

SIDE-SPLITTING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN WITHIN!

The GEM 2^D



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CHAPTER 1.

The Adventure of the White Mouse.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry.

The boys of St. Jim's were assembled in Hall, and the Head had given that little preparatory cough which the boys knew so well.

"Silence!"

Tom Merry stood with his Form, the Shell, and the rest of the Snell were all attention; but Tom Merry seemed distressed in some unaccountable way. He gave an uncomfortable wriggle and tried to insert his hand between his collar and his neck, and then, as he found his Form master's eye on him, he looked very red.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Tom. "Where's that little beggar got to?"

"Silence, there!"

Manners looked at his chum in surprise.

"What's the matter with you, Tom?" he whispered. "Why don't you keep still? Old Linton's got his eye on you. You'll catch it soon!"

"It's that giddy white mouse I swapped my pen-knife for, with Herries."

"What's the matter with it?"

"It's slithered down the back of my neck."

Manners gave a suppressed giggle.

"Silence, there, if you please!" said Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell. "I shall not speak again, Merry."

"I'm sure I don't want you to," murmured Tom Merry, sotto voce.

"Ahem!" came from Dr. Holmes.

Silence reigned in the Hall, and all eyes were turned towards the doctor. The boys wondered what he had to say.

"H'm!" said the Head. "Boys, I wish to speak to you upon a subject I have referred to before. I have only a few words to say, but I trust they will be listened to with attention."

The boys all looked politely attentive.

"You are aware," resumed the Head, "that a building has lately been erected within the walls of St. Jim's, where the boys are now allowed to keep any pets they choose—a permission which has been taken advantage of to a very wide extent."

"Hear, hear!" said a voice at the back of the Hall, which sounded a good deal like Jack Blake's; but it would have been difficult to identify the culprit.

"I am glad to see this," continued Dr. Holmes. "I am glad to see a boy fond of animals, and by keeping pets, and taking proper care of them, a lad naturally learns to be kind and considerate towards dumb creatures. This is good; but there is one point that is not so satisfactory."

Here the Head paused for effect; and in the dead silence

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The ST. JIM'S



that followed his words, came a very distinct gasp from Tom Merry.

Dr. Holmes' eye singled him out like a rapier.

"It is very peculiar, Merry, that you cannot keep quiet for a few minutes," the doctor remarked. "This is the third time I think that you have made yourself audible. Will you kindly be silent until I have finished?"

The doctor's irony made poor Tom turn quite crimson.

"Yes, sir!" he stammered.

"Thank you, Merry. Now, as I was saying, boys, there is one point which is far from satisfactory, and that is that many of you—especially among the juniors—have been careless enough to bring pets into the school itself, in spite of positive orders to the contrary. This is very bad."

"Shocking!" murmured Jack Blake to his chums, Herries and D'Arcy. "Awful! How dared we?"

"This must not continue," resumed Dr. Holmes. "I have had a complaint from Mrs. Mimms, the house-dame of the School House, who found a frog in her hat last evening and was greatly startled when she put the hat on."

There was a faint ripple of laughter through the Hall.

"This creature had evidently escaped from its owner, who had brought it into the School House, and it had taken refuge in Mrs. Mimms' hatbox," said the doctor. "This kind of thing must cease. I may say that a severe punishment will be visited upon any boy who in future disregards the rule upon this subject, and such culprits will be prohibited from keeping pets in the future."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

The Head's freezing glare was turned upon him.

"Merry!"

"Sir!"

"You were pleased to make a remark just now, Merry."

"Yes, sir."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'Oh, my hat!' sir!" said Tom demurely.

"Indeed! And for what did you make that absurd and, indeed, meaningless remark?"

"I—I— Something startled me, sir."

"Stand out here, Merry!"

Tom obediently left the ranks of the Shell.

The doctor fixed his eyes sternly upon him.

"Now, Merry, kindly explain yourself. Was it your intention to be deliberately impertinent by interrupting me?"

Tom looked shocked.

"Oh, sir! No, sir! Oh, sir!"

"Then why— But what are you 'wriggling in that absurd manner for?"

Tom had given an uncomfortable twist.

"I—I— Did I wriggle, sir?"

"Yes, sir!" exclaimed the doctor, raising his voice a little.

"You did wriggle, and I have asked you why you wriggled."

"I—I—I—"

"That is no explanation. I am waiting to be enlightened, Merry."

"I—I— Something tickled me, sir."

"Oh!" said the Head, with withering sarcasm. "Something tickled you, did it? And what was it, Merry, that tickled you?"

"I think it—it must have been a mouse, sir."

The Head stared.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

The whole Hall was giggling.

STRONGER THAN EVER! PETS BECOME PESTS!

MENAGERIE!

Long Complete
Yarn of TOM
MERRY & CO.

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

"Merry, how dare you make such a reply to me!"
"You asked me, sir. I feel sure it was a mouse. Oh crumbs!" Tom wriggled again. "There he goes again, the little beast!"

"Do you mean to say that you have a mouse about your person, Merry?" demanded the amazed doctor.

"I'm afraid so, sir. It feels just like it."

"How could the mouse possibly have got into your clothes?"

"I think it must have got out of my pocket, sir."

"Your pocket! How could it be in your pocket in the first place?"

"I must have put it there, sir."

"You—you—you put it there?"

"Yes, sir. It's a white mouse."

"Oh, I perceive!" The Head smiled grimly. "It is, in fact, one of the pets which you have been forbidden to bring into the school, Merry?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Then give it to me at once!"

"Certainly, sir."

Tom Merry made a dive with his hand down the back of his neck, then another inside his jacket. Then up his sleeve, then into his shirt. The whole Hall burst into a yell of laughter at the sight of his contortions as he searched for the elusive white mouse, and even the doctor's stern visage relaxed.

"Never mind, Merry, you need not—"

"I've nearly got him, sir!" gasped Tom.

"Never mind—"

"Here he is, sir."

Tom had caught the delinquent at last. He held the little creature in his hand, and extended it to the Head.

Dr. Holmes took the mouse from him. Now that he had it he was rather puzzled what to do with it, but he held it in his hand.

"You may go to your place, Merry. You will write fifty lines of Virgil for bringing the mouse into the school. The mouse will be confiscated."

"Oh, sir! If you wouldn't mind—"

"You may go, Merry."

Tom went back to his place, looking rather dismayed. He didn't want to part with his late acquisition, but the Head's will was law.

"Now, my boys," said the doctor, turning to the assembled school again. "I think I have said all. Whoever brings a pet into the school will be severely punished, and the creature will be confiscated and sold to the dealer in Rylcombe, and the proceeds of such a sale will be sent to a deserving charity. You will bear that in mind."

And the Head raised his arm as a signal to dismiss, and to give additional weight to his remarks, and then he gave a gasp.

He had for the moment forgotten the white mouse.

The boys were about to dismiss when they were amazed to see their sedate and revered Head suddenly give a spasmodic wriggle.

"Dear me!" gasped Dr. Holmes. "Dear, dear me!"

Tom Merry gave a suppressed shout.

"My only Panama hat! He's got the little beggar up his sleeve!"

The Head was making a dive up his right sleeve with his left hand. His face was very red. Then he wriggled and twisted quite fantastically.

The whole Hall giggled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's got it himself now. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted the masters, trying to look stern; but with the dignified Head performing such peculiar gymnastics in the sight of all, that was a difficult thing to do.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The doctor quickly realised that he couldn't catch that elusive mouse, and that he was cutting a comical figure.

He made a dart for the nearest door and strode from the

Hall—or, rather, bolted from it—with his gown trailing and rustling behind him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The doctor's ears burned as he heard the shout of irresistible laughter that followed him from the Hall. It was some minutes before the masters could restore order—indeed, some of them wore a broad grin themselves. And Tom Merry, in spite of the imposition he had earned, was chuckling as he marched off with the rest of the Shell to the class-room.

CHAPTER 2.

The Giddy Goat.

THE Head's permission to keep pets had certainly been taken advantage of to the full by the boys of St. Jim's.

Trouble had often been caused by the keeping of pets in the studies, but now that a separate building—called the "menagerie" by the boys—was devoted to the purpose, there was really no reason why the youngsters should not keep them to their hearts' content.

But as for confining the pets to the menagerie, that was another matter.

For, as Figgins remarked, when a chap had a giddy monkey he wanted to have it, not to keep it at a distance and go and look at it sometimes. Kerr agreed with him, though Kerr didn't specially like monkeys, his own favourite being a billy-goat. And Fatty Wynn concurred, though neither monkey nor billy-goat appealed to him, his pets being white rabbits.

Figgins & Co. were indignant.

And on this point, for once, they found agreement with their views expressed by the juniors of the School House.

New House and School House, as a rule, agreed upon nothing except ragging each other, but they heartily concurred in this matter.

"It's rot!" said Jack Blake, laying down the law in Study No. 6 in the School House. "Simply absolute rot and piffle!"

"What is?" asked Herries.

"This keeping of pets out of the house. There's my jolly old parrot has been sent away, and I shall have to get him back again somehow."

"Yes," agreed Herries. "Your parrot doesn't matter much, but my bulldog—"

"Oh, blow your old bulldog! I should draw a line at that!"

"Would you, though? We don't want a beastly parrot hopping about and squeaking and cackling. Now, my bulldog—"

"You couldn't keep a bulldog in a study," said Blake. "You couldn't expect us to stand it. My parrot would be all right."

"Oh, rats to your parrot!" said Herries.

"Same to your bulldog!" replied Blake. "The Head's quite right there—you couldn't expect to keep such a brute in a civilised study. My parrot—"

"Weally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "we don't want either of them in here, dear boys. I strongly object to them. If you'd only keep something nice and quiet, like my white rabbits—"

"But your white rabbits!" said Herries crossly. "Think we could stand the rotten things in here? Not half!"

"I should think not!" exclaimed Blake. "No beastly white rabbits or rotten bulldogs in this show. A parrot makes things so homelike."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in D'Arcy.

In Study No. 10 there was a discussion on the same lines. Tom Merry thought it sheer nonsense that he couldn't keep his white mice and a lizard in the study. Manners, whose taste ran in the direction of canaries, wanted his cage put up there.

TOM MERRY GETS KERR'S GOAT!

But he gives it back again—after
it's butted the Head!

"It's rot!" said Tom Merry. "The Head does not understand. It's such a long time since he was a kid. I say, Manners, old man, Kerr wants to sell his goat. He says it's too much trouble to keep it if it's got to be stuck in the menagerie."

"You don't want to buy it, do you?" said Manners.

"I was thinking of it. There's a lot of fun to be got out of a billy-goat," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "We could teach it to butt every New House boy it came across, you know, and lots of nice things like that."

Manners grinned.

"But what about keeping it in the menagerie?"

Tom shook his head decidedly.

"Couldn't be did. It would have to live there, but we should want it in the School House to teach it tricks, shouldn't we?"

"I suppose so."

"Let's go and see Kerr about it," suggested Tom Merry. "As it's a half-holiday this afternoon most of the masters are away, and we should have a chance of getting it in here without some of them spotting us."

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

And the Terrible Two—for while Monty Lowther was away they were no longer the Terrible Three—quitted the School House and walked over into the enemy's country. Most of the juniors of St. Jim's were on the cricket field, hard at practice, for the last House match of the season was close at hand, and the rival elevens were eager to keep themselves fit.

But Tom saw Figgins in the window of his study, so he guessed that the chief of the New House juniors and the Co. were at home.

They met Monteith, the new prefect of New House, in the Hall, and the prefect looked at them in his sour, suspicious way.

"Hallo! What do you School House kids want here?" he exclaimed.

"Come to speak to Kerr," said Tom Merry meekly.

"Better keep over on your own side," growled the prefect. However, he did not interfere with them as they went upstairs. The door of Figgins' study was open, and Tom Merry and Manners walked in.

"Hallo!" said Tom, with a pleasant nod. "We've come to see about that giddy goat, Kerr. I hear you want to—oh! My hat! Crumbs! Scissors!"

Tom gave a jump as he felt a sudden clawing at his hair. He looked up and saw a black-faced monkey perched on the top of the door. The little creature had quickly retreated out of reach again.

Figgins & Co. burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! We've taught him to do that!" exclaimed Figgins.

Tom rubbed his head ruefully.

"Well, that's a nice trick to teach a monkey, I must say, Figg! What about the rule not to have pets in the house, eh?"

"Well, it's a half-holiday, anyway," said Figgins.

"What's that about the goat?" asked Kerr. "I don't want him. It's a bit too risky to bring him into the House, and I don't want a pet I can't ever see."

"Well, I'll give you what you gave for him," said Tom. "He's a quiet chap, isn't he? I've only seen him fastened up in the menagerie."

Kerr winked at Figgins.

"Quiet!" he exclaimed. "My dear chap, butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He could be trusted with your youngest baby. He simply doesn't know what temper is."

"Not likely to start butting people—people he wasn't wanted to butt, I mean?"

"Bless your life, he couldn't if he tried!"

"Well, I'll have him," said Tom Merry.

"All right, I'll come and hand him over to you."

"I'm going down to the cricket," said Figgins. "We're going to lick you on Saturday, Merry."

"We'll take all the lickings you can give us," said Tom, "and a few more thrown in."

"That one will be enough, when you get it," said Figgins darkly. "We're going to make you sit up. By the way, who's your captain this time? Is it going to be Blake?"

"Do you think we'd let a Fourth Form kid captain us?" demanded Tom Merry, who was a few months older than Blake, and always referred to the latter, in consequence, as a "kid."

"Tom Merry's captain," said Manners. "If Blake and Study No. 6 don't like it, they can lump it, that's all. But let's go and see that goat."

Kerr, Manners, and Tom Merry at once proceeded to the little building behind the Head's house, where all sorts and conditions of pets were kept. The sweet voice of Billy,

the goat, could be heard as they approached. Billy was fastened up, and Billy, like everybody else, wanted to be at liberty that sunny afternoon.

"Here he is," said Kerr. "Did you ever see a nicer-looking goat, now?"

Tom Merry cocked his eye thoughtfully at Billy. The goat was rather a skinny and shaggy specimen, and his eyes were sharp, and decidedly wicked-looking. He didn't look at all as if he deserved the gentle character Kerr had given him.

"Sure he's gentle?" said Tom doubtfully. "I don't want a beastly wild animal running amuck in the School House, you know."

Kerr grinned.

"My dear chap, if you are afraid of Billy—"

"Afraid!" said Tom indignantly. "Give me the key!"

He released Billy and took hold of the slender chain attached to his collar. Kerr chuckled as Tom led the goat out. Tom caught that chuckle and looked back suspiciously; but Kerr's face had become grave as a judge's.

"Good old Billy!" said Tom. "Come along, Billy!"

Billy looked round him, scenting the fresh air, and freedom. Then he made a sudden bolt, and the chain was dragged from Tom's hand by the jerk, and he dashed off with it trailing behind him. Tom dashed after him.

"Billy—Billy! Good old Billy! Stop, you horrid beast! Dear old billy-goat! Stop, you mongrel!"

Billy did not stop. He evidently enjoyed his freedom, and he whisked away at a pace Tom could not equal.

"Stop him—somebody!" gasped Tom. "Head him off, Manners!"

Manners tried to head the goat off. Billy did the heading off, however. His head came in contact with Manners' legs, which were swept from under him. Manners sat down on the ground, looking rather dazed, and Billy continued his wild career.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr, from the doorway. "How do you like goats?"

Tom Merry wasted a moment in shaking his fist at Kerr. The latter, like a canny Scot that he was, had secured the purchase money before handing over the goat, and now he was watching Billy's progress with keen enjoyment.

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll get a lot of fun out of that goat."

"Jump up, Manners!" exclaimed Tom. "We must catch the brute before he gets into the open! Come on!"

"I'm c-c-coming!" gasped Manners.

They dashed after the goat. Billy had stopped, and he allowed them to come very near. Then, just as Tom was stooping to make a grab at the chain he darted off like a shot. Tom made his grab, and in his sudden haste tumbled forward on his hands and knees.

Billy whisked away past the elms, and the two juniors pursued him furiously. The elusive goat was out in the wide, green quadrangle now, and his course was taking him towards the junior cricket ground, where the New House cricketers were at play.

Tom Merry gave a gasp.

"I say, hold on, Manners!" he exclaimed. "We can't catch him! And I don't know that I want to now. Kerr planted the brute on us. Let's see how Figgins & Co. like him."

The New House Elevens were playing a scratch team of their House fellows, and the latter were in. Figgins was bowling to Pratt, the scratch team's captain, and Fatty Wynn was keeping wicket.

Fatty was stooping behind the wicket watchful for chances, and doubtless his attitude offered a temptation to Billy which the goat could not possibly resist. At any rate, whether it was from sudden temptation, or malice aforethought, Billy, the goat, made a bee-line for the unsuspecting wicket-keeper.

There was a buzz from the fieldsmen, but Fatty Wynn did not notice it. Like a good cricketer he had eyes and ears only for the game, and Figgins was just bowling. Figgins sometimes sent down wides, and the wicket-keeper had to be on the look-out.

Tom Merry stopped, holding his sides, as he saw what was about to happen. Right at the stooping Fatty went Billy, the goat.

Biff!

Figgins bowled, and Pratt cut the ball away. There was a roar; but it was not to greet the batsman's hit. It greeted the hit of Billy, the goat. For Billy's head had butted Fatty Wynn in the most convenient place as he stooped behind the wicket, and Fatty let out a yell that would have done credit to a Red Indian on the warpath.

Right forward he went, plunging headlong into the stumps, and Billy, as if satisfied with what he had done, trotted quietly off.

Pratt looked down at the wrecked wicket in amazement. Never was a wicket more completely "down," for Fatty's

impact had knocked all three stumps out of the ground, and he was sprawling on top of them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "How's that, umpire?"

"Out!" giggled Manners.

The fieldsmen were holding their sides and shrieking. The funniest thing was the expression of Fatty Wynn's face as he sat up and stared around him in complete bewilderment. Fatty hadn't the faintest idea what had hit him.

"Wh-wh-who did that?" yelled Fatty.

He jumped up in a fury. Short-slip was the nearest fieldsmen, and short-slip was doubled up with laughter. Fatty jumped to the natural, though erroneous impression, that short-slip had played that little trick on him. And Fatty, who was hurt and indignant, went for short-slip in a twinkling, before there was any chance of an explanation.

The fieldman's merriment suddenly changed to surprise as he felt Fatty clutch him, and roll him over on the sward. Fatty hadn't much idea of fighting, but he knew that it would damage anybody to sit on him, and he sat on that unhappy fieldsmen.

"Help!" yelled short-slip. "I'm suffocating! He's squashing me!"

The other fieldsmen came running to his aid, and Fatty

"We'll soon corner him inside the House," said Manners. "More likely he'll corner some blessed master in one of the corridors!"

"Ha, ha! Come on!"

They followed the goat into the School House. Billy was stalking along a passage, looking round him as if interested in his exploration. At the sight of the two juniors he whisked off, and Tom and Manners ran after him. There was a sudden yell.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, were coming down the passage in a row, and they had unsuspectingly met Billy in the midst of his wild career. D'Arcy, who was in the middle, was bowled over like a ninepin by Billy butting against his leg, and in his surprise



Herr Schneider bolted down the passage. Towser bolted after him to the length of his cord, and Tom Merry & Co. nearly wept with laughter!

was dragged off. Short-slip staggered to his feet quite breathless. Fatty Wynn looked inclined to go for him again, but Figgins grasped him, and held him back.

"Hold on!" gasped Figgins. "Hold on, Fatty!"

"I'll teach him to shove me over!" roared Fatty.

"Hold on! It wasn't him! It was that giddy goat!"

"What goat? Oh, that! Well, why couldn't he say so, then?"

"You didn't give him much time!"

"Bosh!" said Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Tom Merry, as he set off in pursuit of Billy again. "That was a wicket to Billy, anyway. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" chuckled Manners. "But where's that beastly goat getting to?"

Billy had started browsing on the grass, but as Tom and Manners drew near him he started off again. He was evidently in no mood to lose his new-found freedom.

Tom and Manners attempted to coax him and to catch him in vain. They got him off the grass, and chased him round the gymnasium, and then Billy made a sudden bolt, and disappeared into the School House.

"My hat!" panted Tom, down whose face the perspiration was running in streams. "My hat! Manners, I'm getting about fed-up with that goat!"

and alarm he caught hold of Herries and Blake, and dragged them over in his fall.

Three juniors went down in a heap, and Tom and Manners, coming on at full speed, went sprawling over them before they could stop themselves.

"Hallo!" roared Blake. "Where are you coming to? What's the matter? Is it an earthquake?"

"No!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's a goat!"

"Eh-what?"

Tom gained his feet and dragged Manners up. Blake extricated himself from the heap and helped up Herries. Arthur Augustus sat up, moaning.

"Oh, you wuff, wuff bwutes!"

"Not hurt, old fellow?" said Tom Merry.

"Hurt? Look at my trowsahs!"

Tom Merry looked at them.

"Well, what's the matter with them, Gussy?"

"Mattah!" howled D'Arcy. "They're ruined! You have completely spoiled the ewease in them, and—"

"Oh, rats to your trousers!" said Tom Merry. "I say, Blake, that giddy goat's escaped, and there will be the dickens to pay if we don't catch it. Come and lend a hand, like a good chap."

"Right-ho!" said Blake, always willing to oblige. "Which way did the brute go?"

"I'm afraid it'll be in the Head's house."

Blake whistled.

"Let's get after it quick, then."

They hurried to the corridor which gave access to the Head's house. Billy, the goat, had turned the corner, and was evidently bent on continuing his explorations in this new and strange territory.

The juniors hurried along the corridor. At the farther end they halted and looked out cautiously into the passage beyond. In this passage the Head's study was situated, and it was not a place for the youngsters to venture lightly into.

The Head's door was shut, fortunately. Billy, the goat, stopped close to it and looked back at the juniors, who were making coaxing signs to it from the corner.

"Good old Billy!" whispered Tom Merry. "Come on, old dear! Oh, you obstinate brute, I'll wring your beastly neck for this! Come on, old chap!"

The old chap firmly refused to come on.

"Wait here," said Tom. "I'll go and shift him, and if he comes back this way collar him. Mind the beast don't butt you!"

"Right-ho!" said Blake.

Tom advanced on tiptoe towards the goat. He was equally afraid of scaring Billy away, and of making a noise to attract the Head's attention if he should be in his study.

Billy, the goat, retreated till he came close to the Head's door and could go no farther. He backed against the door, watching Tom warily, ready to bolt at an instant's warning. Naturally, his rubbing against the door did not pass unnoticed by the doctor, who was in the study.

"Come in!" came a deep voice from within.

Tom Merry whisked back to rejoin his companions.

"Come in!" repeated the doctor's voice.

He evidently thought there was someone at the door who wanted to come in, and doubtless wondered why the person did not knock. Billy, the goat, seemed to be startled by the voice from within, for he turned round and looked at the closed door, and finally butted his head against it. The door trembled and shook.

"Come in!" called out the Head a third time, in a sharp voice.

"Oh, my Aunt Matilda Jane Jackson!" murmured Tom Merry. "There's going to be a row now!"

He was right. The Head, who had been disturbed in the midst of an exciting excursion among Greek roots, threw open the door of his study angrily.

The sudden opening of the door startled Billy. When Billy was startled he always did one thing—he bolted straight at the startling object with his horns. The startling object was the Head in this case.

Billy paused for a moment, while the doctor stared at him in amazement, and then he shot forward like an arrow from a bow. The dignified Head of St. Jim's skipped out of the way with an activity astonishing in one of his years, and shouted for help.

Billy, the goat, might have been stopped by a determined resistance, but the sight of a foeman in flight naturally roused all his courage and filled him with the intoxication of victory. He dashed after the doctor, and chased him round the study.

"Help! Help!" shouted the Head, dodging the goat and springing upon his desk for safety.

"I say, we're on in this scene," muttered Tom Merry.

He dashed into the study. Billy eluded him, and sought to escape, and over went a chair and a screen, and then another chair as Tom rushed in pursuit.

"It's all right, sir!" gasped Tom. "We'll catch him, sir! We'll have him!"

"Dear me!" said the Head from the top of his desk.

"Dear me!"

"Got him!" exclaimed Tom.

He grasped the trailing chain at last.

Billy made a bolt for the door, but Tom hung on. Billy was determined, and he dragged the junior all over the study, upsetting furniture in all directions, till Manners and Blake managed to rush on him and get a grip on his horns.

Then Billy was dragged ignominiously out of the room. The juniors, holding him fast between them, marched him off. The Head descended from his perch and surveyed his wrecked study in dismay.

"Dear me!" he said. "Dear me!"

Billy, the goat, was marched out of the School House. Now that he was overpowered Billy was looking as meek and quiet as a goat could look, and seemed hurt and surprised by the care the juniors took not to let him loose again.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "I—I think we'll give

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up the idea of keeping Billy in the study, after all. He's a bit too lively, I think."

They half-dragged, half-persuaded Billy back to the menagerie. There they fastened up his chain and heaved sighs of relief when they had done it. The music still remained to be faced, and they wondered what the Head would say; but it was certain to be something very much to the point.

CHAPTER 3.

Towser Causes Trouble.

BUT Dr. Holmes took a lenient view of the matter. The doctor could be severe, but he was just. When he learned that the goat had got into the house of his own accord, and had not been brought in by the juniors, he let the matter pass, only giving instructions that on no account was Billy to be let loose within the precincts of St. Jim's.

"We're well out of that," said Tom Merry to Manners. "That's the best of the Head—he always stops to think before he goes for a chap. But all the same, we owe Kerr one for planting that fiend of a goat upon us, don't we?"

"We do," said Manners. "We do."

"He's offered us the purchase-money back, now that he's had all the fun," continued Tom. "But that's not the point. We've got to avenge the wheeze."

"We have, we have," said Manners.

"Figgins & Co. have been cackling about it ever since," said Tom. "They will go on cackling about it till we give 'em something else to cackle about."

"They will."

"And so," said Tom, "the sooner we give 'em something else to cackle about, the quicker."

"Right-ho! I can see you've got a wheeze in your noddle," said Manners, who knew that gleam in Tom Merry's eyes of old. "What's the jape this time?"

Tom ran his fingers thoughtfully through his curly hair.

"You see," he explained, "it's a stroke of luck that the workmen are still putting on those new slates at the back of the New House."

Manners stared.

"What on earth—" he began.

"Because, you see, it makes it perfectly easy for anybody who wants to get on the roof of that building," Tom explained.

"Off your rocker?" queried Manners pleasantly. "What do you want to get on a rotten old roof of a rotten old New House for, ass?"

"My dear kid," said Tom, with a superior smile, "listen to your uncle and don't interrupt. Don't you remember that Figgins' chimney was smoking the other day?"

"What about it?"

"Nothing. Only I noticed which was his chimney at the time, you see, and when I found that the workmen were there, a wheeze came into my head. I've been waiting."

"Waiting for what?" said Manners, still mystified.

"For to-night," said Tom. "Do you remember a while back Blake and his kids raided our study and gave Figgins & Co. a feast here on our tommy?"

Manners grinned at the recollection.

"Rather! We settled that little account, though."

"Never mind; an account like that will stand settling twice," said Tom Merry serenely. "Figgy has asked Study No. 6 to a feed to-night, in return for that little entertainment at our expense. I happen to know that Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy are going."

"Wish we were too," said Manners. "Figgy gives ripping feeds!"

"He does," said Tom; "and this one will be more ripping than ever, for we're going to make things rip. It's time we made the New House bounders sit up, and it won't do any harm to give Blake's lot a turn at the same time. I saw Figgy in the school shop laying in a supply of provisions. He was doing it on a liberal scale. The number of sausages he bought would be enough to feed an army—or Fatty Wynn."

"Jolly nice," said Manners. "Fatty Wynn cooks their sausages in a frying-pan on the study fire, and he does 'em to a turn. But what are you driving at? There's no chance of raiding a feed in a New House study with all that lot against us two."

"No; but we shall be there, all the same," said Tom calmly.

"Where shall we be?"

"On the roof."

Manners looked at his chum in amazement.

"And what shall we be doing on the roof?"

"Figgins & Co. will guess, when their chimney begins to smoke," said Tom sedately. "Figgins may smell a rat—he'll certainly smell smoke."

The idea dawned on Manners, and he went off into a roar. "Not a word," said Tom Merry. "Not a giddy syllable. We shall have to keep this awfully dark. But I think it will work."

Manners giggled. "It's pretty certain to work, Tom." "Yes. Figgins has asked Blake for half-past seven. That's to give 'em time to get the sausages cooked and the tea ready. The workmen will be gone long before that, leaving their ladders. It will be a walk-over for us. What Figgins and Blake think of it we shall find out afterwards. Hallo! What's that row?"

It was a sound of thunderous knocking in the School House. The chums of the Shell hurried out of their studies to ascertain the cause of the uproar. Percy Mellish was kicking at the door of Study No. 6, which was closed.

"Blake!" shouted Mellish through the keyhole. "Open this beastly door!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Blake from within. "I've got my prep to do. I'm going out on a visit, and I've no time to talk to you."

"I tell you that beastly bulldog of Herries' has eaten one of my white mice!"

"Well, you can't expect me to get it back for you, can you?"

"I'm going to break that beastly dog's beastly neck." The door was evidently locked. Percy Mellish kicked at it savagely. He was in a towering rage.

"Open this door," he shouted, "or I'll go and tell Railton you've got that bulldog in the study against the rules."

"Oh, don't be a cad!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You can't sneak like that, Mellish."

"Mind your own business, Tom Merry."

"But—" "I tell you Herries' rotten bulldog has eaten one of my white mice! He came into my study and gobbled it!" shouted Percy. "I was just going to sell it to Walsh for a tanner more than I gave for it!"

"Horrid!" said Tom. "That must have given you a pain, Shylock!"

"Oh, rats! I'm going to jump on that dog!"

He crashed his boot against the door again. It flew suddenly open, and Blake stood in the doorway.

"Look here! I'm sorry the bulldog has bolted your mouse, on the mouse's account—poor little beggar! But it's done now, and you can't expect me to resuscitate it. Besides, it's Herries' bulldog, not mine."

"I don't care whose it is!" howled Percy. "I'm going to break its beastly neck!"

"You're disturbing us! We're going out to tea with Figgins, and we've got to get our prep done. Clear off!"

"Yes; clear off!" exclaimed Herries. "You're too noisy! There's too much of you! Bunk!"

"That rotten bulldog came into my study and scooped up my mouse!" shouted Percy wrathfully. "Jones saw him do it! I'm going to jump on him!"

"You're not!"

"I am! Keep your rotten bulldog out of my study!"

"Well, you keep your rotten mice out of my bulldog!" said Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Where's that beastly dog?" demanded Percy. "I'm going to jump on him! Produce the beast, or I'll go and tell Railton he's here, and we'll soon have him out!"

"Oh, all right!" said Herries. "If you must see Towser, here he is! Towser—Towser!"

A hideous-looking bulldog crawled from under the table. "Seize him, Towser! Seize him, boy!"

Towser made a rush at Percy. The latter forgot all about his revengeful intentions as he caught sight of the bulldog's jaws. He turned pale, and bolted down the corridor like lightning. Towser bolted after him like a flash.

Fortunately for Percy Mellish, Herries had a cord attached to Towser's collar, so the bulldog was unable to get more than a few yards in pursuit. Then he stopped and jumped about, and barked and growled, and Percy fled madly and did not stop till he was in his own study, with the door locked and bolted.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Blake. "Exit the giddy avenger! But, my hat, here's Schneider!"

The barking of Towser had brought Herr Schneider on the scene. Herr Schneider, the German master, who boarded in the School House, came along the corridor, with a frown upon his face and a cane in his hand.

Herries, at the warning from Blake, dragged Towser into the study. The bulldog was shoved under the table, and the cloth with which it was covered partly concealed him.

The juniors stood around the table close together, on the side towards the doorway, so as to hide Towser from view. Tom Merry and Manners, of course, loyally joined in to help. As Herr Schneider put his fat face in at the door the five juniors were deeply engaged in discussing cricket.

"Then you think we shall beat Figgins' lot in the House match, Merry?" said Blake, solemn as an owl.

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "You see, the New House boundaries are pretty strong on bowling; but at the wicket—"

"Poys!"

"We shall beat them there," said Tom, apparently unaware of the approach of Herr Schneider, as he discussed the all-absorbing topic. "I fancy that we shall—"

"Poys!" roared the German master.

He strode into the study, so that it was impossible to further ignore his presence.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom cheerfully. "Do you want anything, sir?"

"Vat vas you Shell poys doing in Fourth Form study?" said the Herr suspiciously.

"We were talking about the House match, sir. You see, we're going to meet Figgins and his little lot on Saturday, and—"

"Mein Gott! De poys talks like vun talking-machine! Silence!"

"Yes, sir. You asked me—"

"Vere is tat tog?"

"What tog, sir?" asked Tom innocently.

"Tat tog which you have mit yourselves!" roared Herr Schneider, getting angry.

Tom Merry looked questioningly at Blake.

"Have you any of Herr Schneider's togs here, Blake?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No! We have only our own togs, sir!" said Blake. "These swell togs you see on the chair are D'Arcy's. He's going to wear 'em to tea in the New House, at Figgins'."

We haven't any other togs here, sir, besides those we are wearing."

"You not misunderstand me mit yourselves!" shouted the Herr. "I speak not of te clothes, but of te tog—te tog vich park mit himself in te passage."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Have you seen any tog parking with himself, Blake?" he demanded.

"He, he, he! I haven't. Have you, Herries?"

"No," said Herries. "I shouldn't know a tog if I saw one. And I don't know how they park. Do you, Adolphus?"

"Weally—"

The German master strode towards the juniors, and brought down his cane upon the table with a resounding thwack.

"Poys—"

There came a deep growl from under the table, and Herr Schneider gave a jump.

"Gr-r-r!"

Herr Schneider stepped back hastily from the table. "Te tog is dere!" he cried triumphantly. "I hear te peast! Pring him out at once before."

"Oh, you were speaking of the dog, sir?" said Tom Merry, with an air of surprise.

"You know I vas speaking of te tog, Merry!" exclaimed Herr Schneider. "Pring him out!"

"He's very fierce, sir," said Herries.

"Pring him out!"

"Come on, Towser! Towser!"

Towser came out. Herries stooped to pat his head, and whispered:

"Seize him, Towser!"

Towser gave a growl, and rushed at the fat German.

The way Herr Schneider got out of the study was a revelation. None of the juniors had ever dreamed that the fat gentleman could have moved so quickly.

"Keep him off!" roared Herr Schneider. "Mein Gott! He vill pite me! Mein Himmel!"

(Continued on the next page.)



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He bolted down the passage. Towser bolted after him, to the length of the cord, and then stopped, barking furiously.

Tom Merry was nearly weeping with laughter. "My hat!" he gasped. "I never thought Schneider could shift like that!"

Herries, grinning, ran Towser out of the School House. Herr Schneider had locked himself in his study—as Mellish had done, and he remained there. The sight of Towser's jaws had thrown him into a palpitation he did not soon recover from.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors knew there would be an hour of reckoning, but that did not prevent them from enjoying the joke. Blake, weary with laughing, turned to his neglected prep again.

"Hallo! We shan't have time to finish if we don't buck up," he exclaimed. "We're due at Figg's study in twenty minutes. You'll excuse us, Merry?"

"Certainly!" said Tom. "I hope you'll have a jolly good time with Figg."

Blake looked at him suspiciously.

"Have you got any little game on?" he demanded.

Tom looked astonished at the suggestion.

"My dear chap, how awfully suspicious you are!"

"Well, I know you, you see," growled Blake. "Still, you can't bother us this time, that I can see. Figg is giving us a prime feed in return for the one we gave him—you remember, in your study, with your grub. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" said Tom Merry. "Funny, wasn't it? Come on, Manners!"

They nodded to the Fourth-Formers, and walked out of Study No. 6. Blake grinned after them.

"That was a jolly good wheeze, that time," he remarked.

"Poor old Merry would like to give us the kybosh, now we're going to the return feed. But, bless you, he can't think of a scheme! He'll have to give it up."

Blake did not yet know Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 4.

Figg's Tea-Party.

"**H**OW are you getting on with the cooking, Fatty?"

"All right," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins & Co. were busy in their study in the New House. When Figgins gave a feed it was generally all right, and fellows knew what to expect when they were asked to a feast in the study shared by Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

Figgins was especially particular about living up to his reputation on this occasion, because he was giving the feed to School House chaps, and he didn't want to leave any room for criticism. When Blake, Herries, and Arthur Augustus came to the New House, Figg naturally wanted to make a good impression upon them.

The weather was rather warm, and so the fire in the study was a little superfluous, if it had not been required by the chef. But it was required. Fatty Wynn, who was as fond of cooking as he was of eating, was working away with a right good will.

Fatty was frying sausages and eggs, and he had two frying-pans and a kettle and a saucepan, all going at the same time. And as the grate was limited in size it required some manipulation, and indeed, as Figgins said, it was a wonder how Fatty did it.

But he did it, and he usually did it right well. And fellows would come from near and far to taste the result of Fatty Wynn's efforts.

Kerr had laid the cloth, and put on the tea-things. A cool breeze came in from the quad through the open window, somewhat cooling the atmosphere. It needed it, for the fire was built up high, and the room was getting very warm.

Figgins had begged or borrowed chairs from neighbouring studies, having to exercise a great deal of diplomacy to get the chairs without inviting the owners to the feed. As Figgins said, he'd like to have in everybody, from the Head down to the boots; but space was limited, and so was grub, so what was a fellow to do?

The chairs were nicely ranged round the table, which shone resplendent with a new, white cloth which Figgins had begged of the house dame, and promised to return intact—or as nearly intact as possible.

Besides the cups and saucers and plates, of which there was actually sufficient, the table groaned, as the novelists say, under the weight of the viands.

Jam and marmalade and cake was there, with biscuits and bread-and-butter, both brown and white, and an enormous teapot.

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Figgins surveyed the table with a pardonable pride.

The study looked very neat and cosy, and though there wasn't much room for the guests, still there was room with a squeeze, and, as Figgins said, Blake wouldn't expect Buckingham Palace.

Blake certainly wasn't likely to expect Buckingham Palace inside the New House at St. Jim's. So he would not be disappointed.

"Nearly done, Fatty?" said Figgins, with solicitude.

"Getting on!" said Fatty.

Fatty, in his rolled-up shirt-sleeves, looked quite professional. His fat face was glowing with heat and exertion.

"When the sausages are done," said Figgins, "shove 'em into this dish. I collared it out of Monteith's study. It's a giddy piddish, but it might have been made for sausages, and one can't be particular. I've got a soappish out of the dormitory for the butter, and it looks A. I. I don't suppose Blake will notice that."

"We'll have to use the same paper-knife for the jam and marmalade," said Kerr.

"That's all right. When I was at a feed over in Study No. 6 once, we had to use a shoehorn to serve the treacle," said Figgins.

Kerr looked round the study and sniffed.

"I say, Fatty, you're spilling the gravy!"

"I'm not!" said Fatty.

"There seems to be a smother."

It was only too true.

During the last minute or two the atmosphere of the study had become quite hazy.

Fatty stepped back from the grate and sniffed.

"It's this rotten chimney again!" he exclaimed. "It was smoking the other day."

"But Mr. Ratcliff sent for the sweep then, and it was cleaned," said Figg.

"Oh, when a chimney starts smoking, it doesn't leave off till it thinks it will," said Fatty crossly. "You can see it's at it again."

"Yes, by Jove, it is!" said Figgins, in dismay, as a burst of dark smoke came from the chimney, and eddied through the room. "Thunder! What will Blake—"

"Oh, blow Blake!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "I'm thinking of my cooking!"

"Open the window a bit more, Kerr, old chap."

Kerr jammed up the window.

Figgins tore open the door.

That, unfortunately, only made matters worse. The breeze came in freely enough, and the smoke came more thickly down the chimney. The wind blew it about in clouds, and sent a great volume of it rolling out into the corridor.

"Here, this won't do!" exclaimed Figgins, slamming the door. "They'll think the House is on fire, and we shall have a crowd on the scene!"

There came a scattering of soot from the chimney.

Fatty Wynn gave a howl of anguish as the blacks settled on his sausages, which were done to a turn.

He made a dive at the fireplace to remove the frying-pan and dragged it off; but, unfortunately, he was a little too hasty, and a wave of liquid fat went over the side of the pan into the fire.

It flared up instantly, of course, and there was a rush of flame and smoke, which sent the three juniors rushing back from the fireplace.

The pan went with a crash from Fatty's hand, and some of the sausages fell into the grate and some into the fire, where they frizzled up at once and added a new odour to those which already filled the apartment with perfume.

"Oh, my sausages!" cried Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, my eyes!" gasped Figgins, rubbing them.

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Kerr.

Thicker and thicker poured the smoke from the chimney.

A volume of it was sailing out of the open window and floating away among the elms in the quadrangle.

Figgins & Co. were stricken with dismay.

"What ever can be the matter with the beastly thing?" exclaimed Figgins. "What on earth is it smoking like that for?"

"Just as if somebody had laid a board or something on top of the chimney-pot," said Kerr, rubbing his smarting eyes. "What on earth are we to do?"

"Oh, my sausages! Ruined!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

The kettle was boiling over now, and it began to spit spitefully, but none of the juniors ventured near through the thickening smoke to touch it.

"Let it boil over," said Figgins hopefully; "perhaps it'll put the fire out."

It was a hopeful view to take. The kettle soon boiled right over; but the fire was only damped for a moment, and still another smell spread itself through the air.

Thicker and thicker came the smoke.
 "I can't stand this!" sneezed Figgins. "I——"
 Tap, tap!
 Figgins uttered an exclamation of dismay.
 In the excitement of the moment he had forgotten all
 about the guests expected from the School House.
 The tap at the door showed that Blake and his chums
 had arrived.
 "My Aunt Matilda Jenkins!" groaned Figgy.
 Tap, tap!
 "Come in!" said Figgins desperately.
 The door opened.
 Jack Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy presented themselves.
 They were really looking very nice. Blake and Herries
 were in clean collars, with neatly brushed hair. Arthur
 Augustus D'Arcy was in wonderful attire; he looked as
 neat as a new pin, and nothing could have been more
 gorgeous than the fancy waistcoat he was wearing, nothing
 more brilliant than the shine of his patent-leather shoes.

Figgins & Co. had not been able to say a word.
 "My only aunt!" said poor Figgy, when the disgusted
 guests had disappeared. "This is a nice, pleasant end to a
 jolly evening, and no mistake!"
 The smoke was dying away somewhat now. Figgins
 poured a jug of water on the fire, and the last coals splut-
 tered out.
 Kerr was looking savagely reflective.
 "Look here," he exclaimed, "I don't believe the giddy
 chimney smoked like that of its own accord! Somebody
 has been playing a game on us!"
 Figgins gave a jump.
 "I say, Blake! Come back, will you?" he called after
 the departing School House boys.
 The three turned back.
 "What do you want?" asked Blake.
 "Is Tom Merry in the School House now?"
 "No; he went out with Manners a quarter of an hour
 ago."



In the dimness of the passage Tom Merry and Manners came upon Herr Schneider. "Mein Gott!" exclaimed the German master, as he shot out a hand and grabbed Tom by the collar!

nothing more aggressively white and snowy than his shirt-front and his cuffs.
 Such was the dazzling vision that presented itself at the door of the study, and was overwhelmed by a rush of smoke the moment the door opened.
 "Hallo!" said Blake. "Why, what the—how the—who the— Gr-r-r!"
 "Ugh! Grggrgrgr!" said Herries.
 "Weally!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally, you fellahs!"
 "Awfully sorry!" said Figgins helplessly. "You see, the chimney's smoking."
 "Yes," said Blake, coughing, "we see it! I don't think we could fail to see it without being as blind as you are silly, Figgy, old chap!"
 "Awfully sorry!" said Figgy. "It's only started less'n ten minutes ago. It's horrid! The grub's spoilt——"
 "And so are my clothes!" wailed D'Arcy. "Look at my shirt-front! Look at my silk waistcoat!"
 "Tisn't our fault," said the hapless Figgins. "I can't understand it! The beastly chimney was swept only the other day!"
 Blake sneezed violently.
 "Well, we can't stick this!" he exclaimed. "Figgy, old chap, we thank you for your kindness, and we've enjoyed ourselves rippingly. Good-bye!"
 "Good-bye!" said D'Arcy. "It has been weally wippin'!"
 And the chums of Study No. 6 marched off.

"Ah! Do you know where they went?"
 "No."
 "They've been playing this on us!" said Figgins with conviction. "I'm going to see, anyway. I'll bet those two horrid rotters are on the roof of the New House at this very moment!"
 "My hat!" said Blake. "Let's go and see!"
 "I'm goin' to change my clothes," said D'Arcy. "I do not feel equal to anythin' while I am in this howwid, dirty condition, deah boys."
 "You can go and eat coconuts if you like!" said Blake politely. "Come on, chaps! If Tom Merry's been up to this little game we'll soon catch the bounder on the bound!"
 Arthur Augustus went back to the School House; and Blake and Herries, who were less particular, hurried off with Figgins & Co. in quest of vengeance. Suspicion once awakened, both Blake and Figgins were certain that Tom Merry was at the bottom of the catastrophe.
 "It's Tom Merry!" said Figgins with decision. "Of course, he's got on the roof with one of the ladders the workmen have left there. Come on, and we'll soon see, anyway, and give the horrid rotter the kybosh!"
 Figgy and his companions were not long in getting to the scene of the recent operations of the workmen, who were executing some repairs at the back of the New House.
 The workmen, departing for the evening, had left their properties behind them, and there were ladders and poles

and a huge tank of mortar, as well as bricks and slates in profusion. Among other things, they had left a long ladder, which the juniors now found erected against the New House in a spot where the elms growing close to the house concealed it from the view of any of the windows.

"Look!" said Figgins. "That shows they've been at it!" Blake nodded.

"Yes," he remarked; "and it shows they're still up there, Figgy. They'd have put the ladder down with the others if they were off the roof."

"That's so."

Kerr burst into a sudden chuckle.

"Let's take the giddy ladder away!" he exclaimed. "Don't say a word; just let's take the ladder away, and leave 'em to get down if they can!"

The five juniors grinned at the idea.

"Right-ho!" said Blake. "Lend us a hand!"

The five of them seized the ladder, and it was soon lowered and placed with the others; then, chuckling, the young rascals went their way rejoicing.

CHAPTER 5.

Out of the Frying-pan into the Fire.

THINK they've had enough, Manners, old chap?"

Tom Merry asked the question.

He was sitting astride a ridge on the high roof of the New House sedately watching the chimney of Figgins' study.

On top of the chimney-pot a board was carefully laid, covering up the entire orifice, and only a few little curls of smoke escaped from underneath it.

By that simple device Tom and his chum had succeeded in preventing the escape of the smoke from Figgins' study. Manners looked at his watch.

"Well, it's nearly ten minutes since Blake and his lot were due at Figgy's," he said. "I suppose the fun's over by this time."

Tom chuckled.

"I hope they've enjoyed the feed," he remarked. "It will be a wrinkle to them not to run up against the Terrible Two again. I fancy they've had enough, chappy. It will be getting dark presently, so I vote that we hop it."

"Right you are, Tom!"

"We'll go and call on Study No. 6 as soon as we get in," said Tom Merry, "and ask them how they liked the feed, and whether it was smoky. Come on!"

The juniors made their way over the roof, taking the board with them.

The New House had not all been built at the same period, and the roofs and chimney-stacks were very irregular. In some places there were flat leads, and in others sloping slates. It was at the edge of a flat portion of the roof, with a low parapet, that the ladder was set—or, rather, had been set.

Tom Merry reached the parapet and glanced over; then he gave a whistle of dismay.

"I say, Manners!"

"What's the matter?" asked Manners, who was behind him.

"The ladder's gone!"

"Phew! Gone! Are you sure?"

"See for yourself."

Manners looked, and he had to admit that the ladder was gone. The spreading elms prevented them from seeing much except the ground at the foot of the sheer wall.

The two juniors looked at each other in dismay.

"Somebody's taken the ladder away," said Manners at last.

Tom slapped him on the back.

"Manners, old man, that's a brilliant guess of yours, and it shows what education will do for the intellect," he said gravely.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Manners. "This is serious. How on earth are we to get down?"

"That's what we've got to find out."

"Some silly ass came along and thought the workmen had left the ladder standing," groaned Manners. "What silly asses there are in the world!"

"Yes, and I fancy we are two of 'em," observed Tom Merry. "As likely as not Figgins & Co. tumbled to the wheeze and came and took the ladder down. We ought to have fastened it somehow at the top."

"Yes, it's a lot of good to think of that now," said Manners. "Look here, you're the blessed leader in this firm. Lead me off this roof!"

"I'll chuck you off if you're not more respectful," said Tom severely. "Sit down and hold your face shut while I think."

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"If you can think us off this beastly roof," said Manners, "the sooner the quicker. It's going to rain."

"Oh, dry up!"

"The weather won't, if I do," said Manners.

Manners was right there. The sunny afternoon was turning into a cloudy evening, and rain had been threatening for some time. Now the first drops began to fall, and, as the poets say, thus had begun but worse remained behind.

Tom sat on the parapet and meditated.

As Manners had stated, it was his business as leader to lead the way off that roof; but without taking a jump of fifty feet he didn't see how he was going to do it. He thought of the elm-trees, but they were too far away to make a jump into their branches anything like practicable.

"Better have a look round," said Tom Merry at last.

"Lot of good that will do," said Manners.

"Oh, don't growl!"

The heroes of the Shell made an exploration of the roof, or, rather, roofs of the New House of St. Jim's. It was soon pretty certain that there was only one way of escaping from it—that was by the trapdoor in the centre of the flat leads, built there in order to provide egress in case of fire.

Tom halted there, and reflected. Manners shivered. The rain was coming down now, and their jackets were too thin to be much protection against it.

"Well?" said Manners.

"We shall have to go through here," said Tom desperately.

"Right into the enemy's camp!"

"Is there any other way?" demanded Tom.

"Not that I can see. You see, I'm not a giddy chief," said Manners.

"No; you're a giddy ass! Let's get this beastly thing open!"

"It's fastened, I expect."

The trap was certainly fastened. Tom Merry tried to open it in vain. Manners put his jacket up about his ears and shivered in the rain.

"Well, have you got it open?" said Manners.

"The rotten thing won't open."

"Let's bust in the beastly roof, then. We've got to get out of this rain! Ugh! I shall catch my death of cold," said Manners. "Wish I had that chest-protector your old governess sent you the other day!"

Tom knocked on the trapdoor. There was nothing else to be done, and he could only hope that a boy and not a master would hear the knocking, and come to see what it was about.

The trap creaked, and he heard the sound of a moving bolt.

"They're coming, Manners."

"They're jolly quick, coming at the first knock," said Manners suspiciously. "I shouldn't be surprised if it was Figgins & Co. waiting there for us!"

Tom Merry made a long face.

It would be a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire if the Terrible Two escaped from the rain only to fall into the clutches of Figgins & Co. But there was no help for it. Darkness would be coming on with the rain, and it was impossible to spend the rainy night on the roof of the New House. Anything was better than that.

The trap moved, and Tom Merry helped it up and pushed it back. A black orifice was disclosed, and from the darkness below came the voice of Figgins.

"Hallo! Who's there?"

"Is that you, Figgy?"

"Yes, it's me," said Figgins immediately and ungrammatically. "Who are you?"

"I'm Tom Merry; I want to come down."

"How did you get on our roof?"

"I expect you know pretty well," said Tom. "Don't rot, Figgy. We make it pax!"

"It's all very well to make it pax when you're in a fix," said Figgins, from the darkness. "It's no go! We're not going to make it pax!"

"Well, let us in, anyway. It's raining."

"Go hon! What about our tea all spoiled? What about our beastly study smoked out?" said Figgins. "We've had to send Blake and Herries and D'Arcy home without anything to eat, after inviting them to tea. Why, the horrid boulder's giggling!" exclaimed Figgins, as a chuckle came from the roof.

"Well, you must admit it's funny, Figgins," said Tom Merry. "Can we come down?"

"Yes, if you like; but mind, we don't make it pax."

"Does that mean you are going for us?"

"My dear kid, you can interpret it how you like, but we don't make it pax," said Figgins.

"We shall have to risk it," said Manners. "I'm soaked to the beastly skin. Are you going in first, Tom, or shall I?"

"I will," said Tom. "Are the steps there, Figgy?"

"No," said Figgy; "they're moved."

"It's only a drop of seven feet," said Kerr, "and we'll stand clear for you."

Tom Merry didn't like the idea of dropping down to the mercy of his enemies, but there was nothing else to be done. He swung himself into the opening, and let go. His feet touched the floor within, and at the same moment he was pinioned by half a dozen pairs of hands.

"Got him!" said Figgins.

A looped cord was passed round Tom Merry, and his arms were fastened down to his sides. Then he was pushed aside, and Figgins & Co., and the rest of the New House who were with them, waited for the next victim.

"It's all up, Manners!" called out Tom. "I'm a prisoner of war!"

"Come on, Manners, old dear!" called out Figgins invitingly.

"Will you walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly?" trilled Fatty Wynn.

There was a giggle from below.

Manners hesitated. But the rain on the roof gave him no alternative. He swung himself into the trap, and was clutched and secured as quickly and neatly as Tom Merry had been.

"A nice bagful," said Figgins. "Close the trap, young Pratt! Bring the brutes along to the study, kids! Get a move on!"

In the midst of a crowd of the New House juniors Tom Merry and Manners were hurried down the stairs and into Figgins' study.

In spite of his own situation, Tom Merry could not help grinning as he looked into the once clean and cosy quarters of Figgins & Co.

Blackness was everywhere—the furniture, the floor, the books and papers were covered with blacks, and a strong odour of smoke still hung about the apartment, and the air was very hazy.

In the grate were the ruins of Fatty Wynn's cookery, most of the sausages burnt to cinders, in the midst of masses of soot and ashes and dust.

"Nice to look at, isn't it?" said Figgins, noticing Tom Merry's grin.

"Sort of funny—hey? Nice sort of game to play on us, wasn't it?"

"Rather!" said Tom. "Almost as good as the time when you came to feed in my study without asking leave, and kept me out of it."

Figgins grinned.

"They say that after the feast comes the reckoning," he remarked. "In this instance there hasn't been any feast, but there's going to be a reckoning."

"Oh, got it over!" said Tom. "We want to get in to tea."

"Right-ho! We shan't be long. Has it occurred to you kids that your complexions stand in need of a little improvement?"

"Can't say that it has."

"Well, I've thought of it. Get the soot ready, Kerr!"

Kerr was raking the soot out over the hearth, and as soon as a little heap of it was ready, Figgins & Co. seized Tom and laid him face downwards in it.

His features disappeared into the heap of soot, and his struggles and contortions in the grip of the New House juniors only made matters worse.

Not till his face had been well ground into the soot did Figgins allow him to rise, and when he rose there was a howl of laughter in the study.

Tom Merry's good-looking face and curly hair were thick with blackness, and he had been transformed into a very good imitation of a nigger minstrel.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Figgins. "Bear me smile! Like that, Tommy?"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Tom Merry. Some of the soot had found its way into his mouth and nose, and he didn't like the flavour of it.

Even Manners was grinning at his ridiculous aspect. But he left off grinning when Figgins & Co. seized upon him.

"Follow your leader!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Here, chuck it! Leave off! — Gr-r-r-r!"

Manners' face was in the heap. When he was dragged up again he was as black as Tom Merry. The New House juniors howled with laughter.

"Now," said Figgins, "you've had a little lesson, and I don't think you'll get on our roof again in a hurry. Have you had enough?"

"G-r-r—yes!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Then off you go!"

The chums of the Shell were released. They were marched out into the passage to the stairs, and Figgins and Kerr gave them a start with their boots, and they departed. They lost no time in getting out of the New House, passing no one but Monteith en route. The prefect stared at them and

laughed. Tom Merry and Manners scooted across the quadrangle as fast as they could in the pelting rain.

"My hat, it's coming down!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as the wind dashed the rain into his face. "Buck up, Manners, old chap!"

They dashed up the steps of the School House and into the House. The light was not yet on in the Hall and it was very dim. From the dimness came a startled gasp.

"Mein Gott!"

Tom groaned.

"Old Schneider, of course!"

The fat German master stared in amazement at the two black-faced objects that flitted by him. He made a clutch at Tom Merry and seized him by the collar.

"Who—vat—vy—"

Tom struggled to escape before he could be recognised. The German master held him fast.

"Who vas you? I vill know—"

He dragged Tom towards him. The junior, in desperation, slammed his head against the waistcoat which covered the most prominent part of the fat German, the region vulgarly known as the bread-basket. Herr Schneider gasped and staggered back, and Tom tore himself loose and bolted. He overtook Manners on the stairs.

"Get into the bath-room, quick!" gasped Tom.

They ran into the nearest and bolted themselves in. They were soon cleaning off the soot with hot water in desperate haste, and when it was done they bolted away to change their jackets and collars.

Meanwhile, Herr Schneider was raising the house. The impact of Tom Merry's head upon his waistcoat had deprived him of most of his breath, and he held on to the banisters and gurgled. Someone lighted the gas. Mr. Railton, the new Housemaster of the School House, came quickly out of his study.

"What is the matter, Herr Schneider?"

"I—I—I— Mein Gott!"

The Housemaster stared at the fat German in amazement. There was a black smudge on the German's waistcoat, which was usually spotless. Tom Merry had left his mark there.

"My dear Herr Schneider, what has happened?"

It was some time before the German found breath enough to explain.

"Zwei poys came rushing in, mit faces black as ink vas

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after," he explained. "I stop tem mit myself, and vun he butt me in te waistcoat like vun pilly-coat!"

"Like a pilly-coat!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, puzzled. "I don't understand you, Herr Schneider! What is a pilly-coat?"

"He means billy-goat, sir!" exclaimed Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, laughing.

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Oh, I see! This must be inquired into. Which way did the young rascals go, Herr Schneider?"

"Up de stairs," said the German.

"I will call all the juniors together, and we will see whose faces are blackened," said the Housemaster. "Such a foolish trick shall be severely punished."

The juniors of the School House were soon called together.

They came in twos and threes, most of them surprised at the summons. Mr. Railton and Herr Schneider looked over them, but could find none with blackened faces. Cleanest of all were Tom Merry and Manners, resplendent in clean collars, with nicely brushed hair. Tom Merry had a Euclid in his hand, his finger in it to mark a place, and had apparently been interrupted in the midst of an engrossing task. The chums of the Shell looked more surprised and inquiring than any of the others.

"I do not see any blackened faces here," said Mr. Railton.

"Tey have been quick and cleaned tem mit temselves before," said Herr Schneider. "I expect it was tat Merry after."

"I cannot condemn anybody on suspicion, so I'm afraid it will be impossible to discover the culprits. You may go, boys!"

Tom Merry and Manners did not laugh till they were safely in Study No. 10. Then they roared.

"Well, that was a narrow shave!" exclaimed Tom.

"We're well out of that! Poor old Schneider's waistcoat is spoiled; I must buy him another."

CHAPTER 6.

Let Loose!

MELLISH came out of his study with fury in his face.

Morning school was over on the day following the adventure of Tom Merry in the New House. The culprits had not been discovered, and the Terrible Two rejoiced. Tom and Manners came out of the Shell class-room and met Mellish in the passage.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom. "What's wrong, kid?"

"It's Herries' bulldog that's wrong!" howled Mellish. "He's wolfed another of my white mice. I saw him coming out of my study."

"Why didn't you go for the brute?"

"He's got such a thundering lot of teeth," said Mellish. "I'm not going for him. I'm going to tell the Housemaster."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "You can't be a sneak! Herries told you to keep your white mice out of his bulldog. Why don't you do as you're told?"

"He shouldn't bring that savage, wild beast into the House!" said Mellish. "It's against the rules!"

"Well, it's against the rules, too, to keep white mice in the studies," said Tom. "I don't see how you're going to peach on Herries without giving yourself away, too."

"Hun!" said Mellish. "I suppose that would come out, too. Well, I don't care; I'll make those rotters in Study

No. 6 sit up somehow. If I can't keep white mice without having 'em wolfed by that beastly Towser, there'll be a row!"

With that, Mellish started off with determination in his face.

"What are you going to do?" asked Tom.

The Fourth-Former did not reply. He went out of the School House and the chums lost sight of him. It was not till dinner-time that they saw him again, and he came into the Hall with a grin upon his face, which showed he had been perpetrating some mischief.

"Hallo, Mellish!" said Herries affably. "I'm sorry about that white mouse of yours."

"Are you?" said Mellish grimly. "Your sorrow is a bit too late!"

Herries looked at him.

"What have you been doing, Mellish?"

"I? Oh, nothing! I've just been round to the menagerie, and I noticed that the doors of all the cages and hutches were open."

"What?"

"Somebody has been awfully careless. All the pets are loose."

"Loose?"

"Yes. Your bulldog was fighting with Walsh's terrier when I left them, and that giddy goat was chasing Figgins' monkey all over the shop."

"My hat!"

"I dare say there'll be a row," said Mellish. "It was awfully careless of somebody."

"You did it, you rotter!"

"Did I? You'll have to prove that, Herries, old man!"

And Mellish settled down to his dinner with evident relish. "Silence, there, boys!" said Mr. Lathom.

But the whole Fourth Form table was muttering over the information Mellish had imparted. The news soon spread through the Hall, and all the juniors were equally dismayed. If all the sorts and conditions of pets kept by the youngsters were let loose, it was certain that there would be a "row," as Mellish predicted.

The boys got out as soon as possible. There was a terrific uproar proceeding in the quad. Herries' bulldog had got the best of a tussle with Walsh's terrier, and, like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer. He found the fresh worlds he wanted in the person of Billy, the goat. A fight between the two was proceeding when the juniors arrived on the scene.

"I say, separate 'em!" exclaimed Herries.

But he did not offer to do it himself. It looked rather a dangerous thing to do. Mr. Railton looked out of the door of the School House.

"What is this fearful noise? Dear me! What a number of animals appear to be loose! Has anything happened to the cages?"

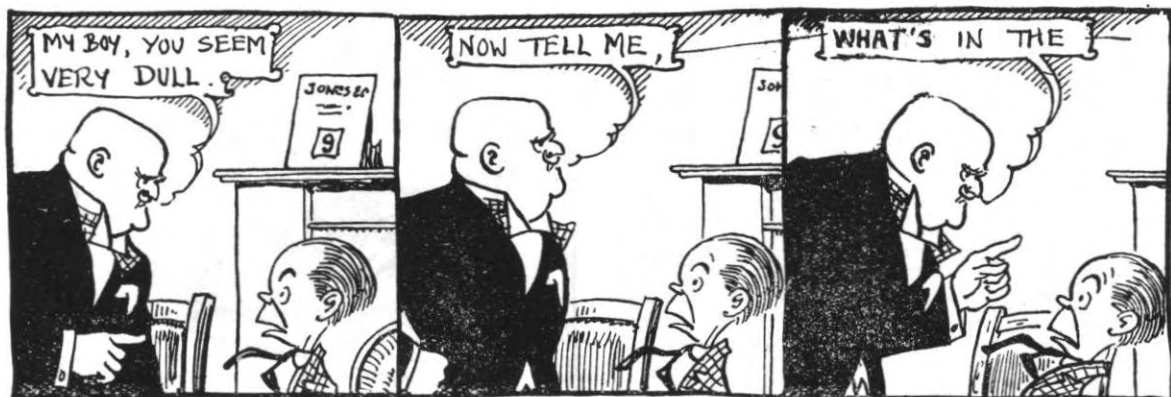
"Somebody left all the doors in the menagerie open, sir," said Mellish. "The pets have all got loose."

"Bless me! How very careless!"

Tom Merry rushed forward and seized Towser's collar, and Figgins, who had come out of the New House, gripped Billy, the goat, and the combatants were dragged apart. Towser was snarling dangerously, but Tom held him fast, and he was marched off to the menagerie, and Figgins followed with the goat.

These two were secured, but with the rest of the pets it was not so easy. White rabbits and mice were all over

Potts, the Office-Boy.



the place, tortoises and lizards crawling everywhere, parrots and magpies hopping and cackling. It had not taken long to set the pets free, but it would certainly take a long time to gather them together again. Very few of the fugitives had been recaptured when the boys went in to afternoon lessons, and most of them were extremely anxious about the fate of their pets.

"Herries' bulldog's all right," growled Fatty Wynn, "and so is Walsh's terrier. But what about my white rabbits? That beastly Towser would think nothing of bolting 'em!"

"And my white mice!" exclaimed Kerr. "That rotten Towser wouldn't make more'n two mouthfuls of 'em!"

"And my hedgehog," said Blake. "I haven't seen my hedgehog since it was let loose."

"And my canawy," said D'Arcy. "Where's my poor canawy?"

In the Shell there was as much disquietude as in the Fourth Form.

"I was getting such a lovely collection of frogs and newts in my tank," said French, almost tearfully. "Where are they now. I wonder?"

"Oh, and where and oh where can they be?" said Tom Merry. "What about my mice?"

"And my squirrel?" said Manners. "Last I saw of him he was slithering up to the roof of the Head's house."

"You'll never see him again," said French comfortingly. "It was one of your rotten School House brutes let them loose, wasn't it? Serve you right!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Linton.

"And Figgy's monkey," said Jimson, with a grin. "I saw it going up the clock-tower like—like one o'clock. I wonder who's going to fetch it down?"

"Well, we shall have a lively time getting the pets together again," remarked Tom Merry. "The worst of it is that the Head may lose his temper and stop us keeping 'em. If he does, we'll slay Mellish!"

Mellish was not having a pleasant time of it in the Fourth Form. Although he did not admit it, the Form all knew that he had done the mischief at the menagerie, and all sorts of vengeance was promised him after lessons. But the first lesson that afternoon was a little longer than usual. Mr. Lathom was taking the Fourth in English history in a class-room where there was no clock, and when Mr. Lathom glanced at his watch, he found that it had stopped. The master of the Fourth was a fussy little man in spectacles, extremely short-sighted and extremely absent-minded. He as often as not forgot to wind his watch overnight, as he had done upon this occasion.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom.

He stepped out of the class-room to glance up at the clock on the school-tower. The clock indicated the hour of three. Mr. Lathom noticed a dark object against the face of the clock, but it was high up, and he was too short-sighted to distinguish what it was.

"Dear me!" he said, winding his watch. "Three o'clock! I really thought it was later!"

He stepped back into the class-room. The lesson continued, but the boys were growing restive. It was a fine sunny afternoon, and there was to be a short recess before the next lesson. Mr. Lathom noticed that the class were growing impatient.

"If you please, sir," said Blake at last, "it's half-past three, sir."

Mr. Lathom stared at him.

"It is only ten minutes past, Blake."

"My watch is half-past, sir."

"Yours must be fast."

"Mine is half-past, sir," said Herries.

"Weally, and so is mine, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

Mr. Lathom looked puzzled.

"Indeed!" he said. "Perhaps I have made an error."

He stepped out of the class-room again and went out to look at the clock. To his amazement it still indicated the hour of three.

"Dear me!" said the master of the Fourth. "The clock has stopped." He glanced back into the room. "I am sorry, my boys. The clock in the tower has stopped. You may go."

The Fourth Form trooped out joyfully. Their eyes all went to the clock in the tower. It was the first time it had stopped within their recollection. It was Taggles' business to look after it, and Taggles had never failed before.

But as they looked up at the high clock-face a general exclamation went up. Mr. Lathom was short-sighted, but the boys of the Fourth were not afflicted that way, and they saw at once why the clock had stopped.

The dark object clinging to the face of it was perfectly visible to them. It was a little black-faced monkey.

"My monkey!" gasped Figgins. "Poor old Darwin! How did he get up there?"

Figgins had named his monkey Darwin from a somewhat hazy notion of a connection between the great scientist and the simian race.

Figgy turned pale as he saw where his monkey was. The little animal, assisted by the ivy growing on the tower, had climbed up to the top, and the well-meant efforts of the juniors below, who saw it climbing up, to coax it to return had undoubtedly frightened it into going as far as it could. The little creature had swung itself to the clock-face, and was clinging to the big minute hand, which was exactly perpendicular.

There it hung, with a convulsive grasp, unable to go farther, unable to return the way it had come, and apparently too frightened to make an effort either way. It had evidently been there some time now, and the wonder was that it had not already fallen—a dizzy distance that would have meant instant death.

"My monkey!" said Figgins. "Poor old chap! I say, he's got to be saved somehow."

The juniors looked at each other. There was no way of getting up the tower that they could see. The longest ladder to be obtained was only half the required length. On either side of the tower the masonry jutted out in a flat ledge, and to reach this—about half-way to the top—would be easy. But to go higher was a different matter.

Figgins looked up at the tower and groaned. He was very fond of his monkey, but it was not only that. It was the agony of the little creature he thought of—clinging at that dizzy height, afraid to move.

The fact that something unusual was going on in the quad soon became known in the various class-rooms. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, went out to look; and then the Shell were not long in getting up to the windows to look out.

Tom Merry was the first, and from the window he had a



A Soft Answer!



full view of the clock-tower and the monkey clinging to the minute-hand of the great clock.

"My hat!" gasped Tom. "Look there, Manners!"

"Where?" said Manners.

"Look! The clock! Oh, poor little chap! It's Figgy's monkey!"

Manners gave a whistle.

"Poor little beggar! It's done this time!"

"Perhaps not," said Tom Merry, a determined expression coming over his face.

Manners shook his head.

"My dear chap, there's no chance of getting it down alive. Can't you see it's too scared to move?"

"Yes, it looks like it."

"Besides, it jumped to that clock-hand, and caught hold of it. It can't jump back—there's nothing for it to catch."

"True!"

"And there's not a ladder that will reach more than half-way to the clock," said Manners, shaking his head. "Why, what are you up to, Tom?"

Tom Merry was opening the window.

"I'm going out."

"What for?"

"To save the little chap, if I can."

Tom was half through the window. Manners caught him by the shoulder.

"Don't be an ass, Tom; you can't do it!"

"I can try."

"There isn't a ladder that will reach—"

"Taggles' long ladder will reach half-way—as far as the flat ledge at the side of the tower," said Tom.

"What will be the good of that? You'll still be thirty feet from the clock."

"Not if I pull the ladder up to the ledge and set it against the tower."

"Tom Merry!"

"Let me go, Manners!"

"Don't be a fool," said Manners, almost hoarsely. "You can't—you shan't do it! The ladder will slip off the ledge; it's only a couple of feet wide—and you, Tom—you shan't go!"

"I shall, old chap," said Tom quietly. "I'm not going to see that poor little chap come down on the stones and break himself to bits. I'm going! I'll tell you what—you can come with me and hold the ladder on the ledge for me."

"It's madness—"

"Well, I'm going! You can come if you like."

Tom jerked himself free, swung out of the window, and dropped. Manners was after him like a shot.

"You're coming, Manners?"

"Did you think I shouldn't?" growled Manners crossly. "I think you're a mad ass, and that's the plain truth. But you're not doing it alone."

"Come on, then. Let's get Taggles' ladder before anybody else thinks of it."

"Nobody else is likely to think of breaking his neck for nothing."

"Oh, dry up," said Tom, "and come on!"

"Right you are," said Manners resignedly.

They dashed off across the quadrangle. The crowd was thickening in front of the clock-tower, and nobody noticed the movements of the heroes of the Shell. Mr. Linton had gone to speak to the Head, to consult him as to what had better be done. It seemed too cruel to leave the animal, unaided, to fall to a terrible death. Yet it seemed impossible to save it.

Tom and Manners were not long in obtaining possession of the ladder. They ran it towards the tower between them, and then there was a shout. Figgins & Co. and Study No. 6 came running towards them in a moment.

"What are you going to do with that ladder?" demanded Blake.

"You'll soon see," said Tom Merry laconically.

"Up with it," said Manners.

The ladder was reared against the side of the clock-tower. Tom Merry ran lightly up, and Manners followed.

"Here, stop!" exclaimed Figgins. "It's my monkey, and if anybody's going, I ought to go."

To which Tom Merry cheerfully replied.

"Rats!"

He gained the flat ledge half-way up the side of the tower. Above that the tower was narrower. Tom and Manners dragged the ladder up till the foot of it rested on the ledge, and the head against the clock-face.

"Come back!" shouted Figgins and Blake, as Tom Merry

ascended the ladder again, Manners holding it at the foot.

"Come back!"

Tom took no notice. The ledge was only a couple of feet in width, and flat and smooth. It was quite possible that with Tom moving on the ladder it might slip off the ledge. But the thought of that did not deter the gallant lad.

Manners had his foot against the ladder, and was holding it, his face white and set. But if it began to go it was not likely that Manners could stop it.

"Come back!"

It was a deeper voice from below now. Mr. Linton had returned, and with him were the Head and Mr. Railton.

"Come back!"

But Tom Merry hardly heard them. All his thoughts were bent upon the task he had in hand—a task that required all his nerve, all his courage, all his resource.

It was plain that he was not to be called back, and the crowd below watched him with a sickening anxiety as he mounted higher.

CHAPTER 7.

At the Risk of His Life!

TOM MERRY went up the ladder slowly and steadily. Although his peril did not shake his nerve, he was fully aware of its extent, and if he came to grief it would not be for want of care.

The ladder, reared on the narrow ledge, looked almost



Mellish screwed his courage to the sticking point, took a rush he gave a frightful yell and started

perpendicular viewed from below; but it was safe enough for Tom Merry so long as he was careful, and so long as it did not slip off the ledge.

Up he went, higher and higher! Now he was on a level, with the clock-face.

His position was now one of terrible peril. The slightest movement too far would send him spinning from the ladder, to crash upon the ground, sixty feet below.

"Take care—take care!" groaned Mr. Railton; but his voice did not reach Tom Merry.

The crowd of boys and masters held their breath. Kildare and Darrell had rushed off for a blanket, to hold it ready in case Tom should fall; but the matter was pretty certain to be decided before they returned.

Tom made a coaxing gesture to the monkey. The little creature was evidently terrified out of its wits by the position in which it found itself. It was clinging to the upright

minute-hand of the clock; and as Tom Merry reached towards it it squirmed to the farther side of the clock-face, out of his reach.

Tom drew a quick, deep breath. The monkey was scared—too scared to listen to his coaxing.

"Come on, Darwin! Good old monk! Come here, old chappy!" said Tom, in his most persuasive tones.

But Darwin was not to be persuaded.

He regarded Tom with little, twinkling black eyes, and refused to come nearer.

Tom reached farther, and made a grab at him.

The monkey whisked out of his way.

And Tom's heart went throbbing painfully, for beneath him he had felt a tremble of the ladder following his movement.

"For Heaven's sake, careful!" muttered Manners.

Manners was white as death.

Tom set his teeth.

He knew that he had had a narrow escape, and his heart was beating faster; but his courage and determination were undiminished.



the bulldog and delivered a terrible kick. The next moment dancing about the corridor on one foot!

He waited a minute, till his heart's throbbing calmed down. The monkey still refused to budge.

Tom set to work to coax him.

"Come on, chappy! Come here, Darwin!" he murmured. "I'm not going to hurt you. Come to your uncle, you little brute! Come on, kid!"

Perhaps Tom's persuasive accents somewhat calmed the fears of the monkey.

Still clinging to the upright minute-hand, he allowed his head to come closer to Tom, and perhaps it dawned upon his scared little brain that the boy was there to help him.

Tom extended his hand again cautiously.

If he frightened the monkey all his trouble would be wasted. And now his head was beginning to get a little dizzy. He had determined not to look down, but he had caught a glimpse of the quadrangle far, far below, and the

heads there looking like black dots. And its effect upon his brain was not steady.

He leaned against the clock-face again carefully. Then, with a snap, his fingers closed on the little silver collar Darwin wore and held the monkey fast.

"Good old monk! Quiet, chappy!" he whispered soothingly.

Darwin was wriggling.

Tom drew him gently but firmly across the clock-face, and he heaved a sigh of relief as he was able to draw back to the next rung of the ladder.

The monkey clung to his hold for a moment, but Tom jerked him loose.

The little animal, startled and scared, began to wriggle and claw, and Tom had to hold him at arm's length as he slowly descended the ladder.

"My heavens!" murmured the Head, far below. "Will he never come down? Will this ordeal never be over?"

Tom was coming down slowly.

But at last, to the immense relief of the watching crowd, he stepped from the ladder upon the ledge beside Manners.

Manners gave a gasp.

"Tom! Thank goodness!"

Tom was rather white.

"Yes, thank goodness, Manners, old chap!" he gasped. "I thought I was going once. Hold this little beast of a monkey! I'm about played out."

Manners took the monkey and tried to soothe it.

Tom sat down on the ledge to recover himself. The strain upon his nerves had been terrific and he felt exhausted, as if he had been running for miles.

But it did not take the hero of the Shell long to recover himself.

He was soon breathing calmly and regularly, and he rose to his feet again, the colour once more flushing in his cheeks.

"Down with the ladder, Manners."

"Feel better, Tom?"

"I'm all right," said Tom cheerily. "I felt a bit rotten for a minute, that's all. I'm all serene now. Let's get down."

They slid the ladder from the ledge to the ground below.

A dozen hands seized it to steady it as Tom Merry began to descend with the monkey on his shoulders.

He was surrounded in a moment.

Blake and Herries seized his hands and started shaking them, while Figgins took away the clinging monkey.

The long, pent-up feelings of the boys found vent in a ringing cheer.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

Blake was working away at Tom's arm as if he mistook it for a pump-handle.

"Bravo!" he yelled excitedly. "Hurrah! Give him one more, chaps!"

They gave him one more heartily.

"Hurrah!"

The Head laid his hand upon Tom Merry's shoulder.

"My brave lad!" Dr. Holmes' voice was trembling with emotion. "My brave lad! If I had been on the spot I should have forbidden you to make that terribly dangerous ascent. Now that it is over, I am glad to see that we have at St. Jim's a junior who has displayed a courage and nerve worthy of the bravest man."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Blake.

"I am more especially pleased," added the Head, "to see such courage and devotion displayed on behalf of a dumb animal."

"Hear, hear!"

"Boys, after this strain you will not feel inclined to immediately resume your lessons."

This time it was not only Blake who shouted "Hear, hear!" Every lad in the quadrangle cordially endorsed the Head's sentiments.

"Hear, hear!"

"Therefore, there will be an extra recess this afternoon," he said; "You will not return to your lessons until four o'clock."

"Hurrah!"

The doctor walked away. Mr. Railton went with him.

"Thank Heaven," said the Head, "that the matter ended so well, Railton! I am proud of that lad. Such courage and resource is rare."

Mr. Railton nodded cordially.

"And I am proud of Tom Merry," he said. "When he first came to me at Clavering School, I little dreamed that

he would turn out so splendidly. Tom Merry is a boy who will make his mark in the world when he grows up."

"I am sure of that," said the doctor. "But whatever is that noise?"

He glanced back with a smile.

The juniors had seized Tom Merry, and were shouldering him round the quadrangle. School House boys and New House had united to do honour to British pluck as personified by Tom Merry.

Tom was supported upon the shoulders of Jack Blake and Figgins, and upon his own shoulder he carried the monkey, rescued at so much risk.

Round them and behind them the juniors fell into procession, waving their caps and shouting, and so they marched round the old quad.

Masters and seniors looked at the demonstration with good-humoured smiles.

The juniors certainly were making a deafening noise, but it was all in honour of pluck and daring, and it was a healthy kind of hero-worship.

"Oh, I say, chuck it!" said Tom, at last. "I'm getting giddy!"

They set him down at last on the steps of the School House.

"Thanks!" gasped Tom. "That's better!"

Blake clapped him on the shoulder.

"I say, Merry, you're a cocky kid sometimes, and you've got the cheek to think that the Shell ought to come before the Fourth Form—"

"So it ought!"

"Rats! As I was saying, you've got your faults. But we're proud of you."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, I do. We're proud of you, kid, and—and you're going to be captain of the School House juniors in the House match."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Tom. "That's got nothing to do with this. I—"

Blake waved his hand.

"Not a word! You're captain!"

"But—"

"Three cheers for Tom Merry! Cricket captain of the School House juniors!" shouted Blake.

The cheers were given with a will, Figgins & Co. joining in as heartily as any. And Tom Merry took his cap off his curly head and bowed profoundly.

CHAPTER 8.

A Nocturnal Alarm.

G R-R-R-R-R!"

Herr Schneider gave quite a jump as that ferocious growl fell upon his ears.

He was coming along the upper passage in the School House with a candlestick in his hand. The single gas-jet in the corridor cast a very dim light through its great length, and the German master had lighted his candle before coming up to bed.

The sudden growl from the gloom was startling in the stillness of the night.

Herr Schneider's candle flickered in his trembling hand as he stopped.

"Vat is tat?" he gasped.

He stared before him in the direction of the alarming sound.

To reach his bed-room door he had to pass a dark alcove in the passage, near the door of the apartment where the boys of the Shell who boarded in the School House were slumbering—or supposed to be slumbering.

And now, half within the alcove and half without, he discerned the form of a huge bulldog with bright eyes that seemed to be watching him, and jaws open displaying a terrific set of teeth.

It was not Towser, for Herr Schneider knew Towser by sight. Herries' bulldog was an ugly brute, but he might have taken a prize for beauty beside this animal.

Never was there a more hideous face seen than that of this fiendish-looking brute, in whose expression savage ferocity and horrible cruelty seemed equally mingled.

It was no wonder that Herr Schneider stopped, and that the candle trembled in his hand.

"Mein Gott!" gasped the German. "Mein Gott! It is anoder of those bets, after!"

The pets had made their presence felt at St. Jim's since Mellish had turned them loose.

They were all over the place, and the hunt for them had, so far, met with but very partial success.

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Sometimes they were found, certainly, but in the most unlooked-for places, and Mrs. Mimms had wrathfully complained to the Head of discovering white mice in her tea-caddy, and rabbits gorging themselves upon the vegetables in the kitchen. The House dame had been startled out of her wits by finding a hedgehog curled up in her hat-box, and the cook had nearly gone into hysterics when a lively terrier suddenly jumped out at her when she opened the door of the larder.

The pets were everywhere, the Houses were overrun with them; and, though it was great fun for the juniors, their elders were getting rather "fed-up" with those pets.

And even some of the juniors ceased to see the humorous side of the matter when Figgins, for instance, found newts and frogs comfortably ensconced in his best Sunday topper, and Blake discovered that a monkey had been in his dark-room and made a wreck of his films and bottles.

Herr Schneider had not been left unmolested. The Herr was in the habit of taking an afternoon nap, and that afternoon he had been awakened by Figgins' monkey clawing at his scanty locks. But that was nothing to his present experience. He stood now in the passage with his blood running nearly cold as he gazed at that horrible-looking bulldog.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

Herr Schneider backed away a step.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Mein Gott!" muttered Herr Schneider. "He was going to pite! I was sure tat if I go on after he vill pite me padly! Te peast! Oh, those boys!"

What was to be done? He had to pass the bulldog to get to his room, and he could not stay out in the passage all night.

The ferocious brute made no movement; and, finding that he was not attacked, the Herr's courage rose, and he cautiously advanced. Perhaps the bulldog would allow him to pass in safety, after all.

"Goot tog!" murmured the Herr.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

The "goot tog" was evidently not to be overcome by his blandishments.

Herr Schneider retreated again. He wouldn't have passed that brute for worlds. He already felt as if a lump were missing out of his calf, at the thought.

"Te prute! Dose bets vill be the deat of me!" mumbled Herr Schneider. And he turned away to go downstairs again. He could reach the other end of the passage by the back stairs from below, and, though it was a long way round, anything was better than trying to pass that horrible-looking bulldog.

As Schneider's steps died away down the stairs another sound issued from the alcove. It was not a growl, but a very distinct chuckle.

Two boyish heads projected from the recess, and had Herr Schneider been still there, even in the dim light, he would have recognised the Terrible Two.

"He's gone!" whispered Tom Merry.

Manners chuckled.

"Yes. He's gone down, to come up by the other stairs."

"He'll find the bulldog ready for him!" grinned Tom.

"Come on! The brute's heavy; lend me a hand."

The way the juniors moved that bulldog was really peculiar. Tom Merry seized him round the neck, and Manners gripped his hind legs, and they lifted him as if he were an image made of stone, and carried him along the passage. And, strange to say, the bulldog did not make a single movement of his own, nor did he emit anything like a growl.

The juniors carried him past Herr Schneider's bed-room door and set him down again facing the way the German master would come next. Then they darted into the doorway of the Shell dormitory, and, keeping it an inch or two ajar, watched for the coming of Herr Schneider.

There was a sound of footsteps from the back stairs.

"He's coming!" whispered Manners.

"Yes, I can hear his fairy tootsies."

"Get that growl ready."

"Rather!"

They watched through the crack. Herr Schneider's candle glimmered along the passage. The German master was coming along cautiously, treading as lightly as he could.

"Mein Gott und Himmel!"

Herr Schneider stopped with that exclamation of dismay as he saw that the bulldog had changed his position. He was still between the German master and his bed-room door. He was still in the same attitude, crouching low, his horrible-looking jaws partly opened, and his greenish eyes glimmering in the light of the candle carried by Herr Schneider.

"Mein Gott! Te prute! But I will not go round again!" muttered the German.

He advanced cautiously.

"Gr-r-r!"

Herr Schneider jumped back as suddenly as if he had trodden on a tack. The growl was simply vibrating with savage ferocity, and the Herr was far too startled and alarmed to notice that it came rather from the door of the Shell dormitory than from the crouching bulldog.

"Blitzen!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Vat vas I to do after? I gannot stay mit meinsel out in te passage all te night. I must go round again. Himmel!"

The German master turned back the way he had come. As soon as he was gone the Terrible Two emerged from the dormitory.

"Lend us a hand," said Tom Merry.

The bulldog was quickly lifted and carried back to his former position.

There was a solid-sounding clump as the chums set it down. It was really very heavy and solid for a bulldog. Then, with a quiet chuckle, the chums disappeared into the alcove.

It was some minutes before the German master made his reappearance. He grunted as he came up the stairs again. Herr Schneider was stout, and, as Tom Merry put it, he must have found it a fag to carry himself about in the warm weather.

"Der teuffel!" howled Herr Schneider, as his candle showed him the bulldog in its old position, still keeping guard over the approach to the bed-room. "I vill not go round again pefore after. Te prute! If he pite I vill keeck him mit te poot!"

And he marched on.

"Gr-r-r!"

Back jumped the German. All his brave resolutions vanished into thin air as soon as he heard that ferocious growl. But Herr Schneider wasn't going round again. Besides, it would have been useless. He just stood where he was and shouted for help.

If he roused the House, that was the Head's fault for allowing the juniors to keep such fiendish pets, the German said to himself. And as he was unable to get to bed himself there was a certain satisfaction in waking up everybody else in the School House.

And he certainly did some waking-up. Doors opened on all sides and voices called to know what was the matter. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came out of his room, and half the Fourth Form were soon on the scene.

"What is the matter, Herr Schneider?" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "What are you calling out for at such an hour of the night?"

"Look at tat tog!"

Mr. Linton looked and started.

"Dear me! What a ferocious-looking brute!"

"He have keep me out of my room after! I go te oder vay, and he go te oder side of te door. I come pack, he come pack, too, after. Vat is te pe done?"

"By Jove!" murmured Jack Blake, who was, of course, earliest on the scene. "He does look a savage brute, Herries, don't he?"

"Rather!"

"And he looks like that ornamental stone dog that Tom Merry bought in Rylcombe, don't he?" murmured Blake.

Herries started.

"Only a bit more highly coloured," he said.

"Yes, he's had some artistic touches of paint since he came," said Blake, "and some phosphorus on his eyes, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Herries," said Mr. Linton severely, "there is nothing to laugh at. It is not surprising that Herr Schneider should not care to pass that savage-looking brute. It looks as if it were crouching ready for a spring."

"It does look like it, sir, doesn't it?" said Herries meekly.

Mr. Linton advanced towards the dog.

"Shoo! Shoo!" he said, waving his hand.

A blood-curdling growl came from the alcove.

Mr. Linton hurriedly retreated.

"Dear me," he said, "I don't know what is to be done. The animal is certainly of the most ferocious nature and refuses to be persuaded."

"He's too stony-hearted," murmured Blake.

"Silence, Blake! I really——"

It was here that Mellish came to the fore. Mellish was always on the look-out for a chance to distinguish himself and to put Jack Blake and Tom Merry into the shade.

Here was a chance, and Mellish jumped at it. He had stopped to dress and put his boots on before he left the Fourth Form dormitory, so he was late on the scene. But he came forward like a bold volunteer.

"I'll drive him away, sir!" he exclaimed.

"No, no!" said Mr. Linton. "The risk——"

"I'm not afraid, sir!" said the valiant Mellish. "Blake doesn't seem to care for the job!" he added, with a withering glance at Blake. "I'll do it like a shot!"

"Go it, Mellish!" said Blake heartily. "This is your day out. Go it!"

"You chap: back me up."

"Rather! Go for him and give him a fearful kick, and then we'll rush him. Stand ready, you kids! Mellish leads the way!"

Mellish led the way. He screwed his courage to the sticking-point, took a rush at the bulldog, and delivered a terrible kick.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

The next moment he gave a frightful yell and started dancing in the corridor on one foot, holding the other foot in both hands.

The bulldog had not shifted an inch. That terrific kick had not disturbed him in the least. But Mellish felt as if he had kicked his hardest at a brick wall, and he howled with anguish as he hopped on one foot and nursed the other.

"Mein Gott!" ejaculated Herr Schneider. "Tat dog must have a head like te stone, ain't it?"

Mr. Linton uttered an exclamation.

"Is it possible that it is not real?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

There was a forward rush following Mr. Linton's words. Half a dozen candles shed their light at once upon the bulldog. It was quickly seen that the master of the Shell was correct. The bulldog was certainly graven in stone; but he looked extremely lifelike, owing to some artistic touches of paint and to the phosphorus rubbed on his eyeballs.

"Ow, ow, ow!" howled Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

He was close to the alcove, and he started as he felt his shoulder tapped from behind. He turned his head and saw Tom Merry and Manners.

"Mum's the word!" whispered Tom.

Blake grinned.

"Rather!"

Tom Merry linked arms with Blake. No one noticed that he had been in the alcove all the time. The boys were shouting with laughter at the discovery of the joke—all except Mellish. The hero was shouting, too, but it was with the pain in his toe.

"Mein Gott!" ejaculated Herr Schneider, whose face was a study. "It is ein stone dog, after all pefore! Mein Gott! Dis is ein drick!"

"It is certainly a trick," said the master of the Shell. "The dog was placed here purposely, and someone was imitating its growl in a very life-like manner. This shall be inquired into to-morrow. Boys, go back to bed!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" said Mellish.

The Terrible Two sauntered into their dormitory. The stone bulldog had been left in the alcove for the night. Tom and Manners laid down on their beds and roared.

"They can inquire if they like," Tom Merry remarked when he had finished laughing. "But I don't think they'll discover anything; and the bulldog will have disappeared by morning. Ha, ha, ha!"

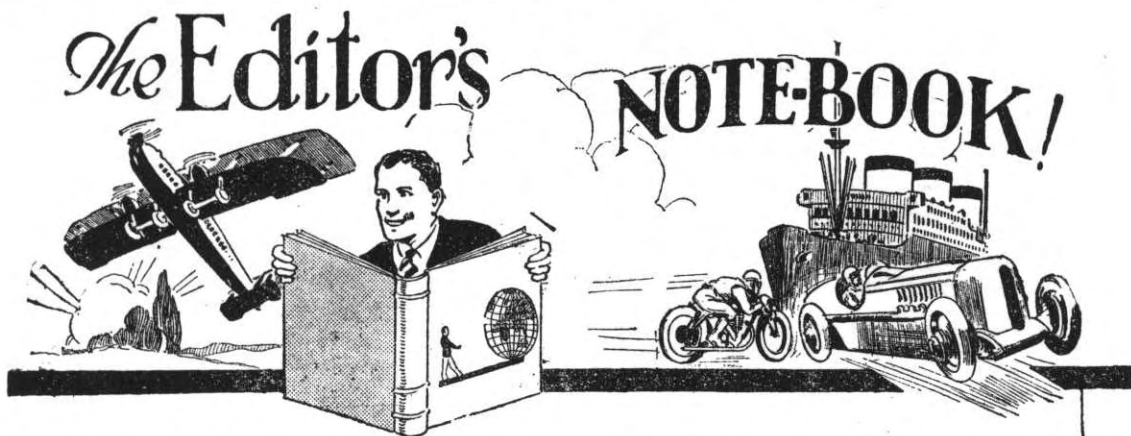
Tom Merry was right. The stone bulldog had disappeared in the morning. Probably Tom could have told what had become of it; but he did not, and the inquiry elicited nothing. The matter remained a mystery. Mellish remembered it longer; he had a pain in his toe for a week to remind him of it. And although Herr Schneider never knew for certain who had played that little joke upon him, he had a strong suspicion!

THE END.

(Tom Merry & Co. certainly had some fun in that yarn, eh? But it's nothing to the fun YOU are going to get out of next week's great yarn, "TOM MERRY & CO., ON STRIKE!" Order your "GEM" early, chums.)

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YOUR EDITOR HAS GOOD NEWS FOR YOU EVERY WEEK!



Address all letters The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

THE WINGER!

WHO is he? What is he? All the world is talking about him; all the forces of law and order are after him, for he is the biggest menace to civilisation that this generation has known. Every day he swoops as if from nowhere, fastens his criminal hands on a rich haul, and then disappears just as if the earth has opened and swallowed him. Defiance is his first name, daring is his second. Not only does this master-criminal plunder at will, but he has the remarkable audacity to notify the police of his plans in advance. Such a character will make his appearance in the pages of

NEXT WEEK'S "GEM"

in the first of a thrilling series of yarns that will grip you from the start. The "Winger" has his good points, strange as it may seem; but these you will learn about next Wednesday, also the part that Snap Fane, a youngster after your own hearts, plays in the repeated attempts to capture this daring gangster. Look out, boys, for the Winger, and tell all your pals about him.

"TOM MERRY & CO. ON STRIKE!"

That hits you bang in the eye, so to speak, doesn't it, boys? Yes, it's true, Tom Merry and his pals are very much on strike. They actually do their own laundry and cooking, etc.! The results are a scream—a roar! Every Gemite will get the best laugh of the week in this latest masterpiece from the facile pen of Martin Clifford. Owen Conquest, who is responsible for the next complete Rookwood story, has not been idle, either. Jimmy Silver & Co. will entertain you right royally in next week's smashing number of the GEM, to say nothing of Potts, the inimitable office boy. Order your copy early; that's the only way to avoid disappointment.

THE TREASURE SHIP!

The night was foggy, you couldn't see your hand before your face, when suddenly the ship reverberated to a terrific crash. Everyone aboard the P. and O. liner Egypt knew that this was a fatal collision. In twenty minutes the treasure ship, for the Egypt carried a cargo of £4,000,000 in bullion, had sunk to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,229.

a resting place on the ocean's bed off Ushant, in France, carrying with her twenty passengers and eighty of her crew. That was in 1922. Now, nine years later, after repeated unsuccessful attempts, divers from a salvage ship have managed to locate the valuable cargo. There still remains the difficult task of bringing the vast treasure that sank with the Egypt to the surface.

A PENNY-IN-THE-SLOT TYPEWRITER!

A thousand taps a penny! That's one of the latest offers made to the public in a large store in Berlin. A penny-in-the-slot typewriter is this attractive novelty, and queues of people line up in front of it daily. You place the equivalent of an English penny in the special slot meter and then start to type your letter. As you proceed a dial records the number of taps the typewriter hands out in exchange. When a thousand have been recorded—taps, mark you, not words—the automatic machine puts the brake on and positively refuses to go on tapping until a fresh coin has been fed into the slot. If any of you GEM readers try your luck at typewriting a letter on this type of automatic machine, for there is some talk of bringing it to England, it would be advisable to write your letter in pencil first, just to see how many taps will be required to typewrite it. Each letter, comma, etc., constitutes a tap, ditto each space between words.

GOOD-BYE, CRICKET!

With the advent of September King Cricket resigns his throne in favour of King Football, but here are a few facts concerning the great summer game for which sundry GEM readers have asked. The lowest total of runs recorded in first class cricket is 12. Both Oxford University and Northamptonshire hold this distinction—the former in their match with the M.C.C. in 1877 and the latter against Gloucester in 1907. You can tell your pal, George Hershaw, of Norfolk, that he's wrong, for the first Test Match between England and Australia was played as far back as 1877 at Melbourne. Don Bradman's prowess with the willow gave England something to think about in the last series of Test Matches, for he scored with amazing ease, but it is not generally known "over here" that Don's highest score is the colossal figure of 452, which he made at Sydney in 1929.

CAN YOU BEAT THIS?

A certain American discovered that he could hold thirteen tennis balls in one hand, and his friends were not slow to claim this as a record. But they haven't heard of a Mr. K. Miller, of Norwich. "Thirteen," he sniffed. "I can wallop that American record, anyway." And he did, for this cheery Englishman can hold quite comfortably fifteen tennis balls in one hand. Sounds fairly easy, doesn't it? But you try this stunt among your friends, and see how many tennis balls you can pile into one hand without dropping 'em.

THE WANDERING BOTTLE!

If a certain bottle that was thrown into the sea off the coast of Russia could be endowed with speech it would have a mouthful to say in the matter of long distance endurance records. This ordinary bottle drifted about on its lonesome for three years, and eventually "came ashore" at Ilwaco in America, very little the worse for its long trip.

'WARE TIGER!

The passengers and crew of the North German liner Lahn had a big thrill just before the vessel touched Marseilles on a recent voyage. Included among the "cargo" was a handsome specimen of a man-eating tiger. It looked just champion behind its specially prepared cage, for it was over six feet long, and stood four and a half feet high. But the big thrill and the big scare came along when it was dark. The tiger was of the inquisitive type; it clawed its way out of the cage and prowled about the ship. One unfortunate seaman mistook the escaped animal for the ship's dog, called it by name and received a nasty mauling. It was some time before the passengers felt they were safe to go to sleep in their bunks; even when the tiger, riddled with bullets, had paid for his brief spell of liberty with his life.

HEARD THIS ONE?

Tearful youth, to shop assistant: "I told mother what you said, that these eggs are the best you've had for years."

Shop Assistant: "Well, why have you brought them back."

Youth: "Mother says she'd rather have some that you haven't had so long."

A NEW COMPLETE ROOKWOOD YARN.

TUBBY MUFFIN'S DOUBLE!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.CHAPTER 1.
Caught in the Act!

"IDIOT!"

"I say, Peele—" "Fooling, fooling fathead!" said Cyril Peele, of the Fourth at Rookwood, giving vent to that stream of vituperation as he sprinted down the lane towards the school. "Blithering, blundering, burbling bandersnatch!" "Look here, old chap—" gasped Tubby Muffin, puffing painfully along in an endeavour to keep pace with the blade of the Fourth.

"Might have expected it of a fat frump like you!" said Peele bitterly. "Just as a favour I take you to the Bird-in-Hand for a game of billiards, and you have to get spotted by Dalton coming out of the back entrance! You're a fool!"

"Oh lor'! Wish to goodness I hadn't gone now!" gasped Reginald Muffin. "Don't suppose I should have, but for that remittance my uncle sent me!"

"If you're suggesting I took you there to rook you—"

"Well, you got most of my remittance, so it jolly well looks like it!" wailed the fat junior. "I shall tell Dalton you led me 'nto it!"

Peele's face hardened as he continued running.

"If you do, you fat rotter, I'll slaughter you—"

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" panted Tubby Muffin. "I'll tell Dalton, anyway, and—"

"Tell him and be hanged, then!" hissed Peele. "I'll deny it. And what then? He didn't spot me, and my word's as good as yours; get on with it!"

Tubby groaned.

"Oh dear! I say, Peele, perhaps he didn't recognise me. Think there's any chance of that?"

Peele laughed.

"My hat! About one in a million! You'd be recognised anywhere, chump! If he saw you, he jolly well knew you; ten to one he's doubling after us now."

"Oh crickey! Still, it might not have been me!" gasped the fat Fourth-Former hopefully. "It might have been someone like me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Peele—"

"No time. This is where I leave you and go in by the side entrance," said Peele. "Catch me trotting through the gates with a marked man!"

"I say, old chap—"

"If Dalton tackles you, just deny it," said Peele coolly, as he prepared to leave his fat colleague. "Remember this,

anyway; dragging me into it will earn you nothing but what you'll get from me—and that won't be anything you'll like!"

And with that Parthian shot the black sheep of the Fourth put on a spurt, quickly leaving the fat junior far in the rear.

It was a perspiring and weebegone Tubby that rolled up the steps of main school building and puffed his way up to the Fourth quarters, five minutes later.

Rarely had the fat junior felt so sorry for himself as he did on this occasion. It was not often that Tubby Muffin trod the primrose path. As a matter of fact, it was not often that he had the opportunity; Tubby was proverbially impecunious.

Fate, in the shape of an unexpected remittance from an almost-forgotten relative, had for once given him the chance. Tubby had seized it with both hands. Peele's suggestion of a trip to the billiard-room of the Bird-in-Hand, which was naturally out of bounds to Rookwood men, had seemed like a heaven-sent inspiration. It seemed the reverse of that now.

Cyril Peele had his redeeming features. He was, for example, a born actor; so far as the Junior Dramatic Society at Rookwood was concerned, he was the bright star in its firmament. But, in many ways, he failed altogether to come up to the Rookwood standard; most fellows, in fact, would not

have hesitated to describe him as a dingy young blackguard.

In the usual way, he would not have dreamed of chumming with Tubby Muffin. But Peele, not for the first time in his career was suffering from a shortage of cash, and the friendship of Tubby Muffin, with a remittance, held out material advantages which could not be ignored. He had "taken up" Tubby for the occasion; and Tubby had been led like a lamb to the slaughter—in the billiard-room of the Bird-in-Hand!

It had been the reverse of an enjoyable expedition from Tubby's point of view. He had gained a bad headache and lost the best part of his remittance. Afterwards, to crown it all, he had made his exit from the back entrance of the Bird-in-Hand at the precise moment when Mr. Dalton, his Form master, happened to stroll by on the opposite bank of the neighbouring stream!

It was cruel luck, and Tubby was a sadder, if not very much wiser, man, as he rolled wearily down the Fourth Form passage.

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Said Muffin to himself one day:
"I wish I had a double!
He'd have to take the blame
for me
When I got into trouble!"

He didn't go straight to his own study. Tubby was tired; but he was hungry in an ever greater degree, and he knew that his own cupboard was bare. So, instead, he rolled into the end study, whose tenants, the Fistical Four, were pretty sure to be out this fine afternoon.

They were.

Tubby opened the cupboard and found immediate solace in the shape of a large and luscious cake.

He lifted that tempting article out of the cupboard and sank into the study armchair.

For the next five minutes silence reigned in the end study, save for an occasional grunt from the direction of the armchair. Tubby Muffin was busy.

But, for once, his pleasure in the task of demolishing a rich and fruity cake was not unalloyed. As he ate he couldn't help thinking of Dicky Dalton's fixed look from the bank of the stream.

If only Dalton hadn't recognised him!

Of course, it was possible the beak might not have identified him. It was possible, anyway, that there were other fellows about who resembled him. If only—

At this point Tubby's reflections came to a sudden end.

He had heard the sound of footsteps from the direction of the stairs.

Worse still, he recognised the voice of Jimmy Silver, the cheery leader of the Fistical Four.

"Good job we've got that cake!" Jimmy Silver was saying. "I'm famished!"

"Same here!" came a chorus from Jimmy's colleagues.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

Troubles never come singly. Tubby had quite enough trouble to go on with; but it looked as if he was booked for more now.

The fat junior got up hurriedly from the armchair. Stuffing the sadly diminished remainder of the cake into his jacket pocket, he fairly leaped to the door.

Tubby seemed fated to keep running. He hadn't yet regained his breath from the last run home with Peele. But there was nothing else for it but to start afresh now.

Tubby bolted to the landing, passing the Fistical Four, who had just reached the top, without even daring to glance at them. He fairly flew down the stairs.

He had scarcely reached the bottom flight before there was a commotion from above.

"After him!"

"Get that fat burglar!"

"Slaughter him!"

Tubby Muffin, with fear in his little eyes, rushed through the Hall and headed for the Fourth Form room. The Fistical Four might not think to look in there. Form-rooms were not usually resorted to out of class hours.

There Tubby stayed for twenty minutes or so, polishing off the remnants of the cake and reflecting on his unhappy plight.

The fat junior realised that he was in a "hole." There seemed no way out of it, either.

The only idea which gave him any consolation at all was the thought that he could, as Peele had suggested, give Dalton a blank denial. Dalton might, of course, elect to believe the evidence of his eyes; but, after all, there was no proof. Possibly another chap did exist who resembled Tubby at a distance.

If only he had a double!

A wild possibility flashed through Tubby's fat brain.

Then the door of the Form-room was flung violently open, stopping the train of thought.

Jimmy Silver tramped in, with Lovell and Newcome and Raby, the other three members of the Fistical Four, at his heels.

"Got him!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"At last!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with satisfaction.

"Now, you thieving cormorant—"

Tubby Muffin started to his feet.

"I—I say, you chaps—"

"Collar him!"

"I say, you chaps, is wasn't me!" shrieked Tubby desperately. "I didn't do it, really. It was my double."

"Eh?"

The Fistical Four jumped. The unexpectedness of Tubby's statement took them altogether aback for the moment.

"Your—your whatter?" roared Jimmy Silver.

"My double. You see, the fact is— Oh dear! Here's Dalton!" wound up Tubby, with a groan.

Richard Dalton, M.A., walked into the Form-room.

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CHAPTER 2

Tubby's Brainwave!

"MUFFIN!"

"Ow! Absent, sir!" said Tubby Muffin instinctively. "I—I mean, yes, sir!"

"How dare you hide from me?"

"I wasn't—I mean, I didn't. I just came here for a social chat with these fellows, didn't I, you chaps? Been here all the afternoon, haven't we?"

Dicky Dalton's brow, grim already, grew grimmer.

"You are perfectly well aware, Muffin, that you have not been here all the afternoon. Why did you not wait for me to get round to you, when I saw you come out of that unsavoury tavern at Coombe?"

"Un-savoury tavern?" stuttered the fat junior, almost quivering with fear as he blinked up at the master of the Fourth. "I—I dunno what you mean, sir. I—I make a point of never coming out of unsavoury taverns."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver, while his followers gave vent to their feelings in a chuckle, which was instantly suppressed at a stern look from Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Dalton fixed his eyes on the trembling Tubby again. "I distinctly saw you, Muffin, coming away from a back entrance of a public place of refreshment which you know to be strictly out of bounds. It seems impossible that there can be any explanation of such a heinous offence against the rules of the school. Nevertheless, if you have any reasonable excuse to offer, I am willing to hear it."

"Th-thank you, sir!" gasped Tubby. "As a matter of fact, sir, I have an awfully good excuse."

"What is it, Muffin?"

"I wasn't there, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the Fistical Four; