feahful thwashin'!"

"Look here—"

"I wefuse to look heah, Blake! I am goin' to thwash that wuffian heah and now! I am not a fellow of a vengeful spiwit, I twust. But I insist upon thwashin' that checkay, wude wascal!"

"You know what happened before, you ass!"

"It shall not happen again!" snorted Arthur Augustus. "Pway step back into the studay, deah boys, and I will wush out and captuah him before he can escape me!"

"Oh, all right! Go ahead, then!"

Blake winked at Herries and Digby, and Gussy's chums backed into their study again. Arthur Augustus followed them, and stood waiting in the doorway, his eyes gleaming with determination. That Timothy Tipple had not seen him, Arthur Augustus felt quite sure. But Blake, Herries, and Digby were quite sure that he would not walk into the trap unsuspectingly. They grinned expectantly as they waited.

The new pageboy came on, looking quite innocent, and unconscious of the fate in store for him.

He reached the spot opposite to the doorway, and then Arthur Augustus leaped out.

Timothy Tipple promptly ducked down, doubling himself up like a pocket-knife. Not expecting such a swift action, Arthur Augustus went headlong over him.

Crash!

"Yawoooooop!"

Arthur Augustus howled fiendishly as his head came up against the wall of the passage opposite, while the pageboy scrambled away on hands and knees and then rose swiftly to his feet.

Before Arthur Augustus quite knew what was happening, Timothy Tipple had grabbed him and bumped him over. Swift as a flash, he dragged Gussy's elegant jacket over his head and elbows. Then, with a push, he sent the swell of the Fourth rolling.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake, Herries, and Digby.

They had warned Gussy what to expect, and Gussy had not heeded their warning, and they declined to interfere. Gussy sat up, panting and raging, and Timothy walked away, grinning cheerfully.

"You—you frightful wuffian!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

After struggling madly for some moments, the swell of St. Jim's managed to get his jacket down, and then he leaped to his feet and tore in pursuit of the pageboy. Timothy Tipple promptly broke into a run, and vanished at a great speed round the corner of the passage.

Arthur Augustus vanished after him, going great guns.

Blake, Herries, and Digby went along to Study No. 10 on the Shell passage, still laughing.

They entered No. 10, to find Tom Merry and Manners just putting the finishing touches to the laying of the cloth. A cheery fire blazed on the hearth, and a plate of hot toast, piled high, was on the hearth, while a kettle sang merrily on the hob.

"Oh, good!" smiled Blake. "All ready? Nobody turned up yet, then?"

"No!" Tom Merry shook his head. He could not help feeling doubts—grave doubts! "What's the joke?" he added, looking at the three Fourth-Formers.

"Gussy!" grinned Blake. "He's hunting for trouble, as usual! He's fairly thirsting for that new pageboy's blood! That kid's a coughdrop! He's just done Gussy down again, and Gussy's gone tearing after him!"

"I'm afraid the cheeky young villain's a bit too smart for Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "He's a jolly sight too cheeky, though, I must say! A licking would do the bouncer good—though it won't be Gussy who'll give it him, I fancy! I'm blessed if I can make the chap out! He talks worse than a pageboy, but—well, he's queer! I don't like him getting thick with that cad, Racke, either."

"He can look after himself all right, anyway!" sniffed Herries. "Hallo, that sounds like Gussy again!"

From somewhere along the passage came a sudden crash, followed by a howl of mingled wrath and pain, and it was undoubtedly in the dulcet tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Apparently, Gussy had caught the troublesome Timothy—or else Timothy had caught the troublesome Gussy.

The howl was followed instantly by the sound of running feet, and next moment the door flew open and someone dashed in.

It was the new pageboy. He dashed into the study, wheeled round swiftly, and then crashed the door shut. Then he turned the key in the lock and calmly placed it in his pocket.

The occupants of the study fairly blinked at him in growing and amazed wrath. They had been disposed to look tolerantly on the new page's impudence; but this was too thick altogether!

"Get out!" roared Manners. "You cheeky little sweep, get out!"

"Yes, unlock that door, you cheeky young rotter!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, this is the blessed limit! D'you hear?" he snapped, as the page showed no sign of obeying. "Unlock that dashed door and get out, sharp! This is a bit too thick!"

But the new pageboy did not obey—possibly because there came a sudden thumping at the door, and a wrathful voice shouted:

"Open this door, you feahful wuffian! Oh, you—you—"

Bang, bang, bang! Instead of opening the door, Timothy Tipple coolly seated himself at the table and helped himself to an egg. Then he reached for the teapot and started to pour himself out a cup of tea.

"Well!" gasped Tom Merry. "Well, of all the—" "Come on, you blokes!" said the new pageboy cheerfully. "Pile in! Sorry as I'm late! But it's the fault of that tailor's-dummy outside! We'll let 'im stop houtside as a punishment, I vote! What d'you blokes say?"

The astounded juniors stared—wrath and amazement in their faces.

Then Tom Merry gave a yell.

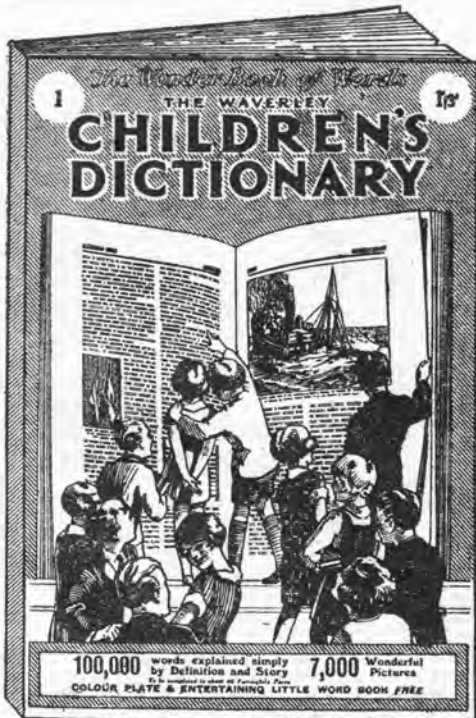
"Chuck the cheeky cad out! I've had enough of this!"

"Yes, rather!"

And the five juniors made a combined rush for the boy in buttons.

(Continued on next page.)

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At least they started towards him, but they pulled up suddenly. For as they made for him, Timothy Tipple jumped back from the table, and his hands flew to his head.

One hand dragged his mop of unruly hair off, and the other removed his huge horn-rimmed spectacles.

"What—what—"

"Mum—mum—my hat!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors stopped and stared, as if rooted to the floor. Despite the grease-paint and make-up, there was now no mistaking the real identity of the new pageboy at St. Jim's.

"Lowther!" gasped Blake.

"Lowther!" howled Manners.

Tom Merry was speechless.

"Little me!" grinned Lowther, speaking in his own voice now. "A little surprise for you, what? Let dear old Gussy in now. I'm sure he'll be pleased!"

And taking the key from his pocket, Lowther unlocked the door and held it open, carefully keeping behind it himself. As he expected, Arthur Augustus fairly hurled himself into the study.

Lowther chuckled, and slammed and locked the door again. Then he turned a grinning face towards Arthur Augustus, who had stopped short and was blinking at him like a fellow in a dream.

"That's not the way to enter a fellow's study!" he said, shaking his head severely at the dumbfounded Gussy. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy! I did hear you knocking, I fancy, but—"

"Oh, gweat Scott! It is—is Lowthah! Oh, you—you feahful spoofoh!"

"Lowther, you awful idiot!"

Half laughing, and overjoyed, Tom Merry rushed at his chum and grabbed his hand. The rest followed his example—even Gussy forgot his grievances at that moment.

"Well, of all the wheezes!" gasped Tom Merry. "And you've been here all the time—even spoken to us, and we never suspected! You're a giddy genius! So this was what you meant when you said you'd return?"

"Scarcely that!" grinned Lowther. "I didn't know what I really meant—I only knew I was feeling ready for anything! It was when I met Toby in the train that I thought of this wheeze. And it came off a treat. I got the job easily enough, and—well, you fellows know the result—especially Gussy!"

"You—you fighwifful wotfah, Lowthah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, but he made no attempt to commit assault and battery on the new pageboy now.

"But you can't go on for ever at this game," said Tom, his face clouding. "Tell us all about it, Monty?"

Lowther grinned.

"We'll have tea first," he said, replacing his false hair and goggles again. "I've missed study teas no end this last few days, and I'm jolly hungry!"

"Go ahead, then!" grinned Tom Merry.

And the juniors seated themselves and went ahead—though not before Lowther, suddenly remembering the snapshot, had asked to see it. His face lit up as he saw the result of his previous night's work. And though he refused to discuss matters until after tea, Lowther's face was quite cheery and satisfied. His detective investigations were not turning out so badly after all. And he hadn't finished yet.

CHAPTER 13.

A Shock for Racke!

"WELL, what's the programme now?"

Tom Merry asked the question not a little doubtfully.

Tea was over in Study No. 10. Under the circumstances it could hardly have been a very merry tea; nor was it. Indeed, the cheeriest member of the tea-party was Lowther himself, curiously enough. He did not seem to be worrying overmuch.

But his chums did. Lowther had "pulled it off" so far without a suspicion of his identity being raised. But he ran a great risk of discovery. At any moment an accident might reveal the fact to the school that the new page-boy was an expelled junior in disguise.

They knew Monty only too well. If he could carry on, using ordinary caution, he might continue at St. Jim's indefinitely as Timothy Tipple, the pageboy.

But they feared the fun-loving joker of the Shell—or late of the Shell!—might bungle matters. It was not in him to exercise ordinary caution for long. And his impersonation itself was a great temptation to him to be reckless, and to play practical jokes. Already he had very much overdone things in the opinion of his chums—and especially of Arthur Augustus.

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Sooner or later his love of practical jokes would get him "bowled out" they felt certain.

His position as pageboy brought him into constant contact with the authorities, and the risk of discovery in the ordinary way was serious enough.

After tea Lowther explained his intentions to his chums, and what he had already discovered. But though his story of the silver matchbox had filled them with sudden hope Tom Merry, at all events, was still doubtful—not as to Lowther's final success, but as to his methods of reaching that result.

"Well, what's the programme now, Lowther?" he repeated. "We know now, without a doubt, who's guilty, and I fancy we've proof enough with that snapshot alone. But you've got the matchbox as well. Isn't that enough?"

"No, it jolly well isn't!" snapped Monty Lowther.

"But what about the servants?" said Tom quietly. "I fancy their evidence will about finish Racke!"

"Yaas, wathah! I cinsidah we've got that wascal Wacke in a cleft stick, deah boys!"

"I'm not chancing anything!" said Lowther, his face hard. "Not likely! Racke is crafty—as crafty as they make 'em! I'm not going to be satisfied until I've got his admission—with witnesses to hear it!"

"He'll never give you the chance to get that, Monty," said Tom Merry, frowning. "He's too wide!"

"We'll see!" said Lowther grimly. "I've not finished yet. And I want the help of you fellows this time. That's why I've let the cat out of the bag to you this evening. I want you to be witnesses—that's all. I'll see to the rest."

"How?" asked Blake. "I'm game for anything, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, this is the idea! I want you chaps to go and hide in the lower box-room—it's a big room and there are plenty of hiding places—boxes and things! You can get one or two more fellows, too—the more the merrier, though don't let on what's in the wind. Don't let 'em know who I am anyway! I'll get Racke along there somehow."

"Isn't it rather like eavesdropping?" said Tom Merry hesitatingly. "You know I'd do anything I could, Monty, old man. But—"

"I don't call it eavesdropping!" said Lowther, his lips setting hard. "It's hardly right for an innocent fellow to suffer for another chap's rascality!"

"Well, yes, now you put it like that, Monty—"

"It's just helping justice—helping to right a wrong!" said Lowther. "I know just how you look at things, Tommy; but I'm pretty desperate. I can't keep this game up for ever, and I'm not going to leave St. Jim's without making a fight for it! I'm doing it anyway—if you fellows will back me up!"

"Well, I'm on, Monty!" said Tom Merry quietly. "It's worth trying—if you can get that sweep to own up. What do you fellows say?"

"I'm on!" said Blake promptly.

"Same here!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

It did not sound a pleasant task, but Monty's chums were willing enough to do it now. Racke was a rascal—a scheming cad who deserved no consideration whatever. He had trapped Lowther—had locked him in the bedroom to stand the blame for the offence he himself had committed. And he had remained silent, allowing Lowther to be expelled for his crime. He had even gloated over it—they knew that!

Such a fellow deserved no consideration. Lowther was right! Desperate ills required desperate remedies.

"We'll do it!" said Tom, jumping to his feet. "You want us to do it now?"

"Yes. The sooner the better!"

"Right! Come on, you chaps! We'll get Glyn, and Cardew, and Clive, and Levison, and Talbot—they'll be enough—more than enough!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And after waiting while Lowther resumed his disguise and was ready, the chums left the study, their faces showing their determination. Lowther waited a moment or so listening at the door, and then he peered out. Making sure the coast was clear, he slipped out and walked along to Racke's study.

From his pocket he drew a note—a note he had scribbled a few moments ago in Study No. 10—and this he slipped under Racke's door. Then he hurried away, turning his steps towards the box-room.

In Study No. 7 Aubrey Racke and Crooke were just finishing tea when Crooke heard a slight rustle at the door. He glanced towards it, and then he spotted the white envelope on the floor.

"What's the matter?" snapped Racke irritably.

Since the previous night Aubrey Racke had been in a vile temper, and Crooke had given him a wide berth until

now. Further reflection over the night's happenings had not improved Racke's view of the situation. Far from it! The more he reflected over it, the more he felt convinced that the brilliant flash, followed by the strange, ghostly face, was no figment of his tortured imagination. It was not an attack of nerves, either. It was trickery! Someone had been there, and who else could it have been but Tom Merry and his chums?

Racke gritted his teeth at the thought. How they had worked it, and for what reason, he could not imagine. But he suspected—with more than dread—that they knew of the lost matchbox and had been searching for it!

On the other hand, the face Racke had glimpsed was Lowther's face—and Lowther was scores of miles away!

No wonder Racke's nerves were in shreds.

"A giddy letter from someone," said Crooke, answering his question, and he picked up the letter from the floor and glanced at it. Then he threw it across to Racke. "For you, old bean!"

Aubrey Racke took the letter and tore it open. The writing on the envelope was ill-formed and straggling—Lowther had seen to that—and the cad of the Shell guessed at once who it was from.

He read it quickly.

"Dear Aubrey," he read, gritting his teeth at the impudent familiarity.—"I got it all right, found it in a drawer. Must have dropped in there by accident. However, I got it. Come to the lower box-room at five-thirty, and I'll hand it over. Mind you bring the dibbs, old sport!"

"Yours ever,
"T. T."

As he finished reading Racke drew a deep breath.

So it was found—the biggest danger was over!

Toby was gone, and if the other servants did talk about it, and it came out, he could deny it utterly. There was no proof! In any case, the servants would soon forget about it. It had not come out yet, anyway. And he could easily square that impudent fool Timothy Tipple. If only he could get it without having to part with the fiver!

But he knew that was hopeless. He would have to keep on the right side of the new pageboy; it was worth more than a dozen fivers to him! And the fellow might be useful in other ways.

Racke looked in his wallet, and his eyes glinted at the banknote reposing there. Though Racke was a wealthy junior, with far more money than was good for him, he hated to part with a penny more than he could help.

But it could not be helped now; it had to be done!

"Well, what the dickens is it, Aubrey?" asked Crooke curiously. "Is it from that young cad Tipple?"

"Yes!"

"Has—has he found it?"

Racke nodded.

"Phew! Good man! Pay him the fiver and have done with it, for goodness' sake!" gasped Crooke.

"Perhaps you'd like to go halves!" sneered Racke. "You seem jolly keen on giving other people's money away!"

"But look here, old man—"

"Oh, shut up! I haven't forgotten last night, you mean cad! If you'd come with me—"

Racke paused. He had refused to tell his "chum" what had happened the night before, and he had no intention of

telling him now. He crumpled the note in his pocket, and then he left the study.

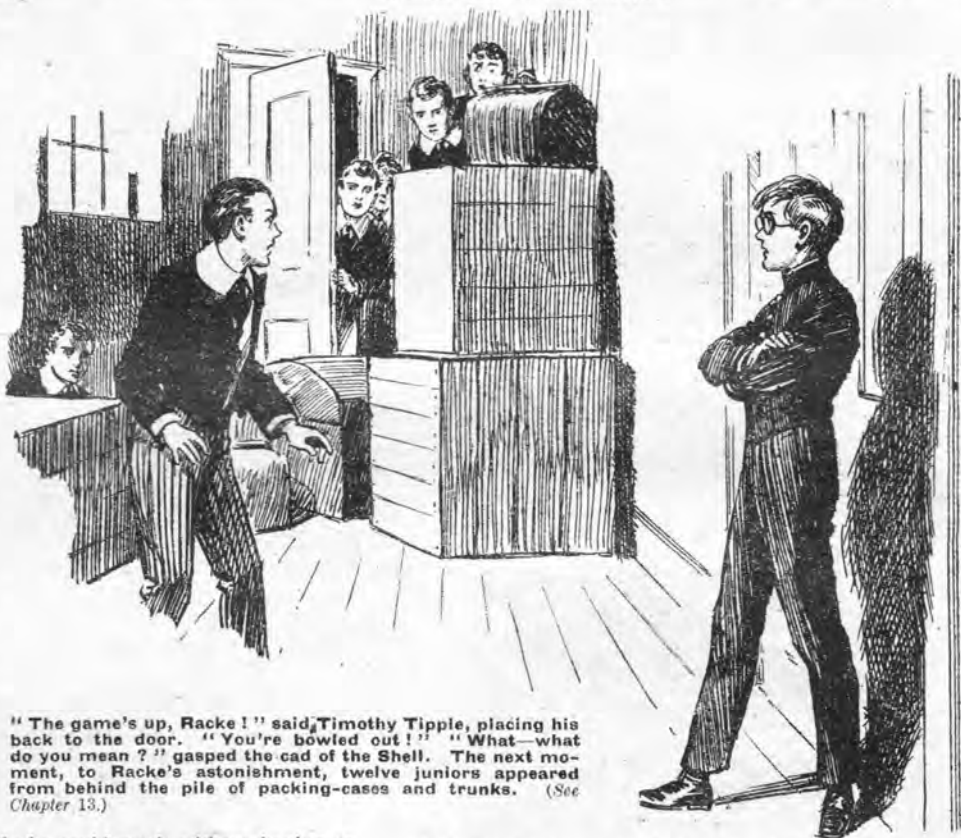
It was not five-thirty yet. Racke paced up and down for some moments, his brow clearer now than it had been for days. He did not suspect Timothy Tipple of any special motive in making the appointment in the box-room. Only that day Racke had told him not to visit him in his study—it would excite comment. And Timothy Tipple had grinned and agreed that it would. Therefore Racke suspected nothing at his asking him to meet him in a quieter place. It was just the place Racke himself would have chosen.

For a few moments Racke paced up and down, and then, unable to wait longer, he made his way to the box-room on the next floor.

He opened the door after a swift glance round, and then he walked in, closing the door after him again.

Timothy Tipple was there, seated on a box. He had something on his knee which he seemed to be polishing industriously with a rather grimy handkerchief.

Racke's eyes glinted as they alighted upon it. It was a silver box—his silver matchbox! He recognised it at a glance, and his heart leaped.



"The game's up, Racke!" said Timothy Tipple, placing his back to the door. "You're bowled out!" "What—what do you mean?" gasped the cad of the Shell. The next moment, to Racke's astonishment, twelve juniors appeared from behind the pile of packing-cases and trunks. (See Chapter 13.)

"Oh, good!" he said, closing the door carefully after him. "You have got it, then, Tipple! I—I thought you might be pulling my leg!"

"Yes, I got it, Aubrey!" remarked the pageboy, with a chuckle, shoving the shining article back into his pocket. "I told you as I should find it somehow. It were in a drawer—in the toe of a slipper. I s'pose the slipper 'appened to be by the bed when you was shovin' that there guy inter it. You must a' dropped it, and dropped it clean inter the slipper. Then the slipper got damaged, and it was jest shoved in that there drawer."

"Yes, yes—only don't shout, you idiot!" hissed Racke. "Look here, hand the thing over sharp!"

"No 'urry, is there?" asked Tipple, raising his eyebrows. "You brought that there fiver, I 'opes. I ain't 'andin' that there matchbox over without it, Aubrey, pals or no pals!"

"I've got it! Here it is!" said Racke savagely. He drew out his wallet and extracted the fiver. He held it almost feverishly. "Now hand it over! Don't play the fool! Someone may come any second!"

"Nice if they did—for you!" grinned Tipple, making no effort to obey. "What would the Head say if he knowed as it was you as played that trick on that there master—"

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you as locked that feller Lowther in 'is bed-room and got 'im sacked!"

"Shut up, you fool!" hissed Racke.

"Well, it's true, ain't it?" said Timothy meaningly.

"No good denyin' it, Aubrey!"

"You silly fool! What's the good of denyin' it!" snarled Racke. "It's true enough; but you'll have everybody in the school know it if you don't shut up. Aren't I paying you to keep your dashed mouth shut? Hand that confounded box over, you grinning fool!"

"No 'urry, is there?"

"Yes! Hand it over!" said Racke, glaring at the other in amazed fury. "You fool! Here's your fiver! Take it!"

"I don't want it!"

"Wha-at?"

"Wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole!" said Timothy coolly. "And as for the matchbox, I wouldn't 'and it over for twenty fivers—not until you've 'ad a chat with the 'Ead, Master Racke!"

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Racke, in sudden, overwhelming fear, as he noted a strange, hard gleam in the blue eyes before him. "What—what's this game?"

"It means that the game's up, Racke!" said Timothy Tipple, placing his back to the door. "I think that will do, you fellows. Out you come!"

The next moment, to Racke's astonishment, twelve juniors rose from behind the pile of packing-cases and trunks.

CHAPTER 14.

Bowled Out!

AUBREY RACKE started back, his face blanching. The rascal stared and stared, scarcely able to believe his eyes. Yet it was only too true—only too real. Tom Merry and Manners were there, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, and Cardew, Levison, and Clive, and Talbot, Glyn, and Noble—most of the important members of the Middle and Lower School.

And they had heard all!

Racke shivered, and licked his dry lips.

Then he turned on Timothy Tipple.

The next moment both were struggling furiously. But Tom Merry, Blake, and Herries rushed forward and dragged Racke back by main force.

"That won't do you any good, you rascal!" said Tom Merry calmly. "Better take it quietly, Racke. You're bowled out, and you know it!"

"Yes; no good kicking up a fuss, Racke!" said Levison, staring curiously at Timothy Tipple. "I fancy this merchant— Oh!"

Levison paused, gazing with fixed eyes at the pageboy. The rest were also gazing at him. For Timothy was just

picking up his mop of tow-coloured hair, his face wearing a rueful grin. It had been dragged off in the brief struggle.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Levison. "What—who the dickens are you, my pippin? I seem to know—"

"It's all up, Monty!" grinned Blake. "Might as well finish the job!"

"At your service, gents!" murmured Timothy, and he took off his spectacles.

It was enough!

Racke staggered back.

"Lowther!" he panted. "It—it can't be!"

"Lowther!" yelled Glyn. "Oh, my hat!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped Levison faintly. "Oh, the awful spoof! Lowther! Here all the time!"

Racke panted. He understood now—understood everything—or nearly everything! It had been Lowther's face he had seen the night before—Lowther himself in the flesh!

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, you cad, Lowther!"

"Little me!" grinned Lowther. "Not so treacherous, after all, Racke! Just attending to my own interests, old top, as a sensible fellow should. In me you see Monty Lowther, the private detective, late of St. Jim's. Now, what about that visit to the Head, Racke?"

"You—you fool!" shrielled Racke. "Do you think I'll go to the Head? I deny everything! You can prove nothing! It's all a dashed conspiracy!"

"Will your word—not a very valuable word—be taken before the word of these twelve fellows?" inquired Lowther. "I don't think so!"

"You can prove nothing!" panted Racke.

"Yes I can—quite a lot! I can prove from the evidence of these fellows that you have owned up—have admitted your guilt, Racke! I can prove from their evidence that you offered Timothy Tipple—otherwise little me—five quid for that matchbox—a box not worth more than ten bob at most! And the box is still in my possession, Racke!"

"Hang you!"

"Go it! But that's not all. I can prove, from the evidence of lots of fellows, that you vowed to get even with both Linton and myself. You shouldn't let your tongue run away with you, Racke!"

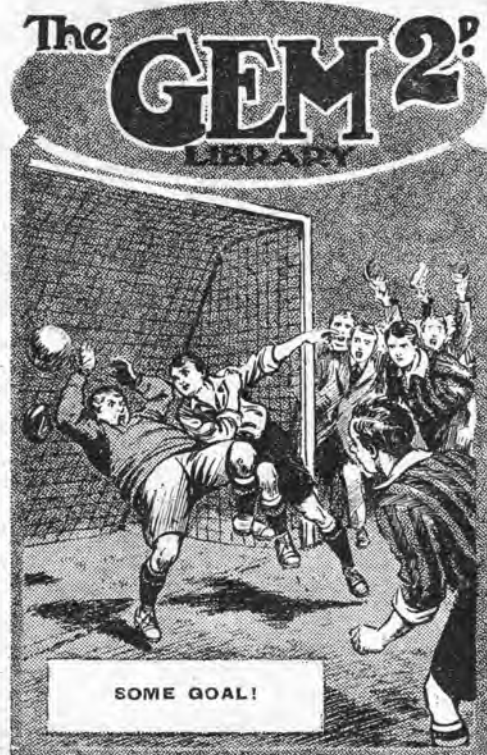
"I—I—I—"

"That isn't all, either! There's the evidence of the servants. Mary, the housemaid, found you searching Linton's bed-room on the morning after bonfire night. That's enough in itself. But you've also worried her about it several times since—about your lost matchbox! And then there's the evidence that you were searching in Linton's old bed-room only last night—at dead of night!"

There was a whistle from Levison and the others.

Racke gritted his teeth.

"Prove it!" he hissed. "Prove it, if you can!"



FAREWELL TO ST. JIM'S!

To have to leave their old school, to have to bid good-bye to their faithful chums, is a staggering blow to Ernest Levison and his young brother Frank.

But these Levisons are made of the right stuff; they don't whimper when adversity comes their way.

Read how this totally unlooked for contingency comes about, also what happens to the popular brothers, in next week's enthralling school story, entitled:

"LEVISON'S LAST DAY!"

You will all agree that Martin Clifford has handled his latest "Levison" theme with exceptional brilliance.

Don't get left in the "sold out" queue, boys! Order your copy of the GEM in advance!

"Easily enough!" said Lowther coolly. "Look at that, Racke. You needn't trouble to destroy it for we can get plenty more."

And Lowther handed Racke the print of the snapshot taken the night before.

Racke's face went ashen as he looked at it.

"That was taken by flashlight—by little me," said Lowther. "That was the flash you saw—the flash that frightened you nearly out of your wits. And it was my chivvy that made you bolt, thinking you were seeing ghosts, you funky coward!"

"Oh!" breathed Racke. "Oh gad!"

Racke understood all now!

He trembled under the scornful, disgusted glances of the juniors.

"Well?" demanded Tom Merry, breaking in on the silence. "Are you going to the Head, Racke, or shall we have to go?"

"I—I won't!" hissed the baffled rascal. "I won't, hang you! You dare!"

"Right! Come along, you fellows! Racke's been offered a chance. If he won't take it—"

"Stop!" gasped Racke. "I—I'll do it!"

"You'd better!" said Tom, his lip curling. "Do you think we're going to allow Lowther to be ruined by a cad like you? Not likely! It'll pay you to own up, Racke! If you own up yourself—if the Head believes you have repented and owned up on your own, he may be inclined to be merciful. But if you refuse—if we have to tell the truth—then you're booked for something far worse than Lowther got! You mean it? You'll go to the Head at once and own up?"

Racke was silent. But he saw there was no help for it—none whatever. He knew he was hopelessly bowled out.

He nodded at last.

"Yes, hang you!" he panted.

"Right! We'll give you till six-thirty. Some of us had better come with you to the Head's door in case you feel inclined to change your mind. But, remember, simply own up. Not a word about the real identity of Timothy Tipple, or your number's up. It will all come out then, and the Head will know you were forced into owning up. He'll have no mercy on you, then. So, remember, not a word about Lowther's return to St. Jim's. Understand?"

"Yes!" hissed Racke, giving Lowther a bitter, deadly look.

"Then clear, and get it over!"

And Racke cleared, Levison and several other fellows willingly volunteering to see him safely to the Head's door.

After they were gone, the rest looked at Monty Lowther.

"Well, what's to be done now?" said Tom Merry, shaking his head hopelessly. "This is a nice pickle, unless you make Timothy Tipple disappear and go home until you're sent for—you're pretty certain to be sent for!"

"I hope so!" said Lowther cheerily. "But I shan't be there! I'm going to be Timothy Tipple a bit longer yet. My idea is to wait until the Head sends for me. You fellows can easily give me the tip, as it's bound to be mentioned to you, even if I don't hear. Anyway, that's the programme."

"You're going to hang on as Timothy Tipple?" gasped Blake.

"Just that, old tops!" grinned Lowther. "Until I know the Head's sent for me. Then Timothy Tipple will vanish from mortal ken, and Monty Lowther will reappear at St. Jim's in all his glory."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let's hope so, anyway!" breathed Tom Merry.

And all his chums hoped so.

And it "came off" just as Tom Merry & Co. had hoped. Scarcely an hour later a telegram was handed to "Timothy Tipple" by Dr. Holmes to be taken to the post-office in Rylcombe. Timothy started out for Rylcombe quite cheerily, and made his way swiftly—not to the post-office, but to the village tuckshop. There he had a good feed, and then he returned to St. Jim's with the telegram reposing in his pocket.

In the privacy of his room that night Timothy wrote a long and very interesting letter to his people, explaining

everything, and begging them to "keep mum," and with the letter he enclosed the telegram and also the letter the Head had given him on his expulsion to hand to his people.

Then, his conscience much relieved—for the letter, especially, had worried Monty very much—he sneaked into Study No. 10 for a quiet hour behind a locked door with his chums.

The next day "Timothy Tipple," the new pageboy, vanished utterly and mysteriously. Nobody had seen him go, and nobody found him again. It was really most mysterious; but as nothing was found to be missing—even his uniform was left behind—the Head accepted the great loss philosophically, believing the pageboy had tired of his new job.

Nor did the truth ever leak out—to the authorities, at all events. Tom Merry & Co. told a chosen few whom they could trust, and Monty's amazing masquerade was laughed about for long enough afterwards.

And, in the evening of the day Timothy Tipple vanished so mysteriously, Monty Lowther arrived at St. Jim's, looking bright and cheery. And what took place between Dr. Holmes and Monty only his chums knew. But Monty's eyes were glistening and his face was bright when he joined his chums in Study No. 10 later on, and that evening a tremendous feed was held to celebrate the official return of Monty Lowther. And this time it was a right royal affair, with no glum faces whatever.

Aubrey Racke was not sacked—as was confidently expected. Even Racke himself had only hoped for a private expulsion instead of a public one from his "owning up." But, luckily for him, he got neither. For two days he was in the punishment-room while the Head and Mr. Railton carefully considered his case. And then he was taken to the Head's study to receive his sentence.

This proved to be severe enough. It was a public flogging—an experience the rascally junior was not likely to forget in a hurry. Nor was that all, for Racke's schoolfellows sent him to Coventry for a fortnight. Altogether, the cad of the Shell had good cause to regret his vengeful trickery on that memorable bonfire night!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's topping tale of Tom Merry & Co., chums.)

What did Temme eat on his channel swim?

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A PRISONER IN THE VAULTS! Such is the lot of the dignified Head of Rookwood, who is lured down into the Abbey vaults by a mysterious unknown. And this unknown declares that Dr. Chisholm must stay there until the innocence of the Fistical Four is proved!

The Rookwood Dictator!

By Owen Conquest.



An Amazing School Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Heroes of Rookwood.

(Introduction on page 27.)

The Dictator Moves!

"I'd rather you not, Kit," said Mornington seriously. "You see, it's a one man job—an' there's a big risk. Two would bungle it. Leave it to me—an' I'll let you into the giddy secret as soon as I've brought it off."

"Ass! Are you going to open the punishment-room door?"

"Nothin' like it."

"Well, what then?"

"Curiosity killed the cat," remarked Mornington, smiling coolly. "I'm off now. If the fellows wonder where I've gone, tell them for a stroll."

And with a cheery nod, Valentine Mornington opened the dormitory door and disappeared.

Kit Erroll stared after him, deeply mystified. But he did not follow. If Mornington wanted to be on his own, he knew best.

Erroll would have been considerably startled had he been able to follow his chum's movements after he left the dormitory.

In Mornington's cool brain there had evolved a scheme—a daring scheme—to save the Fistical Four at the eleventh hour, and it needed all the dandy's cool nerve to carry it through successfully.

After breakfast Jimmy Silver & Co. were to be expelled. Much was to happen before then if Mornington's plans went well.

His first destination was his study.

He was busy there with pen and paper for some minutes. Then, creeping cautiously along deserted corridors, he made his way to the Head's study.

Dr. Chisholm was an early riser, and usually worked in his study before breakfast. But Morny had forestalled him, and the maid was busy sweeping out when the Fourth-Former arrived.

Slipping into an alcove, Mornington waited patiently. In a few minutes the maid left the corridor, and for a brief period the junior had the Head's study to himself. He was in and out again long before the stately tread of the Doctor sounded along the corridor.

Dr. Chisholm wore a worried look as he entered his study on that sunny summer's morning. He had done what he regarded as his stern duty in sentencing the Fistical Four to expulsion; indeed, with the evidence before him convicting them of the attack on Carthew, he had no choice.

With an exclamation the Doctor dismissed the matter

from his mind. His decision was taken, and there was no reason to alter it.

He was about to seat himself in his favourite chair, when a paper pinned to the desk caught his eye.

Adjusting his glasses, the Head detached the paper and held it up.

As he read it his eyes started, and an expression of complete amazement appeared on his august features.

Certainly the gist of that message was startling.

"In expelling Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome for the attack on Carthew you are doing a very great wrong. If you will see me, I can show you something that will alter your views considerably. For various reasons I cannot come up to the school. Will you meet me by the old Abbey ruins at seven-thirty this morning?"

"A Well-Wisher."

The Head readjusted his glasses and read that communication a second time.

For some moments he appeared in doubt as to its authenticity. But it was early, and the juniors were not yet out of their dormitories. It would have been simple enough for some witness, with his own reasons for not wishing to be seen at Rookwood, to creep across the master's lawn and slip into the Head's study via the window to leave his message.

"Bless my soul! This—this is a very remarkable communication!"

Dr. Chisholm was surprised and not a little disturbed.

For a moment he thought of calling in Mr. Dalton's opinion of the note, but he refrained. Evidently the witness wished to remain anonymous. It was for the Head alone to see him. And if any important fact was disclosed regarding Carthew, clearing the Fistical Four—The Head did not hesitate long.

His duty was clear.

However unconventional the message, there was a chance that it was right—that a miscarriage of justice was imminent. And with his duty plain before him Dr. Chisholm did not linger.

The time was creeping on. He would have to hurry to be at the Abbey by seven-thirty.

Slipping the note into a pocket the Head left his study. In the corridor he passed the maid with a majestic "Good-morning!" In the Hall and in the quad he encountered nobody.

The ancient Abbey ruins were situated at some little distance from the school precincts, and formed a popular

rendezvous for juniors who wished to keep out of sight of authority.

Fights galore and secret exploration parties and other scenes had taken place in the tumbled pile which had once formed a part of the Abbey of Rookwood. The Head was not surprised that the unknown witness had chosen that out-of-the-way spot to interview him. Certainly they would be perfectly safe from observation.

Revolving the matter in his mind Dr. Chisholm crossed the playing fields and approached the ruins. There was a possibility that he was about to meet the actual attacker of Carthew—anxious to clear others of his own blame, but keen to evade public recognition himself. At that thought the Head quickened his pace.

The old ruins appeared very silent and deserted as he set foot among them. Dr. Chisholm glanced round, looking for the writer of the note.

There was no sign of him—for all he knew to the contrary the stately old Head was alone amid the tumbled stones.

"Ah! The vaults!"

Dr. Chisholm remembered, suddenly, the extensive series of vaults which ran beneath the ruins. Fellows explored them on half holidays, in the hope of unearthing the treasure of the old monks. The vaults were well known, and it was probable that the unknown was taking cover within them till the Head should arrive.

Dr. Chisholm stepped to the square opening which led via a flight of worn steps to the vaults. It was dark and miniviting as he peered down.

"Are you there?" called the doctor, raising his voice a little. "I have received your note, and come in answer to it!"

He waited till the echoes of his voice died away below, and then a gruff, muffled voice responded from the opening.

"You've come, then? Will you come down, Dr. Chisholm?"

"I would rather you ascended," said the doctor. "You will be quite safe from observation here, whoever you are."

"That's all you know, sir. I'm not coming up; I've a good reason. Come down—I've got a light, and you'll earn something you didn't know."

"You are exceedingly mysterious!" ejaculated the Head, with a touch of asperity.

"I've a reason to be!" came the muffled voice from below. The Head paused.

He did not want to descend into the shadowy vaults to meet a stranger—and a stranger who avowedly wished to seep out of sight as much as possible. But he had his duty to do, and it was his duty to assure himself of the guilt of the Fistical Four before he sent them away from Rookwood.

"I will come down!" said the doctor shortly.

"I'll show a light on the steps, sir."

There was a movement in the vaults, and the light of a candle streamed on the worn steps by which the Head had to descend. The candle was held so as not to reveal the holder, however.

With set lips, Dr. Chisholm began to descend. As he reached the bottom, his gaze searched keenly for the holder of the candle.

"Now. Why did you wish to see me?" he asked.

There was no response. Instead, at a sudden puff, the candle went out, and the Head and the unknown were left in darkness. Above, the light at the opening revealed the steps. But below it was impossible to see a foot.

Dr. Chisholm breathed hard. He was beginning to suspect—with an access of anger—that he had been tricked. For some reason his time was being wasted, though why he could not fathom.

There was a chuckle near at hand in the darkness.

"Keep quite still, sir. You're safe enough."

"What—what does this mean?" demanded the Head angrily. "Kindly light the candle again, and state why you left your note on my desk."

"Because the four juniors you have sentenced are innocent!" came the gruff voice of the invisible speaker.

"What proof have you to offer?"

"None—at present. But I'm goin' to get it, and until then, you'll not mind staying here, sir!"

"You—you insolent rascal!" ejaculated Dr. Chisholm.

"Do you dare—"

The Head broke off.

There was a sudden movement in the blackness, and a form brushed past him. His startled eyes had a glimpse of somebody ascending the steps, and then the light from above was blotted out for a moment as the unknown clambered into the open air.

"Sir! This is monstrous! I demand—"

The Head made a leap—quite a creditable leap, despite his years—towards the steps. He was half way up when there was a rumble from overhead, and the light was suddenly blotted out completely.

With a gasp of alarm and anger, Dr. Chisholm paused. He was shut in!

With a rush, he arrived at the top of the steps, and bore against the stone above with his shoulder. But it did not move, and he desisted helplessly.

With his mind in a whirl, Dr. Chisholm descended into the darkness of the vaults again—a prisoner!

Above, the unknown was at large. What was his reason for imprisoning the Head of Rookwood? How long was this state of affairs to last?

Dr. Chisholm held his forehead as he tried vainly to answer those questions.

Light at Last!

"JIMMY!"

"Hullo, there!"

"All serene, old top!"

"Eh? What's all serene?"

"The Head's missin'!" whispered Mornington, through the keyhole of the punishment-room, with great enjoyment.

"Talking out of your hat, Morny?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell, in accents of disgust.

"Not a bit of it, old bean. The Head has really an' truly gone—an' nobody knows where!"

"But—but—"

There were gasps of amazement from within the punishment-room.

Breakfast was over; the four condemned juniors had been well fed on their last morning at Rookwood—like convicts before the scaffold, as Lovell grimly remarked.

Now they were waiting, with what resignation they could muster, to be called into Hall for the final ceremony.

In those circumstances, Mornington's excited whisper was sufficient to set hope leaping in their breasts again. But it was hard to swallow.

"Say that again, Morny!" called Jimmy Silver.

"You chaps aren't goin' to be expelled this mornin'—because the Head isn't here to do it!" grinned Mornington, in delight.

"But—where on earth is he? He can't have gone far."

"Fact is that he's gone—never mind where!" said Mornington coolly. "Erroll's here—he'll tell you the same."

"You there, Erroll, old man?"

"Yes, rather! Morny's not talking out of his hat—though I can't understand what can have happened. But Mr. Dalton has been to the Head's study, and Dr. Chisholm isn't there. Mary, the maid, saw him in the corridor before breakfast, but that's all. The whole school is in a buzz!"

"My hat! I should think so!" chortled Lovell.

"Bulkeley and Neville and a crowd of the Sixth are searching for him, but they've drawn blank so far."

"Good egg!"

"Let them keep on drawing blank!" ejaculated Raby excitedly. "They can't jolly well expel us till Dr. Chisholm is found. But how could he disappear—"

"Cave! Bulkeley!" whispered Erroll.

"Keep your peckers up, old beans!" said Mornington, as a parting shot. "An' trust the giddy Dictator to clear you somehow!"

"My hat! You haven't—" began Jimmy Silver, with a sudden deep suspicion.

"Now, then! Haven't you been warned not to speak to Silver and the others, Mornington?" demanded Bulkeley's voice grimly.

"Yaas, old bean!"

"Two hundred lines, then. The same for you, Erroll. Now, cut!"

"Anythin' to oblige!" said Mornington gracefully.

He was grinning as, accompanied by Erroll, he left the

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organisation called the Fascist Band of Rookwood. In due course, Carthew and his cronies are given the ragging of their lives, the Fascists being careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their numbers to act on each occasion.

Later, Lattrey bumps into Captain Punter, a rascally book-maker, who expounds a scheme to get Jimmy Silver & Co. expelled from Rookwood. Lattrey is forced to fall in with the rascal's wishes, with the result that Carthew is found shortly afterwards, lying stunned in a nearby lane. The discovery of a bloodstained walking-stick points to Lovell as being the guilty party, and he, Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome, all of whom are accused of aiding him, are sentenced to expulsion. Rising very early on the morrow, Mornington evolves a daring scheme to save the Fistical Four.

"I'm in it with you, too," says Kit Erroll, donning his clothes hurriedly.

(Now read on.)

corridor wherein the punishment-room was situated. Kit Erroll was looking puzzled and suspicious. He could not help thinking that Morny's satisfaction at the disappearance of the Head was a suspicious circumstance, coupled with his veiled remarks when leaving the dormitory before rising-bell.

But it was impossible to get anything out of his clam at present. Morny was evidently playing some deep game of his own, and he was convinced that he could help the Fistical Four. Erroll followed him into the quad before speaking again.

"Whither bound now, old chap?"

"Sanny," answered Mornington coolly.

"To see Carthow?"

"Exactly! Jolly old Carthow may be able to give us a pointer or two if we ask him nicely. He should be getting over that crack on the napper by now."

"He was getting better yesterday. Didn't we hear that he said he was attacked by a fellow in robe and cowl—"

"I want to hear more than that," interrupted Mornington crisply. "This way. Hallo, Knowles! Why the worried frown?"

Cecil Knowles of the Modern side glared at the grinning Morny. He did not see anything funny in the long search which he had undertaken for the missing headmaster of Rookwood. The Head was nowhere in the school—that much was certain by this time. The supposition remained that for some reason he had gone out, though it was impossible to guess where or why.

The prefects had searched the school buildings from end to end without result. The Head was gone—disappeared as completely as if swallowed up in the middle of the quad.

"What are you grinning at, you young sweep?" snarled Knowles, swinging his ashlant.

"Nothin'," answered Mornington innocently.

"Have you seen the Head this mornin', either of you?"

"I haven't," said Erroll.

"Have you, Mornington?"

"The Head?" said Mornington reflectively. "Let me see now. An old johnnie with a rather heightened colour—"

"You disrespectful young idiot!"

"With no end of an opinion of himself an' all that he does. That fit the man you want, Knowles?"

Knowles' eyes glowered.

He had not forgotten—or forgiven—his treatment at the hands of the Fascists. He did not know whether Mornington was a Fascist or not—but it was very probable. And Knowles did not intend to miss an opportunity of getting a bit of his own back.

"You are disrespectful, Mornington. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, gail!"

"You asked for it, you know," murmured Erroll.

"At once!" snapped Knowles.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders and obeyed. He received two stinging cuts, then shrugged again as Knowles, grinning, strode off.

"Fathead! What did you want to get Knowles' leg out for?" demanded Erroll.

Morny's eyes glimmered.

"Because I couldn't answer his question outright," he responded, chuckling. "I had to get past him, you know. Come on, I want to see Carthow."

Erroll was staring at his chum when they arrived at the school sanatorium. His suspicions were becoming steadily more concrete.

"Can I see Carthow, miss?" asked Mornington.

Erroll and he were ushered into the room where the prefect lay, and the nurse withdrew.

Carthow glanced at them rather peculiarly and waited for Morny to speak first. He did not expect to be visited by juniors, but even Carthow was more inclined for conversation on a sick-bed. He found the hours passed slowly enough with books and papers.

"I've dropped in to ask you a few questions, Carthow," said Mornington easily, taking a chair at the bedside. "Feelin' better this mornin', what?"

"A little, thanks," answered the prefect. "I don't know that I want to answer questions though. What do you want to know?"

(For the continuation of this grand serial see next week's GEM.)

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