

"DETAINED!"

This Week's Best School Story, Containing
Laughs, Thrills, and Sensations.

THE GEM 2^d

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.

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*The Unwelcome
Visitor!*

(Read the remarkable story of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's—inside.)

A SPARKLING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF—

DETAINED!

When a Form master gets his knife into one of his Form it's long odds on the master scoring all along the line. This is not always the case, however, for in the feud between Mr. Linton of the Shell and Tom Merry, for example, things work out the other way round.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1.

Linton Comes Down Heavy!

"CARDEW!"

It was Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell at St. Jim's, who spoke.

Tom Merry had just put his head in at the door of Study No. 9, in the Fourth Form passage. Ralph Reckness Cardew was seated by the fire, with one leg resting comfortably over the arm of the chair. There was a book on his knee, but Cardew did not seem to be reading it.

In fact, Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth did not seem to be doing anything in particular—except slacking. Which was not surprising in Cardew!

"Hallo!" yawned Cardew lazily. "Do you mind comin' in and shuttin' the door? Or else goin' away and shuttin' the door? One of the two, dear man! I find the draught botherin'!"

Tom Merry stepped into the study and closed the door.

Tom Merry was not a friend of Cardew's. Cardew was the slacker of the Fourth, and Tom did not like slackers. But Cardew, though he was a slacker, had the makings of one of the finest athletes at St. Jim's, had he only cared to bother himself. When he chose, Ralph Reckness Cardew could shine on the footer field, as in most other spheres of sport.

He very seldom did choose to do so—that was Cardew's way! But Tom Merry as captain of footer in the Lower School, had been quick to notice that the slacker of the Fourth had been turning up to footer practice once or twice recently, apart from compulsory days.

Whether this meant anything, or whether it had merely been a whim of Cardew's, Tom did not know.

"And what can I do for you, old man?" drawled Cardew. "Excuse my not risin'. I'm tired. I walked to the tuckshop and back after tea, and it's fagged me out."

"Ass!" said Tom.

Cardew smiled, and yawned.

"Well," he queried again, "what's the reason for the honour of a visit from the junior captain of games?"

"It's about footer," said Tom Merry shortly.

Cardew raised his eyebrows with polite interest.

"Kerr has crooked himself," went on Tom. "Hurt his blessed ankle, like an ass—"

Cardew sighed.

"Tut, tut! Only a few days before the Greyfriars match, too! How thoughtless of him!"

"That's just it," nodded Tom quickly. "Kerr was down to play in the Greyfriars match on Saturday. He can't now. So I've come round to ask you to play."

There was an almost eager light in Tom Merry's eyes as he watched the slacker of the Fourth.

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The accident to Kerr had been a blow to the St. Jim's junior football eleven. Tom Merry knew that Harry Wharton of Greyfriars was bringing over a very strong team for the match on Saturday, and St. Jim's would need their very best men to win—or to avoid defeat at the hands of their great rivals.

If Cardew could be persuaded to take Kerr's place, the unlucky accident to the New House man might prove to be a blessing in disguise, after all! But could Cardew be persuaded to play? It was a very doubtful problem.

Cardew had sat up a little in his chair. His handsome face was turned towards Tom Merry with a look of amused surprise.

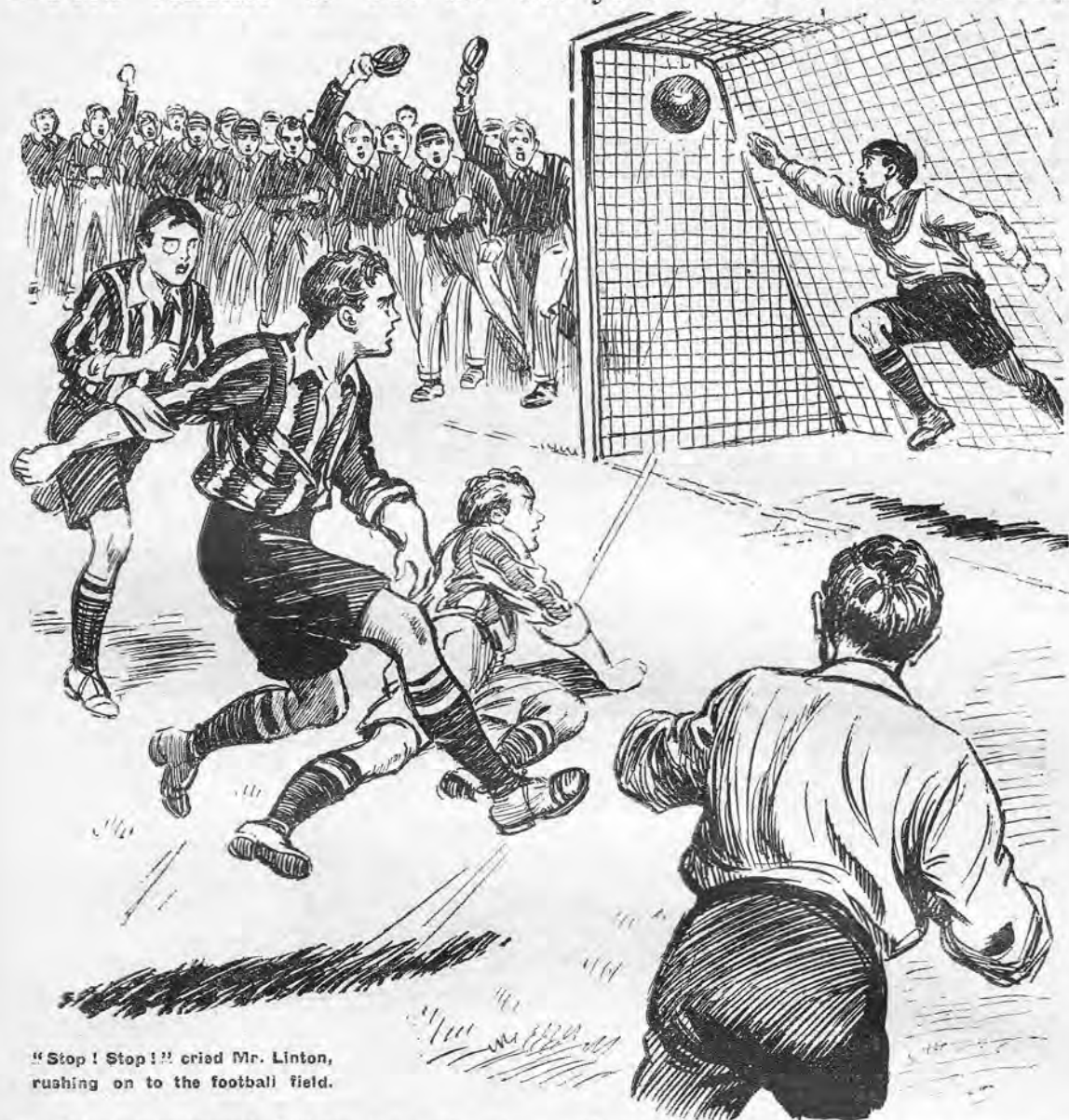
"Gad!" said Cardew. "It's a long time since you've done me the honour of asking me to represent St. Jim's! You overwhelm me!"

He hid another yawn behind his fingers, as he stared thoughtfully at Tom Merry.

"Well," said Tom, a note of impatience creeping into his

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—TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S. FULL OF LAUGHS!



"Stop! Stop!!" cried Mr. Linton, rushing on to the football field.

voice, "what's your answer? Will you play on Saturday against Greyfriars?"

Cardew smiled, shook his head, and nestled himself comfortably upon the cushions.

"No, dear man," he murmured lazily. "Sorry, but I must beg to be excused. It's such warm weather for the time of year, an' I couldn't stand the strain. If it had been a match against the Second Form, or against a local Sunday-school eleven, I might have said yes. I don't say I would, but I might. A nice easy game I wouldn't have objected to, I feel sure. But Greyfriars—such a giddy energetic crowd! It's sure to be a hard game. So I'm afraid I must ask you to count me out, dear man."

Tom Merry glared at the smiling face of the slacker of the Fourth, and breathed hard.

"Look here, Cardew—"

"It's no good arguin'," grinned Cardew. "I tell you the Greyfriars match sounds too much like work for little me."

"You blessed slacker!" roared Tom hotly. "I've a good mind to punch your silly head!"

"Hard words break no bones, thank goodness," yawned Cardew.

"I imagined, when I saw you turning up to some of the practice games, that p'raps you thought of taking up footer again," said Tom Merry bitterly. There was a dark frown on his usually good-natured face.

"You thought wrong," murmured Cardew. "I did turn up once or twice, for amusement. A little passing whim—that was all, dear man."

"Look here—"

"Oh, gad! I do wish you wouldn't argue," sighed Cardew, plaintively. "It's so tiring, arguin'—"

"Right!" said Tom Merry grimly. "I won't argue, because I know it's no blessed use, with a rotten slacker like you! But there's something I will do, and that's punch your head!"

Tom Merry had clenched his fists, and there was a very angry light in his eyes. As skipper of the team that was to meet Greyfriars in the big match on Saturday, Tom's usually sunny temper had been more than ruffled by Cardew's bland refusal to help St. Jim's in their big task against Harry Wharton & Co.

But though he had clenched his fists, and taken a step towards Cardew, Tom Merry did not carry out his threat.

There was a sudden perfunctory tap on the door.

"Come in!" drawled Cardew, with a grin at Tom Merry. "Do you mind leavin' the head-punchin' till afterwards, dear man? There's someone at the door."

As he spoke, the door was pushed open. Tom Merry glanced round, and gave an exclamation of surprise.

The face of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was glaring into the study.

It was not often that Mr. Linton visited the Fourth Form passage. He naturally kept most of his attentions to his own pupils of the Shell—a fact which was not exactly an unmixed blessing for the Shell, in their opinion, since even

at the best of times, Mr. Linton was inclined to be a short-tempered gentleman.

Judging by the expression on his face as he glared into Cardew's study, however, his mood at the moment seemed absolutely vitriolic.

"So there you are!" ejaculated Mr. Linton fiercely, his eyes fixed on the figure of the captain of the Shell.

"You—you want me, sir?" exclaimed Tom.

Mr. Linton glared at him.

"I have been searching for you everywhere!" he rasped. "I was told you were seen entering this study. I want to know why you have not brought me your imposition this evening. You fancied I would forget it, I have no doubt!"

Tom Merry jumped.

He remembered now that he had had a hundred lines to do for the master of the Shell, lines which should have been sent in immediately after tea. But in his preoccupation over the Greyfriars match, and the problem of filling Kerr's place, the little matter of Mr. Linton's lines had utterly escaped Tom Merry's memory.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Tom in dismay.

"Well?" barked Mr. Linton.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" mumbled Tom, going very red. "I'm afraid—"

"They're not done?"

"N-no, sir, I—"

"And why not?" demanded Mr. Linton, his whole figure seeming fairly to bristle in the doorway.

Tom Merry met the master's furious glare with steady frankness.

"I forgot them, sir," he admitted apologetically. "I'm sorry—"

Mr. Linton interrupted him with a sound something like the snarl of a hungry tiger.

"You forgot them?" he thundered. "How dare you stand there and coolly declare that you forgot? How dare you, sir? I have not the slightest doubt you imagined I should forget about them—"

"That isn't so, sir," said Tom Merry shortly.

"Don't answer me back, sir!" stormed Mr. Linton. There was no doubt that he was in a very bad temper indeed. "Come with me! I am going to cane you, sir, for your effrontery. Follow me!"

With a whisk and a glare, Mr. Linton turned and rustled off along the passage.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom.

There was a broad grin on the face of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Hard luck, dear man! Old Linton seems rather waxy with you. I'm afraid you're in for a tryin' five minutes!"

Tom Merry glared at the slacker of the Fourth.

"Oh, rats!"

"I should hurry," advised Cardew, with a lazy drawl. "He'll get really mad if you keep him waitin'!"

Tom Merry left the study, and Cardew chuckled.

In Mr. Linton's study Tom Merry took three "stingers," and returned slowly to the Shell passage with a dark frown on his face.

"Blow Linton!" he growled. "And blow Cardew!" He smiled wryly. "I suppose I ought to have known Cardew wouldn't play up!"

Tom's thoughts were already back on the Greyfriars match as he entered his study and joined his two chums, Monty Lowther and Harry Manners, at the table for prep.

"What about Cardew?" asked Manners curiously.

Tom shook his head.

"No good. The rotter won't play. I shall have to put Clive in, I think."

"Cardew wants kicking!" growled Monty Lowther.

"I know he does," Tom Merry grunted. "But what's the use?"

But, had he only known it, it was Mr. Linton, not Ralph Reckness Cardew, who was to prove the worst enemy of the junior eleven in their big match against Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 2.

Trouble in the Form-room

"MANNERS!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"You were talking. Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh crumbs!"

It was the following day, and in the Shell Form-room Mr. Linton was making morning lessons a thoroughly dangerous time for his pupils. Already Bernard Glyn, Reginald Talbot, and George Alfred Grundy had been awarded lines for very slight offences, and now Manners had followed their example.

Mr. Linton was in a thoroughly bad temper.

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There was no doubt about that, no shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever.

"He's got out of bed on the wrong side all right, blow him!" breathed Manners to Monty Lowther. "I— Oh, my hat!"

"Manners!" roared Mr. Linton.

"Y-yes, sir?"

"You were talking again!" Mr. Linton's voice was ferocious. "What did you find it necessary to say to Lowther?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Manners. "I—I—"

"I insist that you tell me!" rasped Mr. Linton.

"Ahem! It was nothing important, sir—"

Mr. Linton reached for his pointer.

"Unless you inform me immediately of what you said to Lowther, I shall cane you severely!"

"Oh dear!" Manners went scarlet. "I—I said, sir, that I thought you had got out of bed on the wrong side this morning!" he gasped.

Mr. Linton jumped. His face seemed to go almost purple. He breathed with evident difficulty.

The Shell felt sorry for Manners.

"You—you had the insolence to pass that remark concerning your Form master?" thundered Mr. Linton, with a glare that looked like boring a hole clean through Manners at any moment. "How—how dare you? Instead of a hundred lines, you will now bring me five hundred to-morrow evening!"

Manners gave an exclamation of dismay. There were sympathetic glances from the rest of the Shell. With a final glare at Manners, Mr. Linton picked up the book on the desk in front of him.

The Shell were busy with the works of Mr. Virgil for that hour. In the opinion of the Shell, Mr. Virgil was not a very interesting author. They considered that his stuff was not a patch on the work of the author of the "Boys' Friend Library," for example.

But Mr. Linton considered otherwise; and any lack of interest in the works of the immortal Roman on the part of his pupils was likely to cause trouble—lots of it!

"Merry!"

Tom Merry did not answer.

The problem of the Greyfriars match was still the uppermost thing in Tom's mind that morning. He was troubled with one or two difficulties about the positions of his players; whether or not Talbot of the Shell should be brought up into the forward line, for example. With his thoughts far away, it was hardly to be wondered at that the voice of his Form master went unheeded.

"Tom, you ass!" breathed Monty Lowther beside him.

Tom looked up quickly, and found Mr. Linton's eyes fixed upon him with anything but a friendly light.

"Sir?" he gasped.

"You were not attending!" roared Mr. Linton.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!"

Mr. Linton breathed hard.

"Kindly continue construing where Skimpole left off!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

As it happened, he had taken a good deal of trouble over his preparation on the night before. He knew that Mr. Linton had been inclined to "have his knife into him" lately; things had not been improved by his unfortunate forgetfulness regarding Mr. Linton's lines, and he had been determined to give the master of the Shell no excuse for venting his bad temper upon him further, during the spell of ill-humour that seemed to be afflicting Mr. Linton.

Unfortunately for Tom Merry, Mr. Linton happened to have picked upon the hardest passage for him to construe.

One or two mistakes were inevitable from a junior. Only a Latin scholar, like Mr. Linton himself, could have gone through that tricky passage without a single error. And had he been in a reasonable mood, the master of the Shell would have realised it.

But he was not in a reasonable mood.

"Did you prepare this passage last night, Merry?" he demanded suddenly, in icy tones.

"Yes, sir."

"I should scarcely have thought it!" barked Mr. Linton, with glinting eyes.

Tom Merry went crimson.

"Do I understand that you are doubting my word, sir?" he asked. His voice was quiet, but there was a quiver of indignation in it that the rest of the Shell were quick to notice, even though Mr. Linton did not.

Mr. Linton glared.

"How dare you answer me in that insolent way?" he rasped.

"I am sorry, sir. I did not intend to be insolent. But if you doubt my word—"

"That will do! Continue construing!" exclaimed Mr. Linton angrily.

"Very well, sir," said Tom curtly.

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He picked up his book again. But he did not get far. Mr. Linton stopped him with a sharp interruption.

"Really, Merry. You actually wish to pretend that you prepared this passage last night?"

"Yes, sir!"

There was heightened colour in Tom Merry's face, and his eyes were gleaming.

"Indeed?" There was almost a sneer in the voice of the master of the Shell. "Continue!"

Tom laid his book on the desk in front of him.

"It isn't much use my going on if you think I haven't prepared it, is it, sir?" he answered bitterly. "If you think I'm lying—"

"Shut up, you ass!" breathed Monty Lowther.

The rest of the Shell held their breath. It was quite clear that Tom Merry was thoroughly roused. With Mr. Linton

intend to make an example here and now! Have you anything to say?"

"I did not intend to be insolent, sir," said Tom Merry, facing the master of the Shell with gleaming eyes. "I simply objected to having my word doubted. I still object. If you punish me, I shall consider it a rotten and unjust punishment!"

"Phew!" breathed Manners.

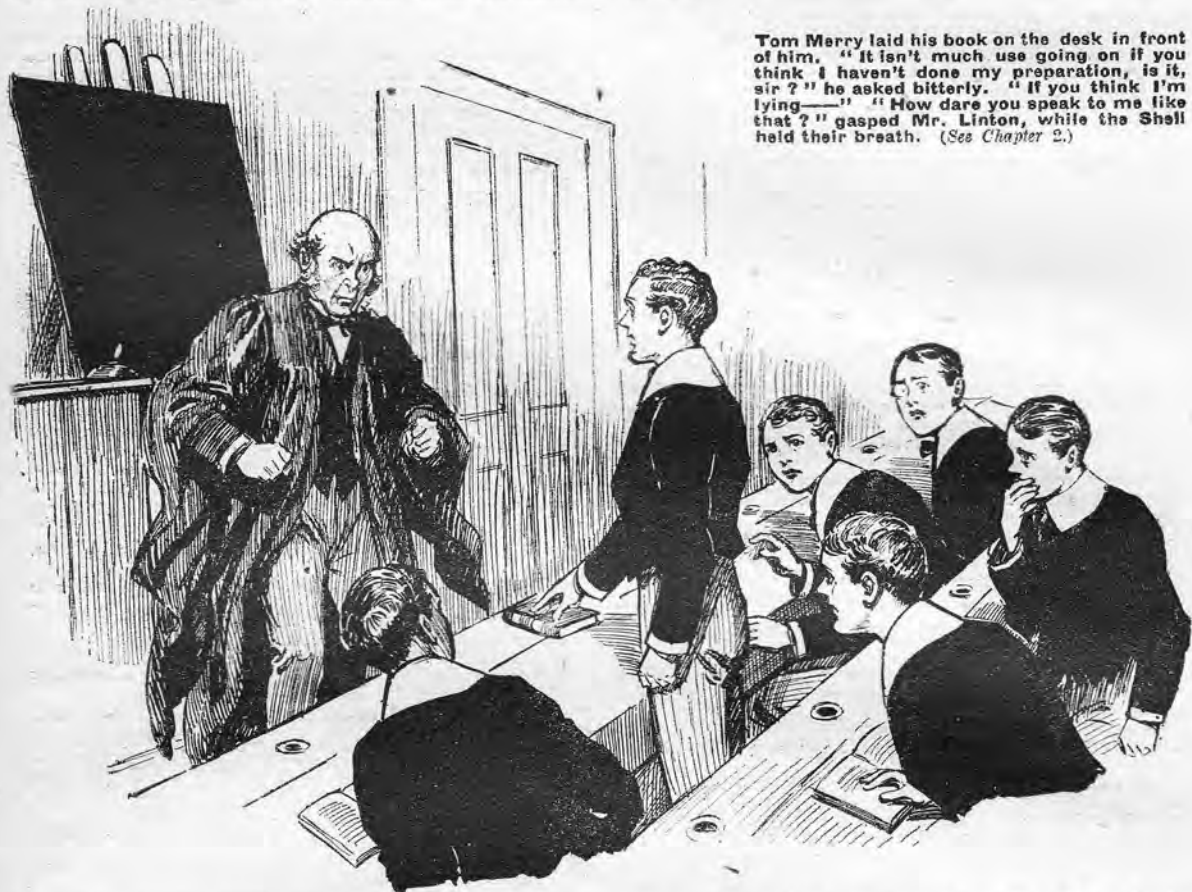
"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry hesitated. But his only way to escape the unjust punishment was to go to the Head, and though he felt that he was in the right, Tom did not wish to take his case before Dr. Holmes.

"Very well, sir," he said, in a low voice.

He held out a hand. The pointer whistled down through the air.

Tom Merry laid his book on the desk in front of him. "It isn't much use going on if you think I haven't done my preparation, is it, sir?" he asked bitterly. "If you think I'm lying—" "How dare you speak to me like that?" gasped Mr. Linton, while the Shell held their breath. (See Chapter 2.)



in his present bad temper, it looked as though the Shell were in for an exciting scene.

They were not disappointed.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" gasped Mr. Linton, with glittering eyes.

Tom Merry faced him coolly.

The junior captain was the best-tempered fellow in the world as a rule. But he was "fed-up" with Linton! Despite Monty Lowther's whispered warning, Tom was too indignant to suppress his anger. Though only his eyes showed it, his blood was boiling.

"I object to having my word doubted, sir," he said, in a quivering voice.

The Shell gasped. So did Mr. Linton.

He glared at Tom Merry as though he could not believe his ears. Then he reached for his pointer.

"Silence!" he rasped savagely. "You are insolent, sir! Stand out before the class!"

Tom Merry stepped from his place, and walked out to the master's desk coolly enough.

"My hat, he's in for it!" breathed Racke, the cad of the Shell, with a grin.

"He asked for it!" chuckled Crooke.

"Shut up, you cads!" muttered Talbot.

Mr. Linton was surveying Tom Merry as a tiger surveys its prey.

"I am going to punish you severely for your insolence, Merry!" he barked. "For some time I have observed an unaruly and defiant spirit increasing among the Form, and I

Three times it fell, with cruel force. Tom Merry bit his lip, but he uttered no sound. Still not even the faintest exclamation broke from him as Mr. Linton delivered three more savage cuts on the other hand.

When it was over, Tom Merry smiled deliberately.

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Linton pointed to the junior's empty seat.

"Return to your place!" he said harshly. "And understand that in future I shall check your insolent ways with the utmost severity!"

Tom Merry returned to his seat.

There was a grim light in the eyes of the captain of the Shell.

It looked as though something very like warfare had been declared between Tom Merry and Mr. Linton in the Form-room that morning!

CHAPTER 3.

The Transformation of Mr. Linton!

"HALLO, hallo—" "Great pip!" "Bai Jove, deah-boys! Look!" "It's Linton!"

Tom Merry & Co. were strolling across the quad in company with Blake & Co. of the Fourth. It was early after dinner, and the chums of the Shell and the leaders of THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,132.

the Fourth were clad in footer kit. They were going towards the playing-fields, when the sight of a figure emerging from the doorway of the School House caused them to halt and stare.

At first, the juniors had not quite recognised Mr. Linton; but on second looks, it was undoubtedly the master of the Shell who was descending the steps into the quad.

Mr. Linton was looking quite different from usual this afternoon.

As a rule, Mr. Linton was inclined to be rather a sombrely-dressed individual. But as he came down the steps he was looking a picture of fashion.

A glossy topper adorned his head. His trousers were light-grey striped, and beautifully creased. A white carnation ornamented his buttonhole. His gloves were yellow, his waistcoat was a delicate shade of fawn, and a silver-mounted stick was tucked under his arm.

With quite a jaunty air Mr. Linton turned in the direction of the gates.

He was looking very pleased with himself; and he certainly looked a great deal younger than the juniors could remember having seen him. His step was almost springy as he crossed the quad.

"Gweat Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, in dazed astonishment. "It's weally Linton!"

"All dressed up and nowhere to go!" chuckled Herries. Mr. Linton passed close by the group, and bestowed a very frosty look upon them in passing. He went on towards the gates.

"Talk about Solomon in all his glory!" gasped Digby.

"Where the dickens is he off to, all dressed up in his best bib and tucker?" murmured Tom Merry wonderingly.

"Perhaps he's going to try to cut out Gussy with the young lady in the Rylcombe linendraper's," suggested Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned a very pink countenance towards Lowther. "Weally, Lowthah, you are perfectly well awah that I am not in the least dewce interested in the young lady at the linendwaph's!"

"My hat! So you've quarrelled with her?" gasped Lowther.

"I am not even acquainted with her, you fwabjous ass!" booted the swell of St. Jim's wrathfully. "I uttably deny—"

A sudden step behind the group interrupted Arthur Augustus' indignant remarks. Levison of the Fourth had come up with Sidney Clive, the South African junior, both in footer kit.

"Wondering what's up with old Linton, blossoming out like a giddy Beau Brummell?" chuckled Levison.

"Wondering isn't the word!" grinned Manners.

"We rather think he's trying to cut out Gussy with the young lady at the draper's in Rylcombe," said Monty Lowther gravely. "But—"

"No! Jove! Look heah, Lowthah—"

"Ba, it's not that!" grinned Ernest Levison. "It's Miss Finch!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Blake. "Miss Finch, of Spalding Hall?"

Levison nodded and chuckled.

Miss Finch was the headmistress of Spalding Hall, a school for girls near Wayland, at which Levison's sister Doris was a pupil.

"I saw Doris last night," went on Levison, grinning. "She was telling me that old Linton has been round to Spalding Hall more than once lately. He's struck on Miss Finch, so the girls at Spalding Hall say!"

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Herries.

"Not your aunt—Miss Finch!" chuckled Clive.

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Miss Finch, of Spalding Hall, was an elderly lady, but she was very charming. All the St. Jim's juniors liked her. There was nothing extraordinary in anyone finding her attractive.

But that Mr. Linton, the short-tempered master of the Shell, should have suddenly developed into a gay Lothario in this astonishing way was staggering!

They could hardly believe it. But there was no doubt that Levison ought to know, if anyone did.

"Linton, of all people!" gasped Manners.

"Gweat Scott! How vewy amusin'!" grinned Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on the distant figure of the master of the Shell, as Mr. Linton vanished through the gates into Rylcombe Lane. "And you think, Levison, deah boy, that old Linton is off to visit Miss Finch this aftahnnoon?"

"Looks like it," grinned Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

"Well, blow Linton," said Tom Merry. "Come along, you chaps." He dropped a hand on Clive's shoulder. "If

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you play up this afternoon, old boss, you'll have Kerr's place in the Greyfriars match on Saturday, remember."

The juniors, still chuckling, moved off towards Little Side, where a number of fellows were already punting a footer about.

In the keen interest of the last practice game before the match with Greyfriars, even the astonishing fact that Mr. Linton of the Shell had suddenly blossomed out as a Beau Brummell, and a Gay Lothario combined was forgotten!

CHAPTER 4.

in Rylcombe Lane I

"A LOVELY evening!"

It was Mr. Linton who spoke.

Mr. Linton was not alone. At his side was walking Miss Finch, of Spalding Hall.

If Mr. Linton was looking a thing of beauty and a joy for ever as he strolled along Rylcombe Lane in the early twilight, the little headmistress of Spalding Hall was also looking decidedly smart. She was wearing a new hat—quite a gay affair, with a blue ribbon in it, which she had purchased only the day before—inspired, possibly, by her growing realisation of the attention that had been paid to her of late by Mr. Leslie Linton.

"Yes, it is lovely along the lanes," cooed Miss Finch shyly.

Though she was inclined to be rather strict with her pupils, at the moment Miss Finch seemed quite bashful and almost girlish. From time to time, as she walked beside him, she was casting bright glances at her companion.

"All the more lovely, may I say it, for your presence!" said Mr. Linton gallantly.

"Oh, Mr. Linton!" gasped Miss Finch.

Mr. Linton smiled tenderly.

"May I—may I suggest that you call me Leslie?" he murmured.

"Oh, Mr. Linton! I mean, oh, Leslie!" breathed Miss Finch.

"And you," continued Mr. Linton, twirling his cane and wishing he had a chance to look in a mirror to see if his hat were at just the right doggish angle that he hoped—"and you, Miss Finch, will you allow me to dispense with formality to the extent of calling you Muriel?"

"Oh, Leslie! Certainly, if you wish it—"

"Then I shall call you Muriel!" announced Mr. Linton, with a roguish glance.

"If you wish" fluttered Miss Finch. "But my name is Hephzebah."

Mr. Linton started slightly.

"Hoffsy which?" he ejaculated.

"Hephzebah!"

"I—I was under the impression that it was Muriel!" said Mr. Linton lamely. "I beg your pardon."

"You may call me Muriel, if you really wish it," whispered Miss Finch coyly.

"No; my mistake entirely!" gasped Mr. Linton, who was wondering how he had made the error. "I will call you, if I can—I mean, if I may—Hephzebah!"

"Heppy for short!" sighed Miss Finch happily.

"Take my arm Heppy!" suggested Mr. Linton gently.

"Then I shall be truly heppy—I mean, happy."

Miss Finch took his arm, with a delicate blush. Mr. Linton pressed her fingers with his.

"You were saying, Heppy," he murmured thoughtfully, "how very—er—profitable a school for girls can be?"

"Most, Leslie!"

Mr. Linton nodded with satisfaction.

Though he had been a confirmed bachelor all his life, Mr. Linton was beginning to wonder whether marriage to the proprietress of such a profitable institution as Spalding Hall must be, would not be well worth his consideration.

"How lovely," sighed Mr. Linton tenderly, "it would be for a lonely man like myself to find some sweet little woman with whom he could sit at night counting the profits—I—I mean the stars—the stars in the sky—"

"How romantic you are!" cooed Miss Finch.

"Heppy," murmured Mr. Linton ardently, "may I ask—may I pluck up courage to ask—"

"Yes, yes?"

"To ask that you and I us two—"

"We two," corrected Miss Finch tenderly.

Mr. Linton frowned and bit his lip.

"Ahem! Exactly—we two!" he snapped. "Careless of me. The pronoun being in the subjective—"

"Oh, Leslie," breathed Miss Finch, "let us leave the grammar for the moment, and get on with the—er—what you were saying!"

"Hem!" Mr. Linton coughed. "Certainly, certainly! Heppy, will you be—"

But whether Mr. Linton was going to ask Miss Finch to be his wife, or simply to be a sister to him, was never known.

The sudden shrill clainour of a bicycle bell cut into Mr. Linton's romance at that moment—with the disastrous effect of the spanner dropped into the proverbial works.

Round the bend a bicycle had come speeding.

There was an excited yell from the figure on the bicycle, as he saw Mr. Linton and Miss Finch being romantic in the middle of the road. Mr. Linton, glancing up in consternation, saw that it was a St. Jim's junior; but he had no time to recognise Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell.

Tom had been into Rylcombe, to fetch some football-boots from the cobbler's. He swerved to avoid the figures in his path, but a patch of oil on the road, dropped from some passing motor-car, proved disastrous. He skidded, and the next moment his front wheel had crashed into the elegant trousers of the master of the Shell, as Mr. Linton turned to bolt for safety.

Crash!

Tom Merry went shooting over the handlebars, and landed in the hedge at one side of the road. Mr. Linton was knocked flying against the flimsy fence on the other side of the road, and the fence was not strong enough to stand the strain. It collapsed, and Mr. Linton shot through into unknown country beyond.

Unfortunately for Mr. Linton, the unknown country beyond consisted, so far as he was concerned, of a pigstye.

The pigs squealed, and Mr. Linton yelled, and then there was a mighty splash.

Swissss! Whooooooosss!

Mr. Linton had landed in the trough that contained the pigs' supper, with a liquid, swooshing sound.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Linton. "Oh! Yooooosh!"

It was a large trough, and Mr. Linton fitted it nicely. Tom Merry, scrambling breathlessly from the hedge, was just in time to see the master of the Shell floundering and splashing as though he were having a bath.

"Grooooooh! Gugg-gugg! Mum-mumm!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom.

Miss Finch was surveying Mr. Linton's downfall with consternation and horror.

"Oh!" wailed Miss Finch. "Dear, dear, dear! Tut, tut! Dear, dear!"

Mr. Linton waved an excited arm, scattering a quantity of pigs' supper in liquid form from his sleeve. Miss Finch's sympathetic exclamations seemed to irritate him.

"Don't stand there saying 'Dear, dear!' he spluttered. 'Pray help me out, Miss Finch—'

"My—my dear Leslie! Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear—"

"Help me out!" yelled Mr. Linton, quite savagely. "Oh! Grooooooh! Don't stand there looking like a—"

Mr. Linton remembered in the nick of time that he was addressing a lady.

He choked and spluttered, and scrambled, dripping, from the pig-trough, just as Tom Merry, collecting his dazed senses, had been about to go to his help.

"Oh! Yoooooh! I—I beg your pardon, Miss Finch, for speaking so—so thoughtlessly in my natural excitement! I apologise, I am sure—"

But his apologies were too late!

Miss Finch drew herself up, facing the master of the Shell with gimlet eyes.

"How dare you speak to me like that, sir?" cried Miss Finch. "How dare you? You are no gentleman!"

"Oh! My—my dear Miss Finch—Happy—"

"Enough, sir!" gasped Miss Finch. "I will leave you, sir! I wish never to speak to you again!"

The little headmistress of Spalding Hall turned and hurried away up the lane, her nose in the air, her face pink with indignation. She vanished round the bend, leaving Mr. Linton staring after her blankly.

Then suddenly his eyes fell on Tom Merry.

Till then, the master of the Shell had not realised who

the junior was who had caused all his troubles. In the excitement of the collision, he had seen very little but the St. Jim's cap! Now, as Tom hurried up to him, his eyes seemed to protrude from their sockets.

"You!" he gasped.

In a moment Mr. Linton saw it all—or thought he did.

He did not doubt for an instant that Tom Merry had crashed into him deliberately, as a revenge for his caning in the Form-room that morning. His face went purple.

"You did it on purpose!" he panted. "I—I shall report you to the headmaster! You are a hooligan, sir! You knocked me down deliberately! I will have you flogged for this!"

Tom Merry stared at him dumbly.

"Flogged, I say!" gasped Mr. Linton, almost dancing with rage.

Tom Merry's face set.

"You are quite wrong, sir. It was an accident. I skidded. I'm sorry—"

"I do not believe you!" choked Mr. Linton.

"Very well, sir," said Tom coolly. His eyes were gleaming. "I suppose you are at liberty to doubt my word as much as you like." He smiled grimly. "But Dr. Holmes may not!"

Mr. Linton glared at him savagely.

Now that he was calming down a little, the master of the Shell was not quite sure that the headmaster of St. Jim's would be willing to believe that Tom Merry had deliberately caused the accident. And if the Head accepted Tom Merry's assurance that it was due to a skid, the captain of the Shell would undoubtedly escape unpunished.

On second thoughts, Mr. Linton thought it might be better to deal with the matter himself in his own way. He knew that Saturday was the day of the Greyfriars match. His eyes gleamed.

"I shall not report you to the headmaster, after all, richly though you deserve it," he said harshly. "I will be lenient!"

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Tom ironically.

"Instead," rasped Mr. Linton, "I shall deal with you myself. I warned you that I intend to quell your defiant, insolent spirit! Therefore you will spend next Saturday afternoon in detention, from two o'clock to five, in the Shell Form-room."

Tom caught his breath.

"But—but that's the day of the Greyfriars match, sir!" he cried hoarsely. "I have got to play—"

"You will do nothing of the kind!"

"But—but—" began Tom pleadingly.

"That is enough!"

"But the match, sir, against Greyfriars—"

"The match does not interest me!"

Mr. Linton snatched up his battered hat and crammed it on his head. Tom Merry took a step towards him. His face was white and desperate. He made a pleading gesture, but Mr. Linton waved him aside. The master of the Shell turned on his heel and marched away.

He heard Tom Merry hurrying after him, and turned a wrathful face towards the junior.

"Look here, sir," said Tom hoarsely, "I—I must play on Saturday! It's the most important match of the season! I'll do anything else you like—three other half-holidays in detention, if you like—or a flogging—anything—"

Mr. Linton's face was hard.

"I have said all I have to say, Merry! You will spend next Saturday afternoon in the Form-room. I have nothing more to say."

He marched off—looking far less gorgeous than when he had sallied forth from the gates of St. Jim's that afternoon. In a few moments he had vanished round the bend, leaving



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Tom Merry standing almost dazedly in the middle of the road, staring after him.

CHAPTER 5. The Deputation!

"IT'S the limit!"

"Linton ought to be scragged!"

"Yes, rather!"

An excited crowd had gathered in the junior Common-room, later that evening.

The news that Tom Merry would not be able to play in the Greyfriars match had been like a bombshell to the Lower School!

Anger and consternation reigned.

Tom Merry out of the Greyfriars match—it was unthinkable!

Blake jumped on to a form and held up a hand for silence. The excited juniors quietened a little.

"Something's got to be done!" declared the leader of the Fourth, looking round him fiercely. "If Tom Merry doesn't play—"

"Shame, shame!"

"Rather! It's a rotten shame!" agreed Blake hotly.

"But the point is, something's got to be done!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What-ho!"

"But what?" put in Talbot of the Shell quietly. "Linton is down on Tom at present, and he's not likely to let him off—we know that. And if Tom defies him, and breaks detention, Linton will get him sacked."

"It's rotten!"

"I considah Linton a feahful outsidah to do a thing like this!" declared Arthur Augustus, D'Arcy warmly. "I considah him an uttah boundah—"

"We know that, ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here," said Blake desperately, ignoring his aristocratic chum's frigid look, "as Talbot says, Linton isn't likely to be willing to let Tom Merry off detention on Saturday. In fact, it's pretty clear that he's chosen Saturday deliberately to keep him from playing—"

"The rotter!"

"But, anyway, there's no harm in trying," went on Blake. "I suggest that a deputation goes to Linton to try and persuade him to be decent!"

"Some hopes!" grunted Kangaroo.

"I know; but there's no harm in trying," repeated Jack Blake desperately.

"That's so," nodded Talbot. But his face was very gloomy.

"I considah—"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Look heah—"

"The thing is to decide who is to go to Linton in the deputation!" exclaimed Blake.

"I am willing to head the deputation, deah boys! As a fellow of gweat tact and judgment—"

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove! I considah—"

But Arthur Augustus could find no listeners as the important selection began. It was finally decided that Blake, Levison, and Talbot should beard Mr. Linton in his den.

They strode from the Common-room, with an excited crowd surging at their heels, intending to accompany them as far as the end of the passage in which Mr. Linton's study was situated.

Outside the Common-room they met three figures who had been approaching, but who stopped dead at sight of the excited crowd pouring out through the doorway.

It was Tom Merry, accompanied by Manners and Lowther. The captain of the Shell gave an exclamation.

"What on earth—"

Blake halted in front of the captain of the junior eleven.

"We're going to see Linton!" he explained grimly.

Tom Merry jumped.

"Linton?" he ejaculated.

"Rather!" yelled Dick Julian of the Fourth. "We're going to put it to him straight!"

"We're a deputation, old hoss," explained Talbot quietly.

"Blake and Levison and I are going to ask Linton to let you play in the Greyfriars match—"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry stared at the excited juniors. A smile appeared at the corners of his lips—a bitter smile. He shook his head.

"That won't do any good," he said in a quiet voice.

"Linton is down on me—this is his revenge!"

"But—"

"I'm out of the Greyfriars match, right enough," said

Tom, with bitter impatience. "You chaps can make up your minds to that!"

"We jolly well won't make up our minds to it!" roared Blake. "We're off to see Linton now. Why, it'll make all the difference, very likely, between our licking Greyfriars or them licking us!"

"I'll agree with you there!" nodded Manners, with a dark frown. "But—"

"Well, come on, you chaps!" growled Blake impatiently. "It's no good jawing about it—let's get it done!"

And the leader of the Fourth strode off, with grim determination in his face. Talbot and Levison quickly followed, and the rest surged excitedly after them. Tom Merry & Co. were left standing alone by the door of the Common-room.

Tom Merry's face was dark and troubled.

"It's no good!" he muttered, with a hopeless gesture.

"No earthly good! Linton won't listen to 'em!"

"Anyway," put in Manners quietly, "they're right to leave no stone unturned. Never say die! It's possible you'll play in the Greyfriars match even now."

Tom Merry shook his head miserably.

In the opinion of the captain of the Shell, there was no way out of it.

With deliberate purpose, Mr. Linton had condemned him to spending the afternoon of the great match in the Form-room. To appeal to the Head would be useless; and Mr. Linton himself would never alter his decision—that was certain.

Tom Merry felt utterly convinced that, on the coming Saturday, St. Jim's would have to take the field against Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars without their captain!

CHAPTER 6. No Go!

"COME in!"

Mr. Linton glanced up irritably from the desk at which he was seated as a tap sounded on his study door.

His frown deepened when the door opened to reveal the faces of three juniors—Blake and Levison of the Fourth and Reginald Talbot of the Shell.

"Well?" barked Mr. Linton.

The three juniors entered the study, closing the door behind them.

"We have come to ask you if you could see your way to allowing Tom Merry to play in the Greyfriars match on Saturday afternoon, sir," said Talbot of the Shell quietly, getting straight to the point. "We are a deputation representing the whole junior school."

Mr. Linton's eyes glinted. He turned his chair to face them.

"I see!" he said acidly.

"It's the most important match of the season, sir," begged Talbot. "Tom Merry is the captain of the junior eleven, as you know—"

"I am well aware of the fact," nodded Mr. Linton.

"We thought, sir, that in the circumstances, you might reconsider your decision, for the sake of St. Jim's," went on Talbot. "For the sake of the school, sir," he repeated slowly, his eyes fixed on the Form master's face.

For a moment Mr. Linton looked a trifle out of countenance. Then his face darkened.

"For the sake of the school," he retorted icily, "I intend to enforce order and check insolence and unruliness in the Shell with a firm hand."

"Yes, sir; but—in this case—"

"I utterly refuse to release Tom Merry from detention on Saturday afternoon!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"But, sir—the match!" cried Blake.

"The match fails to interest me!" answered the master of the Shell coldly.

"But—"

"That is enough! I decline to discuss the matter further. You may go!"

There was no denying that direct command. Besides, the three juniors all realised that it was useless to continue the interview.

With hopeless faces, Talbot, Blake, and Levison left the study, closing the door behind them. Mr. Linton heard their footsteps retreating along the passage.

His eyes glinted. A grim smile appeared for a moment at the corners of his lips.

Whether or not he would have cared to admit it even to himself, there was no doubt that Mr. Linton was enjoying a good deal of grim satisfaction over his anticipated triumph over the captain of the Shell!

"It's rotten!"

Monty Lowther made that remark, with hopeless gloom.

The Terrible Three were in their study, together with Talbot, Blake, and Levison.

The latter had come to tell Tom Merry & Co. the result of the interview with Mr. Linton. None of the three had been surprised to hear that the deputation had been a miserable failure.

There was a bitter look on the usually cheery face of Tom Merry.

"I knew it wouldn't be any good, of course," he said, in a quick voice.

There was a long silence in the study. The faces of all six juniors were dejected and miserable.

A sudden tap on the door caused them to turn their heads.

"Come in!" called Manners.

The gleaming eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy appeared in the doorway. The swell of St. Jim's sailed into the study with a very resolute look on his face.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"Sit down!"

"I cannot wait, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus smiled at

Tom in what was meant to be a very encouraging manner.

"Cheeah up! I fancy it will be all wight, aftah all!"

"What!" yelled Tom. "What do you mean?"

"I fancy it will be all wight, aftah all, deah boy!" nodded Arthur Augustus. "You see, I have decided that I shall go and interview Linton myself. As a fellow of well-known tact and judgment—"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry's face fell. Though the swell of St. Jim's had great faith in his own tact and judgment, Tom Merry had not—neither had anyone else at St. Jim's!

"Don't be an ass, Gussy!" growled Blake irritably.

"What can you do?"

"With my usual tact and judgment, Blake—"

"Cheese it!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake! I considah—"

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"I shouldn't try your—ahem!—tact and judgment on

Linton, if I were you, Gussy, old man," he said quietly.

"You'll only put your foot in it!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!" The swell of St. Jim's sniffed.

"You fellows do not seem to wealise what tact and judgment of a weally supewior ordah can do in a mattah

like this. I intend to put things vewy cleahly to Linton. I shall make him see that he cannot behave in this mannah!

I shall argue with him till I have—ah!—bent him to my will, deah boys and twisted him wound my little fingah. I

feel suah that when I have interviewed him he will wecon-

sidah his dwastice decision entiahly."

Arthur Augustus beamed at Tom Merry, and turned

again to the door.

"So long, Tom Mewwy, deah boy. And cheeah up! It

will be all wight when I have spoken tactfullay to Linton—"

"Come back, you dummy!" roared Talbot.

But it was too late. Already Arthur Augustus had sailed

from the room, and the door closed. Talbot started to his

feet, but sat down again with a shrug of his shoulders.

"I suppose the ass can't make matters worse, anyway,"

he growled.

Once again a gloomy silence descended upon the fellows

in Study No. 10.



"May I—may I call you Hephzabah?" asked Mr. Linton, with an ardent glance at his companion. "Heppy for short!" sighed Miss Finch cooly. "Take my arm, Heppy!" suggested the master of the Shell gently. "Then I shall be truly heppy—I mean, happy!" (See Chapter 4.)

Whatever the swell of St. Jim's himself might think, no one else had the slightest faith in the tact and judgment of Arthur Augustus!

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Uses Tact and Judgment!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY halted outside the door of Mr. Linton's study, and tapped upon it.

There was a growling invitation to enter from within, and Arthur Augustus turned the handle and marched in.

Mr. Linton was standing by one of the bookcases, taking down a volume. His eyebrows lifted with surprise to see a Fourth-Former entering his sanctum.

"What do you want, D'Arcy?" he snapped irritably.

Arthur Augustus shut the door and beamed upon the master of the Shell in a kindly, encouraging way.

"Good-evenin', sir! I have called to discuss a wathah important mattah."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Linton, staring at him.

"I feel suah, sir, that you have the good of St. Jim's at heart," went on Arthur Augustus. "I twust I am wight in my judgment, sir?"

"Will you kindly state your business, D'Arcy?" snapped Mr. Linton angrily.

"Certainly, sir! It is about the mattah of Tom Mewwy—"

A strangled sound escaped Mr. Linton. He glared at the swell of St. Jim's with eyes like gimlets.

"I undahstand, sir, that you have ordahed Tom Mewwy to wemain in detention on Saturday aftahnoon," continued Arthur Augustus gravely. "As eweryone knows, that is the

aftahnoon of the Gweyfwiahs match. Personally, I should hesitate to considah, as many fellows do, that that is the

weason why you are so keen on keepin' Tom Mewwy in detention. I know that you have been wathah down on

Tom Mewwy lately—"

"What!"

"In fact, that you have got your knife into him

pwopahly," went on the swell of St. Jim's, shaking his

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aristocratic head. "I know that you are generally considered to be wathah sour-tempahed—"

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Mr. Linton faintly.

"And at times wathah spiteful—"

Mr. Linton goggled at him.

"But I feel suah that on this occasion you will see your way to doin' the decent thing for once—"

"D'Arcy!" said Mr. Linton, between his teeth.

"Twy to be a sportsman, sir!" urged Arthur Augustus.

"I feel suah you will feel happiah aftahwards if you do not give way to your bad tempah, and behave like a gentleman, instead! Wemembah the good of the school, sir, and put aside your mean and petty motives. Show St. Jim's that you can be decent sometimes, aftah all—"

"How—how—how dare you?" stuttered Mr. Linton.

"How dare you, D'Arcy! I—I—"

"Pway do not get watty, sir," advised Arthur Augustus earnestly. "Considah my arguments carefully, in a cool spiwit, and I feel suah that you will wealise that I am wight and you are w'ong. Think what a pleasant surpise it would be for the fellows if you did the decent thing for once—"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Linton faintly.

"Considah what it means to St. Jim's for Tom Mewwy to play on Saturday!" urged Arthur Augustus.

He adjusted his eyeglass, and surveyed Mr. Linton in a kindly way.

The master of the Shell seemed to be in a trance, staring at the swell of St. Jim's as though stupefied. He tried to speak, but words would not come.

He choked.

Arthur Augustus took this silence for a good sign. In the opinion of the swell of St. Jim's, he had put the matter with very great tact and excellent judgment; now, it appeared to him, Mr. Linton was thinking the matter over, evidently much impressed by the words of wisdom that had fallen from his visitor's lips.

"That's it, sir!" beamed Arthur Augustus. "Think it ovah! Twy to forget any feelin' of spite—"

Mr. Linton found his voice at last.

"Boy! How dare you?"

His voice was shaking with anger, his eyes seemed to be popping from their very sockets, his face was a rich shade of purple.

"How dare you!" roared Mr. Linton, in a voice that caused the very window pane to shake. "Boy, how dare you!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! I—I beg your pardon!"

"You insolent young rascal!" panted Mr. Linton.

"W-w-what, sir?"

"You—you—you—"

Words failed Mr. Linton. He snatched open a cupboard and took out a long cane. Arthur Augustus stared at it in astonishment.

"B-bai Jove! You appeah to be waxy, sir!"

"Waxy?" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Oh deah! Yaas! I cannot undahstand why you should be waxy, sir! All I have said I have said largely for your own good, sir—to encouwege you to be decent—"

"Silence!" thundered the master of the Shell, almost dancing with rage. "Bend over that chair!"

"B-bend ovah!"

"At once, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Linton between his teeth.

"B-bai Jove! I am afwaid you are allowin' your bad tempah to get the bettah of you, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway welect—"

But Mr. Linton did not reflect. He seized the swell of St. Jim's by the collar and dragged him across the nearest chair, holding him there with one hand. Arthur Augustus gasped and struggled.

"Gweat Scott! Weally, sir! You are wuinin' my collah—"

Whack!

"Oh! Bai Jove—"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yawooooooooop!"

A fiendish yell broke from the swell of St. Jim's as the cane rose and fell upon his elegant trousers.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow! Oh! Gwooooooooough!"

Arthur Augustus yelled and howled, but still the cane lashed mercilessly across the seat of his immaculate trousers. Not till his arm was aching did the master of the Shell at last throw the cane aside and release the astonished and gasping swell of St. Jim's.

"There!" panted Mr. Linton breathlessly. He pointed to the door. "Go!"

"Ow! Bai Jove! Gwooooooooough!"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"Vewy well, sir! Ow! But I considah—"

"Go!" hissed Mr. Linton for the third time.

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And this time Arthur Augustus went. He limped to the door, and out into the passage, gasping. Mr. Linton closed the door with a bang.

"Oh deah!"

At the end of the passage, a grinning group of juniors greeted him. They had evidently heard of his visit to Mr. Linton's study, and they shrieked at the sight of the dishevelled figure of the swell of St. Jim's.

"What's up, Gussy?" grinned Kerruish of the Fourth. "Didn't the tact and judgment work to-day?"

"Bai Jove! No, deah boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I uttably fail to undahstand why, but Linton got quite waxy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "He licked me!"

"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of St. Jim's eyed the chortling group very frigidly.

"Weally, deah boys, I see nothin' to cackle at! I considah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For a moment the gloom that had descended upon all the juniors over the question of Tom Merry's detention was forgotten. They roared.

Arthur Augustus glared at them. For a moment it looked as though he contemplated making a rush at the grinning crowd, to relieve his feelings by administering a few "feahful thwashin's!" But fortunately for himself, he thought better of it, and limped away in the direction of the Fourth Form passage, followed by yells of merriment.

It was most astonishing to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that his wonderful tact and judgment had failed to make Mr. Linton see the error of his ways. But there was no doubt that he had failed utterly.

Even the swell of St. Jim's had to admit that.

When the juniors went to bed that night, it was with gloomy faces. The sole topic in both the Shell and the Fourth Form dormitories was the grim prospect of the St. Jim's team being forced to play against Greyfriars without Tom Merry in the eleven.

And that was a very depressing prospect indeed for St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 8.

In Duranee Vile!

IF Tom Merry, or any of the rest of the team and its supporters, had dared to hope that Mr. Linton might relent during the three days that had still to elapse before the match, they were doomed to disappointment.

But very few had dared to hope that.

During Thursday and Friday, Mr. Linton preserved an air of icy austerity in his dealings with his Form, and with Tom Merry in particular. It was quite clear that he had not the slightest intention of unbending.

Tom Merry would not take part in the Greyfriars match—Mr. Linton was determined upon that!

And gloom reigned in the Shell and Fourth in consequence.

Tom Merry himself felt angry and bitter. He was the last fellow in the world to sulk, and he was never heard to say a word about the affair outside his own study, except to ask Digby to take his place in the match. But his face was set in dark lines; and in the Form-room, with Mr. Linton, there was an underlying bitterness in his voice that escaped no one, least of all Mr. Linton himself.

Mr. Linton affected an icy indifference outwardly. But within, the master of the Shell was feeling a grim, triumphant satisfaction over the bitter pill he was forcing Tom Merry to swallow.

An indignation meeting held in the junior Common-room on the Friday led to nothing.

It was useless to send another deputation to the master of the Shell, and there seemed no other means of rescuing Tom from Mr. Linton's clutches.

The only way in which Tom could take part in the Greyfriars match, apparently, was for him to break detention. There were one or two fellows who urged him to do so. But the sensible chaps knew as well as Tom himself that it would be absolute folly for him to take that drastic step. Mr. Linton would get him expelled, without a doubt, were he deliberately to defy him.

Saturday morning came, crisp and clear—an ideal day for footer.

During the first break, Figgins & Co. of the New House were strolling gloomily in the quad—the New House fellows were naturally as cut up over the affair as the School House—when they saw a lonely figure striding slowly up and down under the old elms.

It was Tom Merry.

The captain of the junior eleven glanced round as he heard the New House trio approaching. There was a dark shadow in his eyes. Figgins & Co. halted in front of him.

(Continued on page 12.)

FOOTER STORIES!—Yes! Our special representative, Mr. "Nosey" L. Parker, can tell a few. You want to listen to him talk after he has paid a surprise visit to a famous football club. Gee! He knows how to get hold of the "goods." Listen to what he has to say about the famous Huddersfield F.C.



Mr. Parker POPS IN

TO SEE
HUDDERSFIELD!

Be Prepared To Weep—

I HAVE discovered the town which contains the greatest number of contortionists. It is Huddersfield. As I walked through the streets I looked at the faces of the people: every face was full of possibilities, if you know what I mean.

There was a fellow who looked at me as if he was going to eat me. Then he had another look, seemed to see the funny side of that idea, and a broad smile came across his face. I know why the people of Huddersfield can switch their faces round from grave to gay in a twinkling; their football team has taught them to be ready either with tears or with smiles. One day they are up in the heavens, and the next down in the depths.

So if you go to Huddersfield, go prepared. Take a couple of handkerchiefs in case you have to weep with those that weep. And also take a bit of bunting which you can be ready to hang out of your pocket in case there is something connected with the club over which the town is rejoicing.

Wanted—a Football Club—

I have been to Huddersfield more than once, and that is why I know the football club in all its varying moods. I went there once some time ago when there was a terrible to-do. Huddersfield doesn't want Soccer football, the officials of the club said. They want something else, and so we will move lock, stock, barrel and bootlaces to Leeds.

Now the people of Huddersfield are just like other ordinary people—you and me for instance—in this respect. That the moment they think they are going to lose a thing they want it very badly. When there was a risk of losing the football club the good folk cried their eyes out; said please don't go, and we will show you how much you are appreciated. So tears being the things which few can withstand, the football team was kept at Huddersfield. And it stayed there to some purpose: won the championship of the First Division three times in succession—a feat which no other club has ever done either before or since. And of course, they won the Cup as well, and made pots of money. What a life—what a game.

Rough Luck—

I sneaked into the Huddersfield Town ground at Leeds Road the other morning when all was quiet. Indeed, it was so quiet, and there was so obviously nothing doing, that a big Alsatian dog sitting on a

bit of grass at a corner of the field didn't wake up as I went in.

I had my little umbrella—it's in the picture at the top of this page—in my hand, and as I walked round towards the office a man came out. There were tears in his eyes—crying morning at Huddersfield, evidently—and he startled me by holding out a hand. "Good-bye, old chap. You going, too. I'm so sorry." He wiped away a tear with an already wet handkerchief.

Naturally, my first idea was that the fellow was just a bit potty. Why should he come up and say good-bye to me when I had only just arrived? But I soon found out. Anybody they see at the Huddersfield ground with a bag or umbrella makes them conclude that another player—another of that fine old brigade—is leaving. George Brown has gone, Sam Dent has packed up and departed, and others may have gone, too, by the time these tears of mine are dry.

Three Medals—

'Twas over thus, however. You can build up a football team, but you can't keep that team for ever. Never mind, though, let's look round this ground for somebody who is smiling. Ah, here is Mr. Clem Stephenson. He has to be called "Mr. Clem" now because he is the manager. But to me he will always be just plain Clem. As he had three medals on his watch-chain I thought I had got back to Burnden Park where Bolton Wanderers play, but then I remembered that Clem was a three-times cup-winning man before any of the Wanderers had that distinction.

The trouble with the new manager is this: he always wants to play a game which they call billiards. I am not very good at it, but the last time I played Clem I did score one. He gave me a miss in baulk, and on his next visit to the table ran out with a hundred break unfinished.

This fellow, one of the clearest thinking inside-lefts who ever kicked a football, knows that he has a big job on at Huddersfield, but he is an optimist. None of the tears stuff for him. And I think he will make good, even though he won't find it easy to build a team the like of which the town boasted a few years back.

Inner History—

Alec Jackson is still there, interested in a motor hire company, and interested in a leather company. As a matter of fact, that was Alec's dog I nearly roused as I sneaked into the ground. It is a pretty good runner, and chases Alec round as he

does his training, but its four legs have to work over time to keep up with Alec when he uses his two legs at full stretch.

Between Alec and Billy Smith, who plays on the other wing, there is a perfect understanding. You put the ball across to me, and I'll score. Then next time I'll put the ball across to you. The new chums—Dixon from Halifax, Davies from Stoke, and Campbell from Blackburn—wonder how it is done. Here is the real reason why Huddersfield secured Campbell: because he prevented them from winning the Cup in 1928. Campbell played a wonder game for Blackburn Rovers that day, and Huddersfield determined that never again would he be allowed to stand between them and success.

"Laddie" Sees Me Out—

It's a team of personalities they still possess at Leeds Road, however. Tom Wilson is described as the fellow who never plays a bad game. That's real praise if you like. Tom is great on the ivories, but not the same ivories as the other players. Tom's fancy is for the piano rather than the billiards, "but we don't let him practise near the ground," Jackson told me, "because my dog has no ear for music." The way Alec said that made me think he might mean that Wilson had no ear for music, but as Tom was just at hand I didn't mention this suspicion.

There is no need for anybody to have the "wind-up" very badly, so long as big Tom is there. I said as much to goalkeeper Turner, and he immediately thought I was pulling his leg. You see, a strange thing happened to him the other day, when it was very windy indeed. He took a goal-kick against the wind, sent the ball high into the air, and it came straight back to him without any other player touching it. So Turner made a great save—from his own goal-kick. He told me that he had never known that sort of thing happen before in all his goalkeeping, and he added that he scarcely believed it could happen to a fellow who was teetotal.

Roy Goodall is the only footballer I know who has driven a traction engine, but he actually did that some years ago when nobody would have him as a footballer. He has played for England since then of course. And they have a Chaplin, too, at Huddersfield—Christian name Jack, who had a short time as manager after Herbert Chapman left. Jack is now the trainer, and when he wants the players to go he sets Jackson's dog at their heels.

I think he ought to keep that dog at the heels of the players. But the dog seemed to take a sudden fancy for my trousers when I asked, quite innocently, if the team trained on Yorkshire pudding. I said my good-bye to Huddersfield in a hurry, and "Laddie" alone was at the gate to bid me farewell.

"Nosey."

"Nosey" knows it's no use stopping—so he nips out, helped by "Laddie" the dog.



"DETAINED!"

(Continued from page 10.)

"Look here, Tommy," said Figgins desperately, "can't something be done? If you don't play it means an almost certain licking to-day!"

A grim smile appeared on Tom Merry's face.

"I don't know about that; but if so, we'll have to take a licking, that's all."

"Isn't there any way out of it?" exclaimed Kerr eagerly. The Scottish junior was still limping badly from his strained ankle.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"None!"

"But—"

"I tell you there's no way out of it!" said Tom, almost roughly. "Linton's determined to keep me out of the match. When you chaps kick-off this afternoon, I shall be in the Form-room—Linton'll see to that. He's told me already that he means to look in every quarter of an hour to make sure I'm there. That shows you how determined he is!"

"And suppose you weren't there when he looked in?" suggested Paddy Wynn, the portly goalkeeper of the St. Jim's team doubtfully.

Tom Merry smiled bitterly.

"Expulsion!"

Figgins whistled.

"As bad as that?"

Tom nodded.

The sound of a clanging bell turned the four towards the School House. Figgins & Co. were looking very miserable as they hurried off towards Mr. Lathom's Form-room. At the door of the Shell Form-room, as Tom Merry approached, he was confronted by the gowned figure of Mr. Linton.

"Merry!"

"Sir?" Tom's voice was very quiet. He met the master's eyes with a steady gleam.

"At two o'clock I shall be here to set you your task for the afternoon," said Mr. Linton icily. "Bring an exercise-book and your arithmetic."

The master of the Shell rustled into the Form-room without another glance at his victim.

Curious glances were turned in Tom's direction as he took his seat.

From his face few would have guessed that anything was wrong. But the Shell knew that underneath his iron self-control Tom Merry's heart was consumed with a flaming resentment at the injustice of his sentence.

Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

It was five minutes to two.

As yet, the Greyfriars team had not arrived. They were later than had been expected, but since the match did not start till half-past two there was still no cause for anxiety.

Talbot, Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Figgins, of the New House, had gone off to the station to meet the visitors, with a motor-coach to bring them to St. Jim's.

"About time they turned up," said Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

The Terrible Three were in their study, and their faces were gloomy. Tom turned to the bookcase, took down a red arithmetic book and tucked it, together with an exercise book, under his arm.

"Time I got along," he said, in rather a strained voice.

Manners and Lowther did not speak. There was really nothing to say. They watched their chum gloomily as he turned to the door.

"Good luck, Monty, old hoss! Play up!" said Tom Merry, with a faint smile, as he opened the door. "See you after the match!"

He closed the door of the study, and went off along the passage towards the stairs.

Tom Merry was feeling more depressed than he had felt for a very long while. The crisp autumn sunlight flooding the old quad and the playing-fields beyond called to him, but he had to deny the call. For him, the greyiness of the Form-room and the weariness of detention, while the St. Jim's team battled with Greyfriars on the footer field! It was with heavy steps and a burning resentment at his heart that he went down the stairs and along towards the Shell Form-room.

It was still a couple of minute to two, and Mr. Linton had not yet arrived. Tom moved off to the doorway at the top of the School House steps and stared out at the sunlight.

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A sudden noise from the big gates across the quad caused him to turn and look.

A motor-coach had come gliding through the gateway, and the St. Jim's juniors who had been waiting there were waving their caps in welcome.

"Greyfriars!" breathed Tom Merry. "They've arrived." He could see the Greyfriars fellows climbing cheerfully from the coach—recognised, even at that distance, Bob Cherry's sturdy figure and the cheery face of Harry Wharton, the captain of the visiting team, and the dusky countenance of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh—otherwise Inky—the Greyfriars junior who hailed from India's sunny clime.

For a moment a wild impulse came to him to fling his books aside and go out into the sunshine, to defy Linton and lead his team against the Greyfriars fellows, and take the consequences.

"Merry!"

A curt voice from behind him cut the silence of the shadowed hall. Tom gave an exclamation and turned.

Mr. Linton was standing by the door of the Shell Form-room, his eyes fixed upon the captain of the Shell with a hard glint.

"It is two o'clock," said Mr. Linton harshly. "I will set your task for the afternoon."

The wild impulse to rebel faded from Tom's mind. It had been nothing but an impossible dream—he realised that. Sick at heart, he followed Mr. Linton into the Form-room without a word and took his seat.

Mr. Linton set him his work and turned to the door. In the open doorway he turned.

"Remember, I shall visit the Form-room every quarter of an hour."

Tom did not reply. The door closed.

Through the open window he could hear the voices of the Greyfriars team, together with one or two supporters who had accompanied them, as they passed fairly near on their way to the changing-rooms. He had picked up his pen; but he laid it down again and buried his head in his hands. The voices from the sunlit quad died away.

From the lonely figure in the Form-room there broke a low groan of misery.

CHAPTER 9.

Peter Todd's Little Wheeze!

"MY hat! It's rotten!"

It was Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, who spoke.

The Greyfriars team and their supporters were looking glum.

The news that Tom Merry would not take part in the match was the cause of their dejection. True sportsmen as they were, Harry Wharton & Co. were thoroughly disappointed to have learnt that the captain of the rival team could not take the field, even though they realised what a tremendous difference to the game Tom's non-appearance must make. But they would far sooner have taken the risk of being beaten than have won a victory over a weakened team.

The Greyfriars men were still in their changing-room, though most of them had finished changing into footer kit. They were discussing the matter of Tom Merry. Manners, Herries, Bernard Glyn, and Kit Wildrake and one or two other St. Jim's fellows not taking part in the match were with them.

"Yes, it's rotten," nodded Manners gloomily. "But it can't be helped. There's no getting round Linton, you know."

"I suppose not," said Harry Wharton, with clouded brow. "But it does seem a bit thick to keep Tom Merry in detention on the day of an important match. It's the limit!"

"The limitfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh in his weird and wonderful English. "My esteemed and honourable chums of St. Jim's have my sympathetic regrets at the miserable loss of their esteemed and captainful skipper."

"Can't something be done?" demanded Johnny Bull, of Greyfriars.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," said Manners.

There was a sudden exclamation from Peter Todd.

Peter Todd was a cousin of Alonzo Todd, the famous Duffer of Greyfriars. Peter was Alonzo's double, but in appearances only. Though his face was of the same simple cast as his cousin's, Peter Todd was a very shrewd individual indeed.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "I've got an idea!"

"Get it off your chest, then, old hoss!" suggested Bob Cherry. "About Tom Merry, you mean?"

"Yes," nodded Peter Todd. "Listen! Suppose this old bird Linton got a telephone call that was so important that he hurried off somewhere for the afternoon, I suppose Tom Merry would be able to break detention safely enough, after all?"

"Yes," agreed Manners. "That's so. The only trouble

is that at present Linton is visiting the Form-room every quarter of an hour to make sure Tom's still there. If Linton were called out for the afternoon, he couldn't know whether Tom was there or not, and someone else could do his impot for him—"

"That's all right, then!" grinned Peter Todd.

Manners stared at him.

"All right? How? It's not likely Linton'll get a phone call that'll take him clear of St. Jim's for the afternoon!"

There was an excited gasp from Kit Wildrake.

"Great pip! Don't you see what he means?" he burst out breathlessly, with gleaming eyes. He turned to Peter Todd. "You mean, a bogus telephone call could be put through—"

"That's the scheme," nodded Peter Todd coolly. "Couldn't it be done?"

There was a yell of laughter from Bob Cherry. He clapped Peter Todd on the back so heartily that Peter almost collapsed.

"Good man!" exclaimed Bob enthusiastically. "It's a giddy brain-wave!"

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh remarked with a flashing smile on his dusky countenance that the brain-wavefulness was terrific.

"It might be done!" breathed Manners. "Great Scott! If only it could—"

There was a step in the doorway of the big changing-room. Talbot, who was captaining the St. Jim's team in the absence of Tom Merry, appeared, together with Blake and Monty Lowther and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You chaps ready?" he inquired.

"Yes," nodded Harry Wharton. "But half a minute. Toddy here has got an idea—about Tom Merry!"

Peter Todd explained his little scheme again. Talbot gave an exclamation. His face had lighted up, as had the faces of Monty Lowther, Blake, and Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's, surveying Peter Todd through his gleaming eyeglass with great admiration. "What a wippin' idea!"

"Can it be done?" inquired Tom Brown eagerly.

"Yes!" yelled Monty Lowther. He gripped Talbot's arm excitedly. "And I know the message to send! You remember how Tom told us all about old Linton's row with Miss Finch—"

"Yes!"

"Ethel and Doris and Peggy have just turned up to watch the match. We'll get one of them to ring up Linton, pretend to be Miss Finch, and lure him away from St. Jim's. He'll go like a shot if he thinks he's got a chance of making things up with the old lady!"

"Bai Jove! Wathah, deah boy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus excitedly. "We'll have Tom Mewwy playin' in the match, ahtah all!"

"It's pretty risky," muttered Manners. "But it'll be worth it. My hat, yes!"

"Good egg!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

Led by Monty Lowther, Manners, and Talbot, the St. Jim's juniors hurried from the changing-room.

Standing by the School House steps in conversation with Levison and Clive of the Fourth and Figgins and Fatty Wynn of the New House—all four of whom were in footer kit—were Ethel & Co. of Spalding Hall.

The three girls were looking very pretty and charming.

Ethel Cleveland, Gussy's popular cousin, and Doris Levison, sister of Levison of the Fourth, were wearing very disappointed expressions. The girls had just learnt of Tom Merry's plight. But the pretty face of Lady Peggy Brooke, their chum, was alight with indignation.

"I think it's a rotten shame!" declared Lady Peggy hotly. "Old Linton ought to be bumped!"

"It's a good idea," agreed Fatty Wynn gloomily. "But I don't think we can very well do it, all the same."

There were faint grins from the others. Then they turned their heads, as Monty Lowther and Manners hurried up with Talbot and Arthur Augustus, Blake, and the others.

Monty Lowther turned to Blake.

"Ask Peggy to do it," he muttered. "She'll do it, I expect—particularly if you ask her."

Lady Peggy was the particular chum of Jack Blake and of Fatty Wynn of the New House—a fact which sometimes caused trouble between the pair! But at the moment all such rivalries were forgotten.

And as Lady Peggy listened to Blake's quick explanation of what was required of her her eyes sparkled very brightly.

"Will you do it?" asked Blake. "Pretend to be Miss Finch, you know—"

Lady Peggy drew a deep breath.

"My hat, yes! Of course I'll do it!"

Ethel and Doris looked a little alarmed. But the faces of the juniors were bright and eager. Talbot glanced at his watch.

"A quarter-past two," he muttered. "Just about time! Manners, old boss, will you cycle into Rylcombe with Peggy to make the call? There's a phone-box at the station—"

"Come on!" cried Peggy, seizing Manners by the arm.

The girls had come over from Spalding Hall on their cycles; and two minutes later Lady Peggy and Harry Manners were pedalling swiftly out of the gates of St. Jim's, followed by the eager eyes of most of the St. Jim's team, and Harry Wharton & Co. as well.

It was beginning to look as though Tom Merry might take part in the big match, after all.

CHAPTER 10.

The Plot that Failed!

TING, ting, ting!

The telephone-bell in Mr. Linton's study tinkled sharply at the very moment that the master of the Shell opened the door and entered the room, after a visit to his Form-room, where Tom Merry had made a half-hearted start on his detention task.

"Hallo!"

Mr. Linton held the receiver to his ear. Then he jumped.

"Leslie!" came a tender feminine voice over the wire.

There was only one lady who would address him as Leslie, so far as he was aware.

"Hephzebah!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"I want to see you!" cooed the voice.

"My—my dear Hephzebah!"

"There is no reason for a quarrel between us, is there, Leslie?" sighed the voice.

"None at all!" cried Mr. Linton, with conviction. "It was all my fault, but if you forgive me—"

"There is nothing to forgive!"

"It is very charming of you to say so!" cried Mr. Linton, beaming into the telephone. "I will come to Spalding Hall at once—"

"That's the idea!"

"I—I beg your pardon?"

"I mean," corrected the tender voice hastily, "that is what I wish. I am speaking from a call-office at present. But come round to the school at once, and if I am out you will wait for me, Leslie."

"I will wait for ever!" declared Mr. Linton gallantly.

At the other end of the wire Lady Peggy choked slightly. Knowing as she did that Miss Finch was out for the whole afternoon, Mr. Linton would certainly have to wait a considerable time before he saw his Hephzebah, even though he would not have to wait for ever.

(Continued on next page.)



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"Good-bye, Leslie! Until we meet!"

"Hephzebah!"

But there was no answer. Lady Peggy had rung off.

Mr. Linton replaced the receiver gaily. He glanced at his watch. It was not quite half-past two. He took his best silk hat from the cupboard, snatched up gloves and stick, and hurried from the room.

He had quite forgotten Tom Merry labouring in the Shell Form-room as he emerged into the sunlit quad and strode rapidly towards the gates. He did not notice the queer looks on the faces of a group of juniors standing by the steps, most of them in footer kit.

All his thoughts were concentrated upon Miss Finch. His romance was not to be shattered, after all! She had relented; she wanted him! She was, no doubt, pining. In the words of the poet, everything in the garden was lovely.

So thought Mr. Linton, as he hurried out through the big gateway on his way to Spalding Hall.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

In the Shell Form-room the only sound was the scratching of Tom Merry's pen as it travelled over the paper.

"What on earth—"

Tom glanced up suddenly in astonishment.

The door of the Form-room had been flung open. Glancing round, expecting to see the grim face of Mr. Linton looking in at him, Tom jumped to find that the doorway was crowded with grinning faces.

"What the dickens—"

Monty Lowther and Talbot, Blake & Co., and Levison and Figgins and Fatty Wynn were crowding into the Form-room. Tom Merry stared at them in utter bewilderment.

Monty Lowther seized his arm.

"Come on!"

"Eh?" gasped Tom.

"Come on!" yelled Monty Lowther. "It's all right! You can play in the match, after all. Linton's gone out! He won't be back for some time! Buck up!"

Tom Merry stared dazedly at his chum.

"What?"

Rapidly Monty Lowther explained. But before he had finished Tom was already on his feet. His face was shining. Then suddenly it fell again.

"But when Linton does get back he'll want to see my work."

"That's all right!" chuckled Glyn. "I'm going to do it for you. Your writing's pretty much like mine—"

"My hat!" Tom Merry gripped Glyn's hand in silent thanks, and the next moment he was hurrying from the Form-room.

"The Greyfriars chaps are waiting on Little Side," grinned Talbot. "If you look slipper changing, the match'll only be a minute late!"

In a body, with Tom Merry in their midst, the footballers hurried down the steps into the quad and turned in the direction of the changing-rooms.

A lounging, elegant figure at the foot of the steps stared in astonishment at sight of the captain of the Shell.

It was Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Gad!" ejaculated Cardew. "Do my aged eyes deceive me, or is it really Thomas that I see?"

"It is!" snapped Herries.

"Phew!" Cardew whistled. Then he shrugged. "Well, I suppose it's his own look out. But I fancy he'll be gettin' expelled for this. What'll dear old Linton say?"

"Linton won't know!" explained Kerruish jubilantly. "He's been got out of the way!"

He was hurrying after the others. But Cardew detained him with a hand on his arm.

"Tell me more, dear man!" drawled Cardew. "This is interestin'!"

Kerruish, chuckling, explained everything. Cardew grinned.

"Tut, tut! Naughty, naughty Thomas, to deceive his dear master so! I always thought Thomas was such a dear, good little boy! Still, I congratulate him for his nerve. And havin' the good of the school so much at heart, I'm glad. His presence in the team is sure to be invaluable." Kerruish grunted.

"If you'd got the good of the school at heart, you'd be playin' yourself, you rotten slacker!"

Cardew chuckled lazily.

"Hard words!" he murmured. "But I can assure you I have the good of the school at heart. Not quite to the extent of actually playin' footer on a warm afternoon against an energetic crowd like Greyfriars, perhaps; but all the same, my heart is with the team—"

"Oh, rats!" growled Kerruish, and hurried away, leaving Cardew yawning in the sunlight.

"I say!"

A sudden voice caused Cardew to turn his head lazily. Then he stared.

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An extraordinarily fat figure wearing a Greyfriars cap had come rolling up to him, blinking at him through a pair of spectacles that were perched on his fat little nose. The fat Greyfriars junior halted in front of Cardew, and Cardew grinned.

"Afternoon, Bunter!" he said. "Fatter than ever, eh?"

"Oh, really, you know," exclaimed the Greyfriars junior in an injured tone. "I'm not fat—only well-built. Not



"I know you are genevally considahed to be wathah sour-temphah head. "Wha-a-at!!" gasped the master of the Shell. "And at Linton

like some of these skinny chaps, Wharton and Bob Cherry, f'instance."

"But I say, I'm looking for Trimble," he explained. "Can you tell me where I can find him?"

Cardew chuckled.

He knew that Bunter of Greyfriars and Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's were friends. They were so very similar in both appearance and character that this was perhaps inevitable, once they had first met. It occurred to Cardew that the only reason William George Bunter had come over to St. Jim's with the team that day, was in the hope that his friend, Baggy Trimble, would stand him a feed. For Billy Bunter was as uninterested in football as was Baggy himself.

Cardew shook his head.

"I dunno where Baggy is," he murmured. "But, anyway, he's broke!"

Bunter's face fell. Cardew chuckled. Evidently his guess had been a good one. Billy Bunter had been hoping for a feed from Baggy Trimble.

"Oh, dear!" grunted Bunter. "That's rotten! I'm stony, too!" He blinked disconsolately across the quad at the little tuckshop under the elms. "Look here, I suppose you couldn't lend me a bob? I'm expecting a postal-order from a titled relation on Monday, or Tuesday at the latest, and I could post it on to you—"

Cardew looked at him, and wondered, with a grim smile, what Harry Wharton & Co. would have said had they known that one of their fellows had attempted to "touch" a St. Jim's fellow for money. Then he laughed.

Bunter amused him.

"Feeling peckish?" he inquired.

"Frightfully!" groaned Bunter. "I've got a very delicate constitution, you know, and it requires constant nourishment. I feel quite faint—"

"Come along to the tuckshop, then," grinned Cardew.

It occurred to him that it would be rather entertaining to watch the famous Billy Bunter of Greyfriars at work in the tuckshop, and see how his eating prowess compared with that of Baggy Trimble, his rival trencherman at St.



Linton—"said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of his wathah spiteful—" "How-how dare you!" stuttered Mr. Chapter 7.)

Jim's. Being a wealthy fellow, Ralph Reckness Cardew could easily indulge his whim.

"I say, that's awfully decent of you!" squeaked Billy Bunter excitedly, his little eyes gleaming greedily behind their spectacles. "You're a sportsman! You're not like those mean Greyfriars beasts—"

"Come on," said Cardew, eyeing Bunter as though he were a specimen at a show.

He turned in the direction of Dame Taggles' little shop, and William George Bunter scuttled along beside him.

But as they were about to enter the tuckshop, Cardew halted, with a stifled exclamation.

He was staring across at the gates, with a very peculiar expression on his handsome face.

"I say, what's up?" asked Bunter.

"Gad!" breathed Cardew.

For coming in at the gates, with a furious frown visible even at that distance, was Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell.

What had happened Cardew did not know. But something had gone wrong! Long before his time—indeed, with the big match only just beginning—Mr. Linton was back at St. Jim's.

And Tom Merry was on the footer-field! His absence would be discovered, for certain.

"Gad!" repeated Ralph Reckness Cardew softly. "What a go!"

CHAPTER 11.

Cardew Gets Busy!

WITH black brows, Mr. Linton was striding rapidly towards the School House.

He had plenty of cause for his wrath!

Not half a mile from St. Jim's he had met a motor-car in which was seated none other than Miss Finch herself—his Hephzibah! And when he had stopped her, with a beaming smile, he had been cruelly snubbed! And to his utter dismay he had learnt that the telephone call that had taken him from St. Jim's had not been from her—that it had been, evidently, a deliberate hoax!

In a moment it had all been clear to the master of the Shell.

There had been a purpose in that bogus telephone call, and the purpose was plain. It could only mean that someone wanted to lure him away from St. Jim's that afternoon.

In a moment his suspicions had flown to Tom Merry. He felt convinced that this was a trick to enable Tom Merry to play in the St. Jim's team against Greyfriars.

Mr. Linton had wasted no time in getting back to St. Jim's. And now he was back, he was going to waste no time visiting the Shell Form-room.

If Tom Merry was not there, there was going to be trouble—lots and lots of trouble! Expulsion was the only punishment that would satisfy Mr. Linton.

Billy Bunter, in the tuckshop doorway, plucked at Cardew's sleeve.

"I say, old chap—"

Cardew did not heed him. He was watching Mr. Linton, and there was a faint cloud on his handsome face.

"I say, you know," squeaked Bunter anxiously, "what about this feed? I'm peckish!"

The next moment the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove gave a startled squeal as Cardew's hand grasped him by the shoulder with a vice-like grip.

Cardew's eyes were gleaming strangely.

A desperate plan had come to his nimble brain. He had suddenly remembered something he had heard about Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.

"Bunter! You're a ventriloquist, aren't you?"

"Ow! Leggo! Yes, I am a ventriloquist, but—"

"This way!"

Cardew shifted his grip from Bunter's shoulder to the collar of his coat, and Bunter gave a howl as he found himself being rushed across towards the School House steps.

"Ow! Leggo! What's the game?" yelled Bunter.

Cardew did not answer as he whirled his fat captive up the steps. As he hustled him in at the School House doorway, the slacker of the Fourth glanced swiftly over his shoulder.

Mr. Linton was still some distance away across the quad.

"This way, old fat man!"

"Look here," roared Bunter. "I—I want to know what the game is! Where's that feed? I believe you were spoofing—"

"No, I wasn't spoofin'," said Cardew quietly. "And I'll stand you twice as big a feed if you'll do what I want." Bunter's eyes gleamed. Then a suspicious look came into them.

"What do you want me to do?" he inquired cautiously.

They had reached the door of the Shell Form-room now.

"You know Tom Merry?" snapped Cardew.

"Yes. But—"

"Could you imitate his voice?"

"Easy!" sniffed Bunter.

"That's what you've got to do then. He's supposed to be in that Form-room, see? Old Linton—a master—is coming along to see if he's there. He's not there, but you must make it seem as though he is. Get in here—and remember, I'll stand you a ripping feed for this!"

Bunter did not need any further inducement than that! Cardew had opened the cupboard near the Form-room door, and Billy Bunter skipped into it. Then the slacker of the

Fourth snatched an envelope from his pocket, folded it into a tight wad, and jammed it under the Form-room door.

The Form-room was empty, he knew, since Bernard Glyn had taken Tom's task to his study to do it there. But if he could prevent the door from opening too easily, Mr. Linton would never discover that fact, if Billy Bunter did his part properly. Tom Merry's voice—or what appeared to be Tom Merry's voice—from within the Form-room would be sufficient to make the master of the Shell believe that Tom was there.

As he rose from placing the folded envelope in position, Cardew heard the footsteps of Mr. Linton striding up the steps.

In a moment he had joined Billy Bunter in the big cupboard.

"I say—" squeaked Bunter.

"Shut up," breathed Cardew. "He's coming!"

As he closed the door of the cupboard, he saw the master's shadow fall across the patch of sunlight from the doorway.

"Get ready!" warned Cardew, peering out through the narrow crack he had left when closing the door.

Mr. Linton came striding along with thunderous brow.

He halted outside the door of his Form-room, and gripped the handle. He pushed. The door opened a couple of inches, but no more.

Mr. Linton gave an exclamation of annoyance. He did not notice the little wad under the door, however.

And almost instantly from within the room came the voice of Tom Merry—or, at any rate, an exact imitation of it.

"Is that you, sir?"

"Yes, it is I!" cried Mr. Linton.

A grim smile flickered at the corners of his lips. His eyes gleamed with relief.

He felt sure that he had been hoaxed in order that Tom could leave the Form-room in safety. But his fears were apparently ungrounded.

"I am afraid the door is stuck, sir!"

What seemed to be Tom Merry's voice came again, apparently from within the Form-room.

In his relief at finding that he had not been made a fool of, after all, Mr. Linton did not bother with the refractory door.

"I will visit you again in a quarter of an hour!" he barked.

Within the cupboard, Cardew heard the master of the Shell stride by, and drew a long breath of relief. His plan had worked! Billy Bunter's amazing skill as a ventriloquist had saved the situation for the moment, at any rate.

Not till Mr. Linton's footsteps had died away in the distance did Ralph Reckness Cardew allow Billy Bunter to emerge from the cupboard.

"Gad!" muttered Cardew. "That was a near thing!"

"He, he, he!" Bunter sniggered, in great self-satisfaction. "I'm a dab at ventriloquism, you know! But I say, what about that feed you promised me?" He plucked at Cardew's sleeve. "It'll be a big one, eh? I think I'll begin with tarts—"

Cardew did not seem to hear him.

There was a very thoughtful look indeed on the face of Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"I—I say, I'm fearfully peckish, you know!" squeaked Bunter in an injured tone. "I—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Oh, really—"

"You'll get your feed all right, in a minute or two," said Cardew contemptuously. "But I've got to think just now."

Bunter grunted, and relapsed into a sulky silence.

Cardew moved slowly across to the big doorway, Bunter trotting hopefully at his side. The slacker of the Fourth stared out thoughtfully into the quad.

His eyes were gleaming.

Things looked desperate enough for Tom Merry, with Mr. Linton back at St. Jim's. But Cardew was very loth to bring Tom back from the footer field to the Form-room. He could hear far-off shouting from Little Side, where the big match was in progress.

Next time Mr. Linton visited the Form-room, he would be sure to look in—a troublesome door would only make him suspicious a second time. To any other fellow it would have looked as though the only way out was to fetch Tom Merry away from the match, to return to durance vile!

But Ralph Reckness Cardew was not an ordinary fellow. He had, perhaps, the quickest wits at St. Jim's.

"I'm hanged if I want to fetch old Thomas from the match," he murmured half-aloud. A twisted smile appeared on his handsome face. "I may be a slacker, but I fancy I can do my bit for St. Jim's by keepin' Tom Merry in the match! There must be a way—"

His eyes fell thoughtfully on Bunter of Greyfriars.

"I say—" began Bunter disconsolately.

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Cardew's face lit up excitedly.

"What about this feed, Bunter?" he drawled.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bunter, brightening. "I'm ready!"

"Splendid man!" grinned Cardew. "I suppose you don't mind where you eat it, as long as you do eat it, what?"

"Nunno," said Bunter doubtfully. "I suppose not. But—"

"What about eatin' it in a cupboard?"

"This cupboard?" exclaimed Bunter. "Rats! I—"

"No, not this cupboard," grinned Cardew. "Another giddy cupboard! A nice big, roomy, airy cupboard, with lots of room for lots of grub. It stands outside old Linton's study. I'll take you to it."

"Look here—" began Bunter, with an indignant snort.

"Don't argue, my fat friend," said Cardew severely, "or you may not get a feed at all."

Bunter gasped, and did not argue further! Looking uneasy and vaguely suspicious, he consented to be led away, with Cardew's hand on his arm. At the end of the passage leading to Mr. Linton's study, Cardew paused.

"Not a sound now, Bunter," he murmured. "We are near the lion in his den."

"But I say, look here," sniffed Bunter peevishly, "I want that feed, you know!"

"You'll get it," nodded Cardew reassuringly. "Trust me! The word of a Fanackapan is his bond."

Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"M-my hat! Is—is your name Fanackapan?"

"Well, it might have been, if it didn't happen to be something else," murmured Cardew. "Come on."

Bunter followed the slacker of the Fourth in rather a bewildered way.

Almost immediately opposite Mr. Linton's study door was a roomy cupboard, built in the wall. It was really more of a small box-room than anything else. Cardew opened the door of it softly, and stepped inside. Bunter followed.

"Here we are, Sir Bunter!" grinned Cardew. "Now, listen to me!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew explained his little scheme at length. Bunter chuckled, and nodded.

"Rather! I can do that all right!" he grinned. "But the feed—"

"I'll fetch you all the grub you can eat, right now, my fat friend. You stay here, with the door open half an inch, and when old Linton pops out of his box, you know what to do!"

"Rather! I say, there'll be plenty of tarts?"

"Tarts and tarts and tarts!" Cardew assured him.

"Meringues?" murmured Bunter greedily.

"Meringues and meringues and still more meringues," assented Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"What about a rabbit-pie, old chap? And some ginger-beer? And some cheesecakes? And some biscuits—"

"They're as good as yours," nodded Cardew. "I'll be back with them in five minutes. So long!"

Cardew vanished silently along the passage, and Billy Bunter sat down on a box within the slightly open door to wait.

There was a greedy gleam in his little eyes.

Before long Cardew returned, bearing a cricket-bag, crammed with tuck. He sat down beside Bunter, and waived an airy hand.

"Help yourself!"

Bunter did help himself.

The good things from Dame Taggles' little shop began to vanish at an astonishing rate. Cardew watched with interest as tarts and pies and buns were devoured by the championing jaws of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.

"I say!" gasped Bunter, after a while. "Aren't you having anything yourself?"

"Nothin'!" said Cardew. "It's all for you! Eat on, pretty creature! Eat on!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him doubtfully, and ate on, very steadily. His fat jaws worked like clockwork. His face grew shiny, and his breath a little laboured.

Cardew had glanced at his watch, and leant back against the wall, where he sat with closed eyes.

And out on Little Side, in the crisp, autumn air, Tom Merry was playing the game of his life, in blissful ignorance that Mr. Linton was back at St. Jim's, and that everything rested upon the wits of Ralph Reckness Cardew, the slacker of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 12.

The Cat that Wasn't!

MR. LINTON glanced at his watch. He rose to his feet. It was time for him to visit the Form-room, to make quite certain that Tom Merry had not broken detention. Across the quad, through the open window, he could hear the shouts

from Little Side. A grim smile appeared on his face for a moment.

The problem of the bogus telephone-call was still perplexing him. But he felt sure that it had had no connection with Tom Merry, since Tom Merry had—as he thought—been in the Form-room on his return to St. Jim's.

And the thought of Tom Merry labouring gloomily in the Form-room, while the big match that he had set his heart upon taking part in was being played on Little Side, caused a good deal of grim satisfaction to Mr. Linton.

He crossed to the door and opened it, and stepped into the passage.

"Miaow!"

Mr. Linton started.

The sound had come from somewhere within his study as he had been about to close the door. He peered into the room in great astonishment.

"Bless my soul! It sounded like a cat!"

"Miaow!"

There was no doubt about it this time. There was a cat somewhere in his study! Mr. Linton gazed in with amazement.

"Where—how—"

"Miaow!"

Mr. Linton frowned. He did not like cats. How one came to be in his study was a mystery to him, but he meant to expel the animal at once. He stepped back into his study and glared round.

There was no sign of any cat, however.

"Puss, puss, puss!" called Mr. Linton in an authoritative voice.

There was no answer from the cat—if there was a cat. Neither was there any sign of it.

"Extraordinary!" muttered Mr. Linton.

He raised the edge of the tablecloth, half expecting to see the cat sitting there. But there was nothing under the table. Neither, when he looked, was there anything under the desk.

"Puss, puss! Puss, puss, puss!" chirruped Mr. Linton.

He descended painfully on all-fours, and peered under the bookcase.

"I could have sworn I heard a cat!" muttered Mr. Linton in bewilderment. "Yet there seems to be no such creature in the room. I wonder—"

"Miaow!"

Mr. Linton jumped. The "Miaow!" seemed to have come from immediately behind him. He scrambled to his feet and turned; but the carpet was empty of cats.

"Bless my soul! Where ever can the animal be?" gasped Mr. Linton. "And how ever can it have gained access to the room? I suppose it must have slipped past me unnoticed, when I opened the door just now. Astonishing!"

For the moment he had forgotten that he had intended to visit Tom Merry in the Shell Form-room. He began to prod around under the furniture with a long pointer.

After five minutes or so of exasperated search, Mr. Linton stood in the middle of the room and mopped his brow, and gasped. He had made himself distinctly warm with his activities.

"I fancy the animal must have gone without my noticing its departure—" began the master of the Shell aloud. Then he jumped and broke off sharply.

"Miaaaaaaow!"

It was louder than ever. But where it came from was a mystery. The cat was somewhere in the room, evidently. But where? That was the most amazing problem!

"This is really most phenomenal!" gasped Mr. Linton. "I will rout the animal out! I insist upon its going!"

Mr. Linton glared round the room as though he was defying anyone to stop him in his purpose.

"Miaaaaaow!"

This time there was no doubt about it—the sound had come from behind a heavy chest in a far corner of the room. Mr. Linton pounced upon the chest instantly, and tried to peer behind it. It really looked as though there were scarcely room for a cat; but Mr. Linton knew that his ears could not have deceived him—or he thought he knew that.

The chest was in an awkward corner. Mr. Linton could not screw his neck round sufficiently to peer down behind it. But another "Miaow!" convinced him that he was right; the cat was behind the chest!

"Shoooooh!" panted Mr. Linton. "Shoooooh! Come out, you beast!"

He prodded about with his pointer, but without result. With an angry snort, the master of the Shell threw it down, and seized the chest, striving to drag it away from the wall.

It was a heavy article of furniture, unfortunately for Mr. Linton. It took a lot of shifting. It was nearly five minutes before the master of the Shell had dragged the

chest sufficiently far from the wall to convince himself that there was no cat behind it.

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Linton stared down at the space where the chest had been, and almost rubbed his eyes in amazement.

There was no cat. Of that there was no possible doubt, no shadow of doubt whatever!

"Miaow!"

Mr. Linton jumped like a shot rabbit.

That time the sound had come from the direction of the bookcase. He spent several minutes searching there. Then another "Miaow!" came—this time from the other side of the room.

"This is utterly extraordinary!" gasped Mr. Linton.

His face set in very grim lines.

Mr. Linton was not the man to be beaten by a cat, if he knew it!

But ten minutes later, when the elusive cat had still failed to be unearthed, the master of the Shell—in a very bad temper by this time—had to admit himself baffled.

Suddenly his face lit up. Now he understood!

"Bless my soul! The animal must be somewhere beneath the floorboards!"

How a cat could come to be imprisoned beneath the floorboards of his study was something of a problem. But Mr. Linton felt that he had hit upon the only possible solution. He crammed his mortar-board upon his head and strode towards the door. As he did so he suddenly remembered Tom Merry.

"Bless my soul!" muttered Mr. Linton, half aloud. He glanced at his watch. "I intended to visit the Form-room more than a quarter of an hour ago. I will do so as soon as I have fetched Taggles, to take up a floorboard and eject this animal!"

(Continued on next page.)

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He strode from the room. As he did so, there was an almost fiendish sound from within the study.

"Miiiiiaaaaaooooow!"

But Mr. Linton did not pause this time. He strode off, with rustling gown, intent upon fetching Ephraim Taggles, the school porter.

Taggles would be able to raise a floorboard and eject the cat, Mr. Linton felt sure.

And when he had seen Taggles he would pay his overdue visit to the Shell Form-room!

CHAPTER 13.

Half-Time I

"O H, gad!" breathed Ralph Reckness Cardew.

He had heard Mr. Linton's muttered words as the master of the Shell had finally emerged from the study after his fruitless search for the imaginary cat—a "cat" that had in reality consisted entirely of clever ventriloquism on the part of William George Bunter, the Owl of the Greyfriars Remove.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter sniggered, and took another tart from the open cricket-bag at his feet.

"There's nothing to cackle at," said Cardew coldly.

"But it worked, didn't it?" sniffed Bunter. "I'm a dab at ventriloquism, you know. I did that jolly well!"

"Yes; but Linton's off to the Form-room now, after he's seen Taggles, you fat ass!" snapped Cardew. "The game's up."

But Bunter was too busy with the tarts to heed.

Cardew glanced at his watch. A swift exclamation escaped him.

"Half-time!"

"Eh?" mumbled Bunter, with his mouth full.

"It's half-time!" cried Cardew. "Good! It'll be all right yet! Stay here! If I find you've gone when I get back, I'll skin you!"

There was really very little chance that Bunter would leave his hiding-place so long as there was any grub left in the cricket-bag; however, and, fortunately, as Cardew saw, there was still a lot left. In another moment the slacker of the Fourth had slipped out into the passage, and was speeding away.

He emerged breathlessly at the top of the School House steps, just in time to see Mr. Linton whisking off in the direction of the porter's lodge.

"Just time!" Cardew told himself, with gleaming eyes.

He raced down the steps and away towards Little Side. As he passed under the elms into view of the distant footballers, he saw the prefect who was refereeing the match raise the whistle to his lips.

As Cardew had realised, it was half-time in the big match.

Tom Merry, sucking a slice of lemon in the middle of the field, with the rest of the team, glanced up in great astonishment at the sight of Cardew racing towards him across the grass. A look of swift alarm sprang into the face of the captain of the St. Jim's team.

Instinct seemed to tell him that Cardew's visit to Little Side was in connection with Mr. Linton.

"What's up?" cried Tom, as Cardew came up.

"Linton?"

"Yes," nodded Cardew coolly.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Talbot.

Tom Merry's face had gone a little pale. But before he could speak Cardew touched him on the arm.

"Come on!" he snapped. "There's just time! Linton doesn't know yet, but in a few minutes he's going to the Form-room! No time to explain how I know—come on! You've got to be at work in the Form room in one minute!"

Tom Merry stared wonderingly at Cardew, as did the rest of the footballers. But there was certainly no time for questions if what Cardew said was true.

In another moment Tom Merry was racing from the field, with Monty Lowther and Talbot and the slacker of the Fourth.

As they ran, followed by the astonished stares of the fellows round the touch-line, Cardew glanced at Tom Merry's face, and saw that it was plentifully splashed with mud from the footer-field. He gripped Lowther's arm.

"Get a sponge, like giddy lightnin'!" he breathed.

Lowther nodded.

There was no sign of Mr. Linton as the four raced across the quad and up the School House steps. Tom, Talbot, and Cardew headed straight for the Form-room, while Monty Lowther dashed off to the nearest bath-room. Cardew kicked open the Form-room door. Once inside the room he snatched off his coat, and with breathless haste began unfastening his collar and tie.

"Put these on for him!" he snapped, thrusting the articles of clothing into Talbot's hand. "I'll get Glyn's stuff—"

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He vanished from the room.

Monty Lowther came dashing in, a dripping sponge in his hand. While Talbot hustled Tom Merry into the jacket and collar and tie over his football shirt, Monty Lowther sponged the mud from his chum's face. As they finished, Cardew came back, with fluttering exercise-book in his hand. He thrust it on to the desk in front of Tom Merry.

"Sit down!" he hissed. "Linton's coming!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Talbot. "If he finds us here—" "He won't!" snapped Cardew. "Hide under the desks, you asses!"

"Listen!" breathed Monty Lowther, as footsteps could be heard approaching the door. "Here he comes!"

"Get down!"

And Talbot and Monty Lowther got down, dropping out of sight under the front row of desks even as the door opened, and the grim face of Mr. Linton stared into the room.

From the doorway, all that Mr. Linton saw was a solitary figure seated at a desk, bent over an exercise-book that was obviously half full of sums. All he could see was the back of an Eton collar and jacket.

Scrape, scrape scrape!

Tom Merry was writing busily.

Mr. Linton smiled a grim smile.

"I am glad to see you so industrious, Merry!" he murmured ironically.

Tom glanced up.

"Thank you, sir!" he said meekly.

"I fear the shouts from the football field must prove rather tantalising to you," said Mr. Linton, with a smile that was not exactly pleasant. "However, they may help to show you the error of your ways!"

"I hope so, sir!" murmured Tom. "I wonder if you could tell me how the match is going? Have St. Jim's scored at all, sir—or Greyfriars?"

"I do not know—nor am I interested!" snapped Mr. Linton. He glanced at his watch. "It is now a quarter past three—"

"Must be half-time, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Do you think it is half-time exactly, sir?"

"I know nothing about it!" snapped Mr. Linton. "But at half-past three—in another fifteen minutes—I shall visit the Form-room again. So I warn you not to be tempted to venture forth to watch this match which you consider so important!"

He stepped out into the passage and closed the door sharply. His retreating footsteps could be heard dying away in the distance.

Tom Merry chuckled softly.

"All clear!" he announced, and Cardew rose to his feet, smiling coolly.

Talbot and Monty Lowther did the same.

"My hat!" breathed Monty Lowther. "If Linton had thought of coming up to your desk—"

"It would have been rather surprisin' to dear old Linton to see that Thomas was really in footer-togs!" drawled Cardew. "But he didn't, luckily!"

"But what happens now?" demanded Talbot.

Tom Merry jumped up. His face was grim.

"I can't drop out of the match now," he said, between his teeth.

"How's the match going, by the way?" yawned Cardew.

"No score yet," Talbot told him. "It's a real hot game, though—"

"Thank goodness I'm not playin', then!" said Cardew, with a shudder.

Talbot glared at him. But then he remembered that if it had not been for Cardew, Tom Merry's absence from the Form-room would have been discovered. He smiled.

"You're a queer chap, Cardew!"

"Thanks!" drawled Cardew. "By the way, I'll explain what's been happenin'!"

He told the story of Mr. Linton's early return to St. Jim's and what had taken place since. When he had finished Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"My only hat!" He gripped Cardew by the arm. "Look here, Cardew, I'm going back to finish this match! Even if it means getting expelled! I'll leave you to do the best you can to prevent Linton from coming here again. Think you can work it?"

"I fancy I may be able to," nodded Cardew thoughtfully. "I've got an idea or two up my sleeve, as a matter of fact." He chuckled. "You're safe for a quarter of an hour, anyway. In the meantime, I want to see your charmin' young friend, Lady Peggy! I take it she's back from telephonin'!"

"What do you want to see her for?" asked Monty Lowther curiously.

"Never mind why," drawled Cardew. "She's a very sportin' kid, and she may be able to help. I tell you, I've got an idea!"

Tom Merry stared at Cardew curiously. Then he swung on his heel. He had already returned the borrowed garments that had deceived Mr. Linton to the slacker of the Fourth.

"Come on, then," he muttered.

The coast was clear outside the Form-room as they left it, and hurried off to the playing-fields.

Very curious glances were turned in the direction of the little party as they arrived back on Little Side. The other footballers crowded up, brimming with questions. Tom Merry told them briefly what had happened. Both the St. Jim's fellows and the Greyfriars team chuckled gleefully over the way in which Mr. Linton had been hoaxed.

But on Tom Merry's face there was a very thoughtful frown.

So far, thanks to Cardew, Mr. Linton was in ignorance of his participation in the Greyfriars match, despite the failure of the bogus telephone-call to keep the master of the Shell away from St. Jim's for the afternoon.

But how much longer Mr. Linton could be deceived was a question!

As the teams lined up for the second half, Tom glanced towards the touch-line.

Cousin Ethel, Doris, and Lady Peggy were standing by the half-way line, with one or two admiring juniors. Tom saw that Ralph Reckness Cardew was deep in conversation with Lady Peggy, and Lady Peggy's face was bright and eager.

"What's Cardew got up his sleeve?" I wonder?" muttered Tom. The dark, anxious frown was still on his face.

But that was a question that Cardew alone could have answered! Pheep!

The whistle shrilled. Tom tapped the ball across to George Figgins, and the second half of the big match against Greyfriars began!

CHAPTER 14. Mysterious!

FIVE minutes later, Ralph Reckness Cardew was stealing down the passage that led to Mr. Linton's room.

The door of the master's study was standing ajar, but Cardew succeeded in gaining the cupboard opposite in safety, for there seemed to be a considerable noise going on within the master of the Shell's sanctum.

There was the noise of hammering, and of boards being banged about. The voice of old Taggles could be heard, as well as the scholarly tones of Mr. Linton.

Evidently the search for the elusive cat was in full swing!

Cardew chuckled softly as he slipped into the big cupboard where Billy Bunter was still seated on a box, eating. He was eating slowly now, but he was still eating.

He greeted Cardew with rather a glassy stare.

"Grooooh!" mumbled Bunter, his jaws hard at work. He grinned a fat and greasy grin. "I say, they're getting the boards up—looking for that blessed cat, you know! He, he, he!"

"He, he, he, also!" drawled Cardew softly, and sat down. "Hungry?"

"Grooooh! A—a bit peckish!" nodded Bunter.

"Good gad!" gasped Cardew. "Oh, carry on! But be ready to do as I tell you. You've heard Taggles' voice—The porter's, you know? You can imitate it when I want you to?"

Billy Bunter nodded.

"Good!" said Cardew. "In the meantime, eat on, pretty creature, eat on!"

"Which I can't see no cat, sir!" growled Ephraim Taggles. "But the cat is here!" declared Mr. Linton firmly. "I heard it."

Old Taggles grunted, and wiped his brow with the back of a horny hand.

A long and fruitless search had been in progress in Mr. Linton's usually tidy study, it was very evident. The carpet was rolled up in a corner, and most of the furniture was piled in another corner. Several boards had been prised from the floor, revealing dark oblong cavities into which



Monty Lowther dashed into the Form-room, a dripping sponge in his hand. While Talbot hustled Tom Merry into the jacket and collar, and tie, Monty Lowther sponged the mud from his chum's face. As they finished, Cardew appeared with an exercise book in his hand. "Sit down!" he hissed. "Linton's coming!" (See Chapter 13.)

both Mr. Linton and Ephraim Taggles had peered and prodded.

But of the mysterious cat there was no sign.

There was plenty of dust, but there was no cat. And Taggles was getting very red and irritable.

"Wot I says is—"

"Kindly raise a board in the other corner," interrupted Mr. Linton, with grim determination. "Perhaps the wretched feline is in this area of the room."

"Wot I says is—"

"Do not delay, Taggles! I know the cat is here, and I insist upon its being removed!"

There was a dogged gleam in Mr. Linton's eyes. Mr. Linton was going to find that cat, or know the reason why!

With a grunt, Taggles got to work on another of the boards. It came up at last—rather suddenly. There was a yell from Taggles as the end of the board caught him under the chin.

"Yaroooooh!" Taggles sat nursing his chin, and cast a glaring eye at Mr. Linton. "Wot I say is, I'm hurt! And there ain't no cat, neither!"

"Prod!" commanded Mr. Linton. "Take this stick and prod in the cavity!"

Taggles growled something under his breath, and prodded energetically beneath the boards. Nothing happened.

"If you hasks me, sir, I think this 'ere cat's gorn!" growled Taggles at last. "Gorn, that's what it's done—gorn! Gorn away!"

"Impossible!" snapped Mr. Linton. "I insist that you continue the search. I must leave you for the moment, but I shall be back very shortly."

The master of the Shell was glancing at his watch. It was

more than a quarter of an hour since he had visited Tom Merry in the Form-room.

"I will return in a few moments, Taggles. I expect you to locate the cat in my absence."

Mr. Linton strode towards the door, with rustling gown. He pushed it open, and was about to step into the passage, when he halted as if turned to stone.

"I tell you there ain't no cat, you silly old buffer!"

The words seemed to have come from the lips of Ephraim Taggles.

Whether they had actually done so was another matter. But then Mr. Linton had no knowledge of the Greyfriars ventriloquist concealed in the cupboard across the passage. He turned a dazed face, and stared at Taggles as though he could not believe his senses.

"I—I— What did you say?" he gasped faintly.

Taggles was looking astonished, too. Taggles, also, was wondering where that voice, so like his own, had come from. But before he could answer, an uncanny voice answered for him, the words coming seemingly from his own lips:

"There ain't no cat 'ere, you silly cuckoo!"

Mr. Linton jumped almost a foot into the air.

In a moment all thoughts of Tom Merry fled from his mind—which was just exactly what Cardew, directing Billy Bunter's efforts from the cupboard, had intended.

The master of the Shell surveyed Taggles like a man in a dream.

"How dare you?" he panted.

"Sir?" ejaculated Taggles in bewilderment.

"What did you call me just then?" thundered Mr. Linton.

"If you'd washed your ears this morning you'd 'ave 'eard," Taggles seemed to reply.

"B-bless my soul!"

Mr. Linton seemed as though he were about to faint. He clutched the door for support.

"The man has taken leave of his senses!" he cried in a choking voice. "He is demented—"

"Rats!" retorted Taggles rudely—at any rate, it seemed to be Taggles who spoke. "I'm not half so balmy as you are, old boy!"

"Wha-a-at?" stammered the master of the Shell faintly.

"If there's any candidates for Colney Hatch in 'ere, it ain't me!" sniffed the voice of Taggles—in its imitation. "I always did think you was just fit for a looney-bin!"

Mr. Linton passed a hand across his eyes.

He felt that the world must be coming to an end for the porter of St. Jim's to be talking to him like this. He collected his scattered wits with an effort.

"Taggles," he thundered, "you are either mad or drunk!"

Old Taggles had been looking as dazed as Mr. Linton himself. But at that accusation he flared up indignantly.

"Which not a drop o' liquor has passed my lips to-day!" declared Taggles hotly, speaking for himself this time.

"Nonsense!" Mr. Linton's face was nearly purple. "I say you have been drinking—"

"Ho!"

Taggles rose slowly to his feet and took a step towards Mr. Linton, thrusting a red and wrathful face into that of the master of the Shell.

"Ho!" repeated Taggles. "Ho! That's what you says, is it? I takes leave to remind you that there's a law of libel in the land, and them that tries to take away a pore man's character, as is 'ard-working and habstemious, even though now an' then takin' a little drop o' something for 'is thirst, which is only right and natural, and done by better men than you is or ever will be, and libel's serious, and defamation of character, too, an' which I says is this 'ere, the 'eadmaster, Dr. 'Olmes, 'e says to me, 'Taggles,' 'e says, 'which I knows you to be a man of high character, Taggles,' 'e says, and I'll 'ave you know—"

Mr. Linton, retreating in alarm before the slowly advancing features of Ephraim Taggles, came at last to the wall and could retreat no farther.

"Stop!" he panted. "Keep back!"

"Wot I says is—"

"I refuse to listen!" gasped Mr. Linton nervously. "Stand away from me, my man!"

"Ho!" snorted Taggles. "It's 'my man' now, is it? Ho!"

"Leave the room, Taggles!" cried Mr. Linton in a faint voice.

"Which I'll be very glad to!" sniffed old Taggles. "If you hasks me, I was only brought here on a fool's errand! Cats! Ho! Cats, indeed! My heye! You'll be thinking there's pink elephants in your room next, if you hasks me!"

Ephraim Taggles gathered up his tools and stamped from the room and away along the passage. Mr. Linton gasped with relief.

"The man is demented!" he panted. "I actually feared he was about to attack me with violence! Oh, bless my soul! I shall report him to Dr. Holmes! I will have him!"

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dismissed from his post. He is thoroughly dangerous. He needs medical treatment, I am convinced!"

Mr. Linton mopped his brow with a shaking hand.

The clock on the chimneypiece chimed. Mr. Linton started.

The scene with Taggles had taken his mind from all thoughts of Tom Merry. But now the master of the Shell remembered his intention of visiting the Form-room to make sure that his victim was still there, and had not decamped in order to watch the finish of the Greyfriars match.

He moved to the door and peered out. To his relief there was no sign of Taggles. Mr. Linton had had a vague idea that the porter might be lurking in the passage to attack him.

The master of the Shell closed the door upon the chaos in his study. It would take a long time to restore his room to its usual order after the great hunt for the mysterious cat!

But Mr. Linton was not worrying any more about the cat. Apparently the animal had gone in some way. All Mr. Linton cared about now was to visit the Shell Form-room, then find the Head and report to him Taggles' amazing conduct.

"I will visit the Form-room first!" he muttered aloud.

He did not hear a faint, startled gasp from the cupboard across the passage—did not notice that the door of the cupboard was half an inch or so ajar.

With rustling gown the master of the Shell strode towards the stairs, on his way to the Form-room where Tom Merry was supposed to be toiling.

CHAPTER 15.

One-All!

"O H gad!"

Cardew's face was filled with consternation as he heard from within the cupboard the retreating footsteps of the master of the Shell.

Cardew had counted upon keeping Mr. Linton occupied a long time with Taggles, thanks to Billy Bunter's skill. It was Cardew's nimble brain that had directed the amazing words that had seemed to come from Taggles' lips, and so caused the scene that had delayed Mr. Linton so far.

That it had not delayed him more was a blow to Cardew.

"Now it's all up," murmured Billy Bunter indifferently, selecting a meringue from the cricket-bag at his feet. "What'll he say when he finds Tom Merry's not in the blessed Form-room? He, he, he!"

The idea seemed to amuse Bunter. Cardew glared at him.

"What are you cackling at?" he inquired grimly. "Anyway, he won't find out even yet, if I can stop him!"

"But, I say—"

Cardew had not waited to hear what Bunter had to say. He had slipped from the cupboard and was speeding away towards the stairs, leaving Billy Bunter to the conclusion of his gigantic feast.

"He, he, he!" Bunter chuckled. "Tom Merry's bowled out at last! Bound to be. The blessed game's up!"

There were still some meringues left, and a tart or two. The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove settled himself comfortably upon his box, with a greasy, contented grin on his shining features. Bunter did not care if Tom Merry's absence from the Form-room were discovered. There was still something to eat. That was all William George Bunter worried about.

But it certainly looked this time as though the game was up for Tom Merry!

"Goal!"

"Well shot, sir!"

There was a wild, excited yell from the Greyfriars supporters.

Greyfriars had scored at last! With the score still at nothing for either side, Bob Cherry of Greyfriars had got away with the ball, after an exciting tussle round the Greyfriars' goal, and flashed the leather forward to Harry Wharton, at centre-forward. And Wharton, after a wonderful run, had scored.

It was a bitter blow for St. Jim's.

"Play up, you chaps!" muttered Tom Merry grimly, as the teams lined up.

He kicked off again, and the St. Jim's forwards rushed the ball well into the visitors' territory. But Bob Cherry was a tower of strength for Greyfriars at centre-half, and with the aid of Peter Todd and Mark Linley, he stemmed the tide. The ball was swept up the field again, towards the St. Jim's goal.

Dick Penfold, playing inside-left for Greyfriars, passed to Hurree Janset Ram Singh, at outside-left, and the dusky nabob raced away, with the ball dancing at his nimble toes.

St. Jim's held its breath as he eluded Clive, at right-back, and raced on towards the goal.

With a lightning shot, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sent the ball flying swift and low for the St. Jim's goal. But Fatty Wynn was ready. He caught the ball safely, and as Harry Wharton rushed him, dodged cleverly. With a magnificent drop-kick, he sent the ball soaring into mid-field.

"Well saved!" yelled a score of voices simultaneously.

"Go it, Gussy!" muttered Herries, standing on the touch-line with Cousin Etnel and Doris Levison, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was seen to have trapped the ball.

Arthur Augustus was promptly tackled by Mark Linley of Greyfriars. But the swell of St. Jim's flashed the ball to Monty Lowther, who passed back a moment later, and with the ball at his feet again, Arthur Augustus sped up the field.

Johnny Bull tackled him, but Arthur Augustus was too clever for the Greyfriars back on this occasion. He got the ball past with a skilled tap of the foot, swerved round after it, and streaked for the Greyfriars goal.

The onlookers held their breath.

Hazeldene, the Greyfriars goalkeeper, was waiting, quiet and cool.

"Shoot!" howled Grundy, dancing excitedly as he stood watching from the corner of the field. "Shoot, Gussy, you dummy!"

But Arthur Augustus knew more about football than did George Alfred Grundy. He saw that Hazeldene was ready for him, and that his chance of scoring was small from the angle at which he had been forced to approach the goal. For a moment he seemed about to shoot; but it was only a clever bluff to deceive Hazeldene. Instead, the swell of St. Jim's swept the ball clean across the penalty area to Tom Merry.

Hazeldene, turning like a flash, flung himself the full length of the goal-mouth in a desperate effort to save. But the ball came leaping past his fingers from the boot of Tom Merry, and crashed into the net.

St. Jim's had equalised!

It was at that moment, while the supporters of the home team yelled and cheered, that Mr. Linton was rustling down the stairs in the School House, bound for the Shell Form-room.

(Continued on next page.)



He is warned hereby to mind his keys and pews. Otherwise our Oracle will tell his grandfather, an ex-policeman, about him.

Q. What does a war-drum look like?

A. Humph, there are war-drums and war-drums, Ned Dearing, of Plaistow. After receiving your query I borrowed fourpence off the office-boy and set out to make a tour of the London museums, in the hope of spotting a few of these barbaric implements which are reputed to have made the jungle as tuneful as Piccadilly when the automatic picks are on the road-mending job. Some of the



The reader who asks what a war-drum looks like is requested to take a "squint" at the above drawing. This is a drum of the Ashanti tribes.

The other parts of the war-drum were made of wood and dried skin. I gave it a tap with the old umbrella to see what sort of tuneful note it produced, but the gamp handle went through it. So I came out of the museum and squandered my remaining tuppence on a quick bus ride back to the office.

Q. What two capes on the American seaboard are notorious for their stormy weather?

A. Cape Hatteras on the eastern coast, and Cape Flattery on the western.

Q. What is the sirocco?

A. This is the Italian name for the warm wind that blows over the sea from the Sahara.

Q. What is an epirhedium?

A. My hat! I don't know where some of you fellows hear of words like this. But an epirhedium, Dan Corby, of Carlisle, is not under your giddy ribs as you suppose; it is something that goes on wheels. In short, it is a cart of a square or oblong type much used in ancient times.

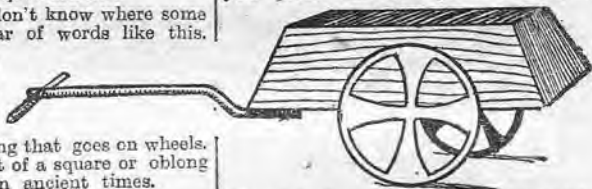
Q. Are journalists well paid?

A. This is the anxious question put by Dan Tibbert, of Little Sedgersley, who has recently left school because the headmaster took a dislike to him for setting the gym on fire with wax vestas strewn over the floor for a joke. And, as Dan says, that's the worst of some grown-ups, they lose their sense of humour. Well, it appears also from Dan's letter to me that his doting dad sent him forth into the world to look for an opening and then got annoyed just because he (Dan) wrote and said he was in a hole. Anyway, the pater settled up the money Dan owed for his lodgings in the Fitz-Splendid Hotel in Seven Dials, and



No, this isn't a kipper with wings. It's an enaliosaur, or the group name of an aquatic reptile of Mesozoic times.

suggested that as he (Dan) had a distinct talent for writing (judging from the numerous letters asking for money sent to him), that he should seek a post as a journalist. So Dan has written to say that he will come as my assistant on the GEM at a salary of £9 a week to commence, providing that the hours are not longer than ten and he can have a typist to f an office boy to assist and. But before he accepts, he him to know if journalists as wishes are well paid and whether a class id soon earn "a really he cou screw," as he has ambitions to run a Rolls-Royce sports model and keep Angora rabbits. I can only tell you, Dan Tibbert, that my own salary as a journalist on the GEM runs into five figures more or less—but then salary, as you must realise, depends entirely on



An epirhedium—yes, actually an epirhedium. In other words, a cart of ancient times.

one's value to the esteemed journal. I fear, laddie, that the only opening the Editor would find for you would be through the door—or the window!

Q. What is creme portugaise?

A. A young chum who signs himself "Puzzled" saw this on the bill of fare at a restaurant where he stood himself a spread, but "gave it a miss." You need not have done, chum, if you like tomato soup, for that is all it is. As the poet said, an onion by any other name will still flavour the jolly old breath!

Q. What is an enaliosaur?

A. This, "Antikquarewum," is the group name of an aquatic reptile of Mesozoic times such as depicted. The group includes also such prehistoric fauna as the ichthyosauria and the plesiosauria, but not the itchy-koo as the office-boy suggests. And by the way, my chum, were you thinking of "antiquarian" when you perpetrated that pen-name of yours?

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CHAPTER 16.
Jameson's Aunt!

THERE was a majestic frown upon the face of Mr. Linton as he strode down the steps into the Hall.

There was more than one reason for that frown.

Old Taggles had upset him, for one thing. For another, while descending the first few stairs, a junior had come rushing past him, down into the Hall. Mr. Linton had recognised Cardew of the Fourth. He had shouted after Cardew as loudly as his dignity would allow, intending to reprimand him severely; but Cardew had not seemed to hear, and had vanished rapidly.

At the foot of the stairs, Mr. Linton turned towards the Shell Form-room.

With stately steps, he approached the Form-room door. He halted outside it, and his fingers closed upon the handle.

He was about to open the door when a sudden light step behind him caused him to turn his head.

An exclamation of surprise escaped the master of the Shell.

Someone was hurrying towards him. But it was not a "someone" whom he might have expected to see in the Hall of the School House.

It was a charmingly pretty young lady of about twenty—or, at any rate, it seemed to be. But had he known then all the facts of that extraordinary afternoon, Mr. Linton would have realised that things are not always what they seem!

As a matter of fact, the "lady" approaching him was only a schoolgirl—Lady Peggy Brooke, of Spalding Hall! But with her schoolgirl garments hidden beneath a very smart lady's coat, an expensive fur round her neck, and her Spalding Hall hat exchanged for a stylish "creation" from Bond Street, the tomboy of Spalding Hall looked about seven years older than she really was! Extra high-heeled shoes gave her sufficient height—the shoes, like the rest of her outer clothing, being borrowed for her from Marie Rivers, the school nurse, by Ralph Reckness Cardew!

It had been no idle boast on Cardew's part when he had told Tom Merry, in the Form-room, that he still had an idea or two up his sleeve!

In Lady Peggy, Cardew had found the ideal accomplice; Peggy was always ready for any "rag" going.

The slacker of the Fourth had not expected to want her so soon, and he had only succeeded by a hair's-breadth in fetching her from the room where she had been waiting in case she were needed. In bringing Lady Peggy on to the scene the slacker of the Fourth was playing his trump card.

Mr. Linton paused, with his hand on the knob of the Form-room door.

Carefully substituting the walk of a grown woman for her own usual free-and-easy schoolgirl gait, Lady Peggy glided across the Hall, and halted in front of the surprised master of the Shell.

Mr. Linton raised his motor-board in a slightly flurried way. Lady Peggy smiled at him. Mr. Linton smiled back, wondering who this beautiful young lady with the pretty red hair could be.

Never for a moment did he dream that she was only a schoolgirl of the age of a junior in the Fourth! Lady Peggy had cleverly made up her face to appear like that of a young lady far older than herself.

"I wonder if you can help me?" murmured Lady Peggy. "I should be so obliged—"

"What can I do for you, madam?" beamed Mr. Linton. And his hand came away from the handle of the Shell Form-room.

"I wonder if I can see a little boy in the Third Form—his name is Jameson?"

Jameson, as Cardew happened to know, was out of gates for the afternoon.

"Jameson?" echoed Mr. Linton. Mr. Linton's memory of Jameson of the Third was of a singularly inky-fingered youngster of the noisy type he so thoroughly disliked. But suddenly his heart, somehow, warmed to Jameson. "Certainly—certainly! I will endeavour to find Jameson for you, madam. It will be a pleasure—a pleasure!"

"I don't think that Teddy knows about his aunt coming to see him," said his companion smilingly. "But if you could find him—"

"I will find—ah—Teddy for you at once!" beamed Mr. Linton. "Dear little Teddy! A most bright little boy!"

As a matter of fact, Jameson's name was not Teddy. But Mr. Linton did not know that.

But whatever his Christian name, Mr. Linton felt that such a young and pretty aunt was utterly wasted on Jameson of the Third.

"I fancy," went on Mr. Linton, in his most charming

manner, "that little—ah—Teddy will most likely be watching the match. There is a football match against a rival school—Greyfriars. All the dear boys are most interested in it—bless them, bless them! Boys will be boys, eh? Ha, ha! How well I remember my own youthful enthusiasms! Yes, I feel sure that Jameson will be watching the match. I will go to the football ground, madam, and send him to you. Or perhaps you would like to accompany me? The sunlight is so delightful! Only—ahem—pressure of scholastic work has held me indoors on such a lovely afternoon!"

Lady Peggy did not answer for a moment.

Her heart had gone cold.

If Mr. Linton went to look for Jameson on Little Side, he would be bound to see Tom Merry playing in the St. Jim's team!

She laid a hand on Mr. Linton's arm.

"No, I couldn't trouble you!"

"It will be a pleasure, I assure you!" cooed Mr. Linton. Really, he thought, it was disgraceful that such objectionable little brats as Jameson of the Third should own such delightful young aunts.

"Let us go and find dear little Teddy!" he murmured. "I shall be honoured to assist you!"

Lady Peggy was thinking quickly. She shook her head.

"You are too kind," she smiled. "But I think I will not interrupt Teddy, if he is watching an exciting match. I can wait till the match is over, and see him then? In the meantime—"

"Yes?" beamed Mr. Linton eagerly.

"Perhaps—perhaps you would show me round the school buildings—they are so old and beautiful!"

"I shall be only too delighted!" said Mr. Linton.

Two minutes later, the master of the Shell was strolling across the quadrangle, with "Jameson's aunt" imitating the walk of her favourite film-star at his side.

From the playing-fields came the distant sound of shouting. Evidently the Greyfriars match was still keeping the spectators at fever-pitch. But Mr. Linton's fair companion adroitly steered her escort as far as possible from that direction.

Once she fancied she heard a distant shout of "Come on, Merry!" But Mr. Linton, at any rate, heard nothing. He was far too wrapped up in his congenial task of pointing out the beauties of St. Jim's to the lady at his side.

Tom Merry was about the last person in the world of whom he was thinking now!

A figure that had appeared at the top of the School House steps chuckled softly.

It was Ralph Reckness Cardew!

CHAPTER 17.

In the Cloisters!

"AND these," murmured Mr. Linton, "are the cloisters!"

It was a little while later, and Mr. Linton felt that he had been getting along famously. He was feeling quite young, and very dashing. Never before had he met such an attractive young lady, he told himself. And it was quite clear to the master of the Shell that his companion was equally attracted to him.

That little dancing smile that she kept awarding him could mean nothing else, he felt sure.

"What lovely cloisters!" sighed Lady Peggy dreamily.

There were one or two green benches on the edge of the grass patch that the cloisters encircled.

"Shall we sit down?" suggested Lady Peggy.

Nothing loth, Mr. Linton helped his companion through one of the arches on to the grass. They sat down side by side.

Mr. Linton sighed.

"A delightful spot," he observed. "But, ah, how seldom enhanced by the presence of a member of the fairer sex! A scholastic life is a lonely one at times."

There was a stifled sound from his companion. Mr. Linton glanced at her.

"I—I think I sneezed!" gasped Lady Peggy.

Mr. Linton sighed again, and glanced at his watch.

"Dear me! The match will be over in a few minutes now, Miss Brooke." He had learnt that her name was Brooke, but that was all. "I feel sure you would like now to go to the football-field, to meet your nephew as he leaves the playing-fields—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lady Peggy—but to herself. "No!" she said aloud. "I like being here—"

"But surely, your nephew—"

"—with you!" cooed Lady Peggy, feeling that things were desperate.

Mr. Linton jumped. Colour suffused his elderly cheeks. He positively blushed.

"I—I beg your pardon!"

"I like being here, with you," whispered Lady Peggy.
 "I—I've always admired schoolmasters so—"

"Really, now!" beamed Mr. Linton. "I—I—"

"Such a noble profession!" Lady Peggy laid a tender hand upon Mr. Linton's arm. "And you, in particular—just my ideal of what a schoolmaster should be!"

Mr. Linton caught his breath.

Wild thoughts surged through his mind. Miss Finch! What a fool he had been to waste two thoughts about Miss Finch, when he was clearly so attractive to far, far younger ladies. After all, he wasn't really so very old, he told himself. Why become a crusty old bachelor? Why not, before it was too late, find some charming young lady who would consent to becoming Mrs. Linton? Why not, indeed?

Some charming young lady such as—well, Jameson's aunt.

"Miss Brooke, I—I—"

But then, in a moment, panic seized Mr. Linton; an overwhelming shyness. He glanced hastily at his watch again.

"I feel sure we should be going to the playing-fields in search of your nephew!" stammered Mr. Linton bashfully.

"Let us go at once, my dear young lady—"
 The playing-fields, where Tom Merry was still with his team! There was only one thing for it.

"Kiss me!" said Lady Peggy desperately.

Mr. Linton had had a good many shocks in his time, but never quite such a shock as this. He simply gaped.

"Kiss me!" breathed Lady Peggy, wishing heartily she had paid more attention to the big love scene in the last film she had seen in Wayland; she might have picked up a few tips, she was telling herself. "Kiss me!"

Mr. Linton gave a choking sound, like a cat with a bone in its throat.

"What-a-a-a-aat?" he gasped.

"At once!" commanded Lady Peggy, in tender tones.

Mr. Linton's brain was in a whirl. Panic seized him—for a moment he nearly fled. Then courage came surging through him. He glanced round hastily. There was no one about. Taking his courage in both hands, Mr. Linton delivered the goods, so to speak.

Smack!

Considering that it was Mr. Linton's first effort at osculation for many years, it was quite a creditable performance on his part. It fairly echoed round the cloisters.

A wave of triumphant satisfaction filled him—though it would scarcely have done so had he known that it had been only a schoolgirl from Spalding Hall whom he had kissed!

He beamed paternally at his fair companion. All idea of going in search of Jameson, at Little Side had left him. He preferred Jameson's aunt to Jameson of the Third.

"I—" he began.

Then he broke off, staring dumbly.

A gust of wind had blown open the coat that Cardew had borrowed from Marie Rivers, revealing to the startled eyes of the master of the Shell the uniform of a schoolgirl.

In a flash he realised the truth.
 A schoolgirl!

Mr. Linton very nearly had a fit. He leapt up as though he had been stung. There was a cry of dismay from Lady Peggy as she saw the cause of his indignation; but it was too late to attempt to conceal the truth.

And as he stood staring down at the schoolgirl who had hoaxed him, a flash of intuition came to Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry!

It had been to keep him from visiting the Shell Form-room that he had been lured away by "Jameson's aunt!" He was sure of it. Tom Merry had decamped, and he himself had been fooled.

A howl of rage broke from the master of the Shell.

He seemed about to speak, but changed his mind. Perhaps, in his present mood, he could not think of words.



"Kiss me!" breathed Lady Peggy. "Wha-a-a-aat?" gasped Mr. Linton, almost in a panic. "At once!" commanded Lady Peggy. The Form-master glanced round hastily. There seemed to be no one about. Taking his courage in both hands, Mr. Linton delivered the goods, so to speak. Smack! (See Chapter 17.)

suitable for Lady Peggy's tender years. Anyway, it was Tom Merry whom he wanted to find!

With a furious snort, Mr. Linton turned and dashed away, out of the cloisters, and across the quad. He pounded up the steps of the School House and fairly raced across the hall. Outside the Shell Form-room he halted, breathless, and grasped the handle of the door.

He swung the door open and glared in.

Tom Merry was not there! The Form-room was empty!

CHAPTER 18.

Bowed Out!

"PLAY up, Greyfriars!"

"On the ball, St. Jim's!"

The supporters of the rival teams were yelling excitedly as they watched a desperate mid-field tussle. At last St. Jim's got away with the ball, only to be beaten by the stalwart Greyfriars backs; a few moments later it was Greyfriars who were attacking.

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There were only five more minutes to go now, and still the score stood at one-all.

From the very first it had been a desperate, thrilling game; but now the suspense among the onlookers was electric.

Tom Merry, racing up the field with the ball in possession, after a lightning pass from Dick Redfern, was putting every ounce of energy into the game. He had utterly forgotten Mr. Linton and the fact that he was supposed to be toiling in the Shell Form-room. All that was washed from his mind—had been for the last quarter of an hour.

Tom had only one thought—to see his team beat Greyfriars!

"Go it, Tom!" muttered Manners, on the touchline, in a voice that was little more than an excited whisper.

Tom was tackled by Peter Todd; but his hefty shoulder-charge sent the Greyfriars player spinning, and he dashed on, flashing the ball across to Levison.

Levison was tackled; but a moment before he was sent sprawling by the charging shoulder of Harry Wharton of Greyfriars he got rid of the ball to Monty Lowther. Lowther was forced over the touchline by one of the Greyfriars half-backs, and Peter Todd toed the touchline with the ball in his hands for the throw-in.

And then, as the Greyfriars player swung the ball above his head, there was a startled gasp from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! Look—"

Tom Merry was beside the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus grasped his arm. Tom Merry glanced swiftly in the direction of the touchline, and caught his breath.

Mr. Linton was pushing his way through the onlookers, and the eyes of the master of the Shell were fixed upon Tom Merry with a glare of cold fury.

"Linton!" breathed Tom hoarsely.

"Merry!" Mr. Linton's voice from the touchline was heard plainly by the footballers. "You will be expelled for this! Leave the field instantly! I command you!"

Tom Merry passed a hand across his eyes in a queer, dazed way. A twisted smile appeared for a moment on his set face. In another moment he had turned and raced to his position on the field, joining in the struggle for the ball that was taking place near the half-way line.

Expulsion!

The word was drumming in his head.

So Cardew had failed!

Like a fellow in a dream, Tom found that the ball was at his toes. He saw the stalwart figure of Bob Cherry racing up to tackle him, and instinctively he tapped the ball across to Figgins, and ran past Bob Cherry. A flashing pass from Figgins gave him the ball again, and the captain of the St. Jim's eleven ran on.

Expulsion!

Yes, he would be expelled all right. Linton would see to that!

A mighty roar was in his ears, the shouting of the onlookers. A figure loomed up and fell away again—mysteriously, it seemed to Tom, for he was quite unconscious of having charged into the Greyfriars back and sent him spinning. He kept on; and suddenly the goal-posts were in front of him, with the Greyfriars goalkeeper tense and ready.

The next thing Tom Merry realised was that he was picking himself up rather painfully. The Greyfriars goalkeeper, too, was scrambling to his feet. But what really mattered was the fact that the ball was in a corner of the net, and the referee's whistle was shrilling out. Tom realised that he had made his shot only an instant before being charged over—and that shot had won the game.

There was a thunder of sound. The fellows were cheering. "Goal! Goal!"

Next moment the whistle sheepled again—a long, shrill blast—and he knew that the game was over.

The great match with Greyfriars was finished. And St. Jim's had won!

Tom Merry glanced across towards the touchline. The white, furious face of Mr. Linton was glaring across at him. As he looked Tom saw the master of the Shell turn and vanish in the crowd.

The next moment he was seized by a yelling throng and hoisted high on the shoulders of the St. Jim's juniors—the hero of the hour!

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Mr. Linton, pacing the carpet in his study—which was still in sad disorder—halted and glared at the door.

"Come in!" he rasped.

The door opened, and the smiling, immaculate figure of Ralph Reckness Cardew came strolling in, closing the door behind him.

"Hope you don't mind my droppin' in, sir—"

"What do you want?" thundered Mr. Linton.

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"Just a little chat, sir," murmured Cardew nonchalantly.

"If you can spare me a minute, what?"

"A—a—a chat?" cried Mr. Linton fiercely. "I—"

"I understand, sir," drawled Cardew, "that you mean to get Tom Merry expelled for breakin' detention this afternoon and playin' in the Greyfriars match?"

"That is so! But I do not intend to discuss the matter with you, Cardew—"

"I shouldn't, sir!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Mr. Linton.

"If I were you I should let the whole matter drop, sir," murmured Cardew. "Really I should!"

"Why—why, how dare you—"

"Forget for one moment, sir, what Tom Merry was doin', and let me tell you what I was doin' this afternoon," suggested Ralph Reckness Cardew in an easy tone. "You'll find it most interestin'! I—"

Mr. Linton gave a sudden exclamation. Cardew nodded. "I said you'd find my afternoon's doin's interestin'," he murmured. "You see, I went round the dear old cloisters, sir. I was there at about—let me see—just about ten minutes before the footer match ended."

"W-w-what?" breathed Mr. Linton, clutching at his desk. "Rather! It's jolly round the cloisters, isn't it? I often go there. You go there sometimes, too, I believe, sir?"

"What—what makes you think that?" gasped the master of the Shell.

"Why, now I come to think of it, I believe I saw you there this afternoon, if it comes to that!" exclaimed Cardew brightly. "With a lady! You sat on one of the benches. I don't think you saw me. You may have done, but I think you didn't. I was in the shadow there, on the other side of the cloisters altogether."

Mr. Linton was staring at Cardew as though he had seen a ghost.

"What do you mean?" he stammered at last.

"Oh, nothin'!" Cardew turned towards the door. "But I'm rather hopin' you'll see your way to droppin' that business of Tom Merry. He didn't really mean any harm, you know. If you do get him expelled, of course, it'll be a very interestin' subject for talk at St. Jim's for quite a long while. But I wonder—"

Cardew broke off. Mr. Linton licked his dry lips.

"You—you wonder?"

"I wonder if it'll be so interestin' a subject for St. Jim's to talk about as how you were ramped in the cloisters by a schoolgirl?" drawled Cardew thoughtfully. "What do you think, sir?"

He turned the handle. Mr. Linton waved a shaking arm.

"Close that door!"

He dropped heavily into a chair and stared at Cardew. Cardew hid a yawn politely behind his finger-tips.

"Cardew," said Mr. Linton thickly, "I—I think I was wrong to be so harsh with Tom Merry. I consider that his anxiety since the match over his expected expulsion has been sufficient punishment for his playing truant this afternoon. I—I shall say nothing of the matter, therefore, to Dr. Holmes."

Cardew chuckled.

"Good! Very—ahem!—sportin' of you, sir." He grinned. "By the way, sir—about Taggles. It wasn't he who checked you this afternoon, sir. That was a little jape on the part of a fellow who's not a pupil at this school. He's a ventriloquist. I can prove that if necessary; so I shouldn't say anything to the Head about old Taggles, either."

"Ven-ven-ventriloquist?" gasped Mr. Linton.

"That's it, sir," nodded Cardew carelessly. "Clever, what? Well, I think I'll be goin'. Good-evenin', sir!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew opened the door and stepped silently from the room.

True to his enforced promise, Mr. Linton never breathed a word to Dr. Holmes of Tom Merry's broken detention on the afternoon of the Greyfriars match. He did not even mention it again to Tom himself.

And Cardew kept his part of the bargain. He never mentioned to a soul Mr. Linton's romantic moment in the cloisters; and Lady Peggy of Spalding Hall promised to keep silent, too.

Therefore Tom Merry never knew why he escaped the wrath of the master of the Shell. All he knew was that he had Cardew to thank, in some queer way. And knowing Cardew, Tom did not try to extract from him the full explanation of how the slacker of the Fourth had saved him from the consequences of his reckless participation in the Greyfriars match, in defiance of the master of the Shell, on the occasion when he had been up against Linton.

THE END.

(Who says a yarn of the "thriller" type? All of you! Then look out for: "THE HAUNTED STUDY!" next week's extra special story of St. Jim's.)

DAVID GOODWIN'S

Remarkable School Story, which deals with the exploits of—

THE WORST FORM AT CODRINGTON!

A Tall Story.

TAFFY & CO sprinted round at the back of the shrubberies as quickly as they could go, but it looked as if they would be cut off from their road of retreat.

Somebody came running past the old gym, and the moment he was out of the way the three nightfarers scrambled on to the leads of the gym again and in through the window.

"They'll be searchin' the whole place for open windows in a jiff," muttered Taffy, as he hastily closed the casement. "An' the whole house is buzzin'! Scoot to the lobby, and watch for a chance to get back into the dormitory as soon as the coast's clear."

Meanwhile, before the three chums had regained the house, Ferguson and his merry men found themselves face to face with an awkward situation. They would willingly have made an escape, too, out of modesty; but Mr. Quayle and Mr. Perkes, darting round the corner, came upon them just as Ferguson was picking himself up, gasping for breath.

"Kempe! Ferguson!" cried Mr. Perkes. "What are you doing here?"

"We were tryin' to catch the thief, sir!" said Kempe gloomily, and then he started as he saw the Head come round the corner, looking stern and anxious.

"Thief? What thief?" said the Head, catching Kempe's words. "Who are these boys?"

Mr. Lambe silently joined the group, his eyeglass glittering in the starlight as he gazed reflectively at the woe-begone three, and, at the sight of him, Ferguson, remembering his wrongs, boiled up.

"We were trying to catch a thief, sir, who was getting into the school, or, rather, having plunder passed out to him by an accomplice!" spluttered Ferguson. "And he knocked me down—"

"One moment!" said the Head sternly. "Will you first explain how you came to be out of the school at this time of night, and what you were doing?"

"We—er—we—er—that is, we happened to hear a noise, sir, and looked out of the dormitory window," said Ferguson, collecting his wits. "We saw a man stealing past, so we—we thought we'd better slip some clothes on and see what he was up to. We came down through the servants' door, and we saw the thief!"

Ferguson paused dramatically.

"Well?"

"He was climbing up the ivy to Mr. Lambe's window," said Ferguson, with a fierce glance at the eyeglass. "But perhaps Mr. Lambe can tell you more about it than I can," he concluded ominously.

All eyes were turned on the Remove master, and Kempe and Kent-Williams, who felt very nervous, inwardly applauded Ferguson.

"Bless me!" said the Head. "Is there really anything in this, or is it some silly piece of imagination—or worse? Did you see this thief, Mr. Lambe? Have you missed anything from your study?"

"I have missed nothing!" said the Remove master, with a calm smile. "Ferguson tells the story so well that it would be a pity to break into it."

"Proceed, Ferguson!" said the Head.

"The light went out in Mr. Lambe's room, sir," said Ferguson, wishing himself safe in bed, or anywhere but under the Head's eye, "and I thought I saw something passed out—that is, I lost sight of the thief for a moment, and then I shouted for the sergeant to come and help, and I rushed forward to seize the ruffian as soon as he came down. But he—er—he jumped right down on top of me, and knocked all the breath out of my body, sir."

"And then he was off before we could catch him, sir," put in Kent-Williams and Kempe eagerly.

"Look at the state I am in, sir," said Ferguson plaintively, calling attention to his clothes, which were covered with wet gravel, and one side of his face, that had also been well rubbed in it. "I did it for the sake of the school, sir, because I thought you were being robbed, and, if you'll

The worst Form at Codrington is at it again—trying to expose their new Form-master for the escaped convict they fully believe him to be. Their latest enterprise, however, proves as amusing as it is amazing.

look among our valuables, sir," he added, with a sidelong glance at the Woolly Lambe, but addressing the Head, "I expect you'll find some missing."

"Eh? Why, the man did not succeed in getting into the house at all!" said the Head in surprised tones.

"I fancy he's got an accomplice in the school, sir," muttered Ferguson, with another glance at the imperturbable Woolly Lambe.

But the Head somehow continued to look suspiciously at Ferguson, for he knew the record of the three companions was none too good. The speaker's gravel-stained condition seemed to bear out the tale, however.

"I suttonly saw somebody a-running half-way down the laurel path," said the sergeant, "and, unless my ears deceived me, sir, I heard voices there."

"That was the man!" said Kempe eagerly. "He bolted that way, sir."

"Really," said the Head, for the sergeant's evidence impressed him. "Then we had better have a search made at once. The police must be informed, and I will immediately inspect all valuables, and see if any are missing. You boys had better return to your dormitories at once. Ferguson, I am—er—I have to thank you for your—hem—efforts on behalf of the school. We will go into this matter to-morrow, however, when we know more about it, and I will see you in my study at eleven o'clock. And now to inform the police."

The Head turned away, and was shortly overtaken by Mr. Lambe, who went off in conversation with him.

The three amateur policemen, in deep disgust, went indoors.

In the meantime, Taffy and his cronies, also discomfited, had regained the shelter of their dormitory without mishap.

Taffy Attempts a Difficult Undertaking!

THE Head called the school together in Hall, and made a welcome announcement. An old Codrington boy, General Sir Cecil Hutton, after a victory over certain tribesmen on the North-West Indian Frontier, had cabled to the school asking the Head to grant the boys a whole holiday in celebration of the event.

The Remove agreed that it was a first-class piece of luck, and that Sir Cecil Hutton was the sort of chap the school ought to turn out more frequently.

"I've heard he was the biggest terror in the Remove in his time," said Birne. "May he go on earnin' whole holidays for us as long as there's a nigger left in India. All the same, there's a fly in the giddy ointment. I've got such a lot of impots that it'll take me all the morning to do 'em."

"Same here!" said Taffy. "The Woolly Lambe's been piling 'em on lately. He didn't use to do that so much. It ain't playing the game, you chaps."

"He's been here about a month now," said Ferguson, "and the police haven't been after him yet."

"Wouldn't it be sport to get oneself up like a constable in uniform, and come an' arrest him, just to see what he'd do?" said Taffy, grinning.

"I thought you barred that sort of thing," said Kempe. "So I did; but that was when Lambe behaved like a sportsman. All these impots freeze up the giddy milk of sympathy in my—er—bosom; though I still consider puttin' handcuffs on his desk as rather caddish," added Taffy—and Ferguson sneered—"but perhaps I might fall as low even as that, if he gives me a few more lines to do. What d'you think, Jelly?"

"I rather like Mr. Lambe," said Jellicoe simply; "but if he is really a criminal person, as you say, I think you had better leave it to the real police to arrest him, and not meddle with it."

"From the lips of infants and blithering idiots cometh forth wisdom," said Saunderson. "All right, kid, I don't want to scrap with you. You're hot stuff, though you don't

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look it! All the same, there's a suit of policeman's clothes for hire in Blentford, if a spoof arrest is the idea."

"What d'you mean?" said Ferguson. "Suit of clothes? Which? How?"

"I saw 'em in Blentford High Street last week, anyhow. There was a travelling theatrical company got sold up, I'm told, and all their props were on sale in a shop window. There were dresses and tights, and soldiers' kits, and I noticed a policeman's uniform, with helmet an' truncheon, all complete," said Saunderson, grinning.

"Of course, I was only rottin'," said Taffy. "Who would tackle such a job in his senses? It would take a precious hefty bobby to arrest the Lambe, too! Who's coming down for some footer before the wind hardens the ground?"

The Remove joined issue with a party from the Fourth and went down to the field. The ground was very dry, no rain having fallen for a long time, except a slight shower the previous night. They put in an hour and a half's solid practice, and then the Remove, after changing in the pavilion, returned to the School House to make its arrangements for the day; there being, of course, no match fixed for the unexpected holiday.

Taffy and his satellites looked in at Study No. 12 on their way along the upper corridor, where many of the other players had congregated already, and there they found Saunderson. He had not been present on the footer-field, and was in his bowler hat—clear proof that he had been on a journey. It was not the thing to wear a cap if one went any farther than the village confines. A large parcel lay on the desk before Saunderson.

"Hallo, Slacker!" said Taffy. "What have you been up to? What's in the bundle? Grub for the Form?"

"No," said Saunderson, twisting his gold watch-chain round his fingers. "I didn't think of grub, or I'd have brought some for the chaps. This is what I spoke to you about. I went and got it."

Saunderson, with much dignity—for some of the boys rather respected him on account of his wonderful supplies of pocket-money—undid the parcel, and showed a complete and well-brushed policeman's uniform, with tunic, helmet, belt, truncheon, and Government boots, all in order.

"What the deuce is that for?" said Walsh.

"I got it in the town, from the shop I told you about," said Saunderson, as the Form crowded round wonderingly. "I fetched it on purpose for Wynne."

"For me?" said Taffy, staring.

"Yes. So that you could arrest Lambe, you know—as you said you would."

"Have you gone off your chump, Saunderson?" said Taffy, in amazed tones.

"Case of softenin' of the brain," observed Dereker, shaking his head gravely; "must be. Comes of havin' too much pocket-money!"

"Do you mean to say you bought that uniform," exclaimed Walsh, "for Taffy?"

"I hired it," replied Saunderson. "The price was jolly stiff, though."

"Then you must have more money than sense!" said Taffy. "However, we'll allow it to be a joke, if that'll comfort you. Is this where we laugh?"

"You did say so!" insisted Saunderson. "Didn't he, you chaps? You said what a rippin' thing it'd be to put up a bluff arrest on Lambe, an' run him in, to see what he'd do."

"It'd be a rippin' joke on Lambe!" exclaimed Kent-Williams. "Simply gorgeous! He'd give himself away, an' go all to pieces when he found he was nabbed at last. An' the bobby'd only have to slip away if things got hot, an' bunk down a side-passage."

"Some of us could be looking on, round the corners, so we could see what a show he made of himself," said Kempe. "It'd put him in our giddy hands for ever!"

"He'd never know who you were with that helmet on, and a dark place like that passage," chimed in Ferguson.

"Any chap can see how easy it is. However, you can settle the details yourself. I don't mind sayin', Wynne, that I think you've struck a really neat idea at last."

"I dare say you do," said Taffy, "but you all jolly well know I never said I'd do it, nor would any chap with as much brains as a flea. All I said was, it'd be fun to see it. So it would be to see Ferguson jump down a well with a fifty-pound weight tied to his leg. But I don't suppose he'd do it. It'd be just as sensible. Saunderson, my oozy youth, you can take those duds back to the shop."

"You won't wear them?" cried Saunderson. "Why not?"

"Because I don't choose!"

"You're afraid!" said Ferguson. "Isn't he, you chaps? You funk it, that's all!"

Several of his followers echoed him. Everybody was excited about the uniform.

"Afraid of what?" said Taffy, flushing angrily. "Who says so?"

"I do!" jeered Ferguson. "We all do! You're plucky enough when it's only talking and blowing and bragging. But when the things are brought for you it's a very different tale. It was your idea. I dare you to put it through! But you won't, of course! No, you'd rather sneak out of it!"

"You dare me, do you?" cried Taffy, red as fire. "By gum, I'll do it then! Give me those togs! I never said I'd do it, but I will! And I'll thrash you into a jolly afterwards for saying I'd funk, you beast, Ferguson!"

Taffy's explosion astonished even his chums, and he seized the uniform and helmet without more ado.

"Here, chuck it, Taffy; don't be an ass!" said Birne.

"Let me alone! I shall go and change in the water tap-room on Lambe's floor," said Taffy, hurrying out with the clothes, followed by the applause of the Form and the jeers of some who doubted he would be as good as his word. "There's just time."

He darted upstairs and hurried into the tap-room where the water-jugs were filled—a little, dim compartment in the second corridor.

He was tall for his age, and the uniform was not made for a particularly large policeman. By turning the legs of the trousers inwards a couple of inches they did pretty well as to length, though they were baggy. The tunic wanted some padding out with towels, but the regulation boots, above all, needed filling up.

"I say!" said Walsh, sticking his excited face in through the doorway. "Hurry up! It's just about Lambe's time for leavin' his study an' you'll catch him on the hop if you go at once! Come on!"

"There aren't any signs of the Lambe yet, are there?" exclaimed Taffy, struggling with the buttons of the tunic.

"No; but he might turn up any moment. It'll be no go if you miss him now," returned Walsh.

"Get out of this, you little nuisance!" cried the exasperated Dereker, rushing at the messenger and sending him flying out into the passage. "Who asked you to shove your snout in here?"

Dereker was particularly annoyed at Walsh's interference. He knew well enough there would be no chance of catching the Woolly Lambe unless they hurried, and he devoutly hoped they would be too late; there were few risks Dereker would have refused to run, but he believed Taffy was throwing himself away foolishly by undertaking such a jape as this. Birne quite agreed with him.

They both purposely blundered as much as possible in dressing Taffy, and in addition to getting boots on the wrong feet, put the belt on inside out, and both these items had to be changed again.

"Do hurry up!" cried Taffy impatiently. "You chaps are all thumbs this morning! I shall go just as I am if you don't get it right soon."

Taffy was turned out fairly well a few moments later; the chums, seeing he was bent on it, thinking they had better do their utmost to get him as fit as possible for the part he was to play. The striped cuff-band showing he was on duty was buckled on to Taffy's sleeve, and then the helmet was placed on his head.

Being about three sizes too large, it came down nearly to Taffy's chin, and which ever way it was tried on it would not fit.

"Looks more like a giddy extinguisher than a helmet," said Dereker.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Convinced that Mr. Woolaston Lambe, their new Form-master, is an escaped convict, Taffy Wynne & Co. and Ferguson & Co., rival factions in the Remove, the most unruly Form at Codrington, determine to bring pressure to bear to rid the school of the new master's presence. The Woolly Lambe proves equal to the occasion, however, and the miscreants are punished accordingly. Shortly after this a suspicious-looking individual is seen lurking within the vicinity of the school. Suspecting the man to be in league with the Woolly Lambe, Ferguson and his cronies secrete themselves in the shrubberies late at night, from whence they watch the Form-master's window. Before very long the mysterious stranger appears, and after a furtive glance round, clambers up the ivy-covered wall directly beneath the Form-master's window. Raising a cry of "Thief!" Ferguson rushes to the spot. Springing out from the wall, the nocturnal visitor drops intentionally on the big Remove, sending him rolling over and yelling with pain. Taffy Wynne and his merry men who had followed in the wake of Ferguson & Co., make a grab at the fleeing figure. The man quickly informs the juniors that they are making fools of themselves, then wrenching himself free disappears from sight. Realising that there must be some mistake, and hearing approaching footsteps in answer to Ferguson's agonised yells, Taffy & Co. decide to dash back to their quarters while the going is good.

(Now read on.)

They hastily hunted up a thick sheet of brown paper from the cupboard, and, making it into a ring, fitted it round the inside of the rim, and then crammed the helmet on Taffy's head. They set the belt straight, pushed a white wool glove as big as an overcoat on to each of Taffy's hands, and stood back to look at him.

"Will it do?" said Taffy eagerly.

"Jolly lucky there ain't much light in the corridor, 'specially near Lambe's room," replied Birne, looking at him critically. "Draw a line or two under his eyes with the end of a burnt match, Derry, to make him look older. Yes, that's better. Don't overdo it."

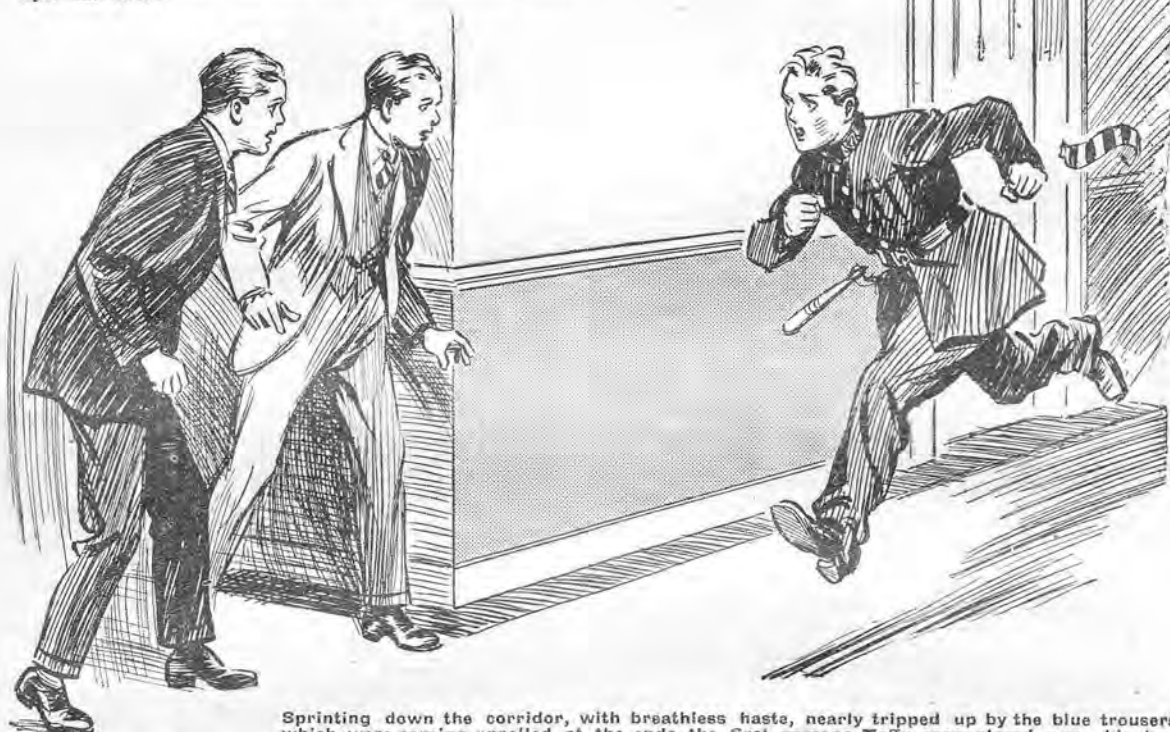
"You look as if you want a course of suppers with the cook to fill those togs out, Robert," said Dereker; "but it's the best we can do. Now, then, are you really going to tackle this job, or won't you think better of it? There's precious little sense in it, an' it means you're pretty certain to get sacked."

"I'm going through with it, I tell you!" exclaimed Taffy. "Open the door!"

stairs, leaving the pan and brush where they fell. As she did so, Mr. Lambe's door suddenly opened violently, and the master himself strode out.

"Who is asking for me? What is all this?" he said sharply; and then his eyes fell on the uniformed figure, and he paused in surprise.

Taffy's heart failed him for once, and he wished himself a mile away. The situation seemed appalling. However, if was no use backing out now, and, trusting to the gloom, he stalked towards the master with a firm step but a quaking heart.



Sprinting down the corridor, with breathless haste, nearly tripped up by the blue trousers which were coming unrolled at the ends, the first persons Taffy encountered were his two chums at the corner. "Into the tap-room! Look sharp!" he hissed. "The Lambe's after me!" (See page 28.)

Finding he was determined, Dereker and Birne ushered him out into the passage, where a chorus of guffaws from the assembled Form greeted his appearance.

"Pass along here—pass along," said Taffy, pacing out heavily with the genuine policeman's stride. "Don't obstruct the thrurfare!"

"Come on, you rotters, don't spoil the game!" said Walsh to the rest, and the Form rather reluctantly withdrew.

They would not go right away, however, and heads were peeping furtively round the corners in each corridor as Taffy and his chums marched towards their goal.

"You chaps had better fall back here," said Taffy, as they came in sight of the end of the passage. "I'll go on alone."

Dereker and Birne, halting, watched Taffy's progress with some misgivings. Neither of them felt comfortable, and they retired round the corner, so as not to interfere with their leader's business.

As Taffy passed the top of the side stairs, Jane Matilda, one of the housemaids, came up them. Finding herself face to face with a live policeman in the very heart of the School House, she dropped her dustpan and brush and gave a loud squawk.

"Oh, my!" she cried.

"Don't be alarmed, my gal," said Taffy, with a majestic wave of his hand. "I ain't come for you. All I require o' you is to tell me which is the room of a man called Lambe."

"What, Mr. Lambe, the master?" she gasped.

"That's the one. Don't make no noise about it, but just point 'is room out quiet an' leave the rest to me."

The housemaid was so frightened that she bolted down the

"It's my duty to appre'end you," he said hoarsely, "and anything you say may be used—"

"You confounded fellow!" cried the Woolly Lambe, suddenly darting forward and seizing Taffy angrily by the arm. "Didn't I tell you I wouldn't have this? How dare you, sir—eh?"

Taffy was so taken aback by this that he was quite at a loss what to do or say.

"Do you mean to disregard my warnings altogether?" cried the angry master. "I'll have you turned out of the Force, you infernal nuisance! Come here!"

Before he knew what was happening, Taffy found himself whirled into the housemaid's brush-room close beside—a small, dim compartment where the brooms and dusters were kept. Mr. Lambe's strength was surprising, and for the first time he seemed to have quite lost his temper.

"You come here—in uniform, too!—and inquire after me from the very servants—in hearing of half the boys in the school, too! Haven't I warned you fellows about this? By Jove, I'll teach you a lesson, my man! I've had enough of this!"

The master's feelings overcame him, and, taking the sham policeman by the shoulders, the Woolly Lambe shook him till his teeth rattled.

Taffy did not know whether he was on his head or his heels. The master's grip was like a pair of vices, and Taffy found himself whirled to and fro like a roll of carpet. His helmet flew off, with the brown-paper pad and the towel inside, and Mr. Lambe, seeing the victim's youthful appearance, in spite of the darkness, stopped in amazement.

"Why, what the deuce does this mean?" he cried.

Taffy did not wait to reply. The moment the master's hands were off him he bolted. Darting to the door and dodging the grab Mr. Lambe made at him, the boy slipped through, pulled the door to with a jerk, and snapped the catch into place. Then he flew down the corridor for his life.

Of the consequences of locking the master in he recked nothing. His one idea was to gain time for escape, in the forlorn hope that he had not been recognised. He heard the Woolly Lambe kicking and puling at the door as he fled.

Sprinting down the corridor with breathless haste, nearly tripped up by the blue trousers which were coming unrolled at the ends, the first persons he encountered were his two chums at the corner, who joined him in his flight.

"Into the tap-room!" yelled Taffy breathlessly. "Look sharp! The Lambe's after me!"

No quick-change performer at a variety show ever did a more rapid transformation than Taffy then. He was wearing his own clothes, of course, under the uniform. It was the work of a moment to scuttle out of his disguise, cram on his shoes, and scrub the charcoal marks off his face with a handkerchief. Dereker snatched up the accented uniform and crammed it into a cupboard just as Johnson II. stuck his head inside the door.

"I say," he whispered hoarsely, "the Lambe's broken open the door, an' he's coming down the corridor! Look out, you chaps!"

"Then we'll go and meet him!" said Dereker desperately. "Clear out of the way, Johnson! Come on, Taffy!"

Arm-in-arm, the three chums emerged and walked coolly along the passage, Taffy in the middle. They would rather have made a bolt of it, but they considered Taffy's best chance was to let himself be seen at once, clothed and in his right mind. They felt a thrill of doubt and apprehension as the Woolly Lambe came in sight.

He was walking down the passage with a rapid stride and a slight flush on his cheek, straight towards them. The three boys stepped aside respectfully to let him pass, and the master, casting one of his keen glances over the three, went

straight on without pausing. The danger, for the moment, at any rate, was over.

"Phew!" sighed Dereker, leaning against the wall with a sigh of relief. "That's over! I believe he doesn't know who it was, 'pon my word I do!"

"I wish I felt sure about it," said Taffy thoughtfully. "You never know what to make of him."

The chums, feeling quite bewildered, drifted into No. 12, where most of the Remove had retreated, and Taffy was received with uproarious glee.

Taffy did not feel much inclined to give information, for he felt he had slipped through the lion's claws by a lucky accident, and might yet suffer for it.

"He believed you were a policeman, anyhow, till your helmet came off!" exclaimed Johnson. "Fancy goin' for a bobby like that! He can't be very scared of gettin' arrested."

"I tell you what it is, you chaps," cried Walsh. "He's got a pull over some of the police, that's what's up. That's why he's been loose all this time. They have to smell round after him, on account of orders, but they aren't arrest him."

"You've hit it," exclaimed Minors, "else why did he say he'd warned the police not to do it?"

"It looks like that at present," said Johnson. "I say, Taffy, here's your cuff-band," he added, holding up the striped band that belonged to the uniform. "It came off your sleeve in the corridor, and I picked it up."

"Thanks! Give it here!" said Taffy, taking it from Johnson. "By the way, Saunderson, you'll have to do without your giddy helmet. It fell off, and the Lambe captured it, I expect."

"Oh, never mind that!" said the wealthy Saunderson. "I don't care a hang about the expense, after such a jape! You brought the thing off rippingly, Wynne!"

(There's a big surprise in store for the Remove Form at Codrington, and for you, too, chums. You'll read all about it in next week's instalment of this ripping serial. Don't miss it, whatever you do!)

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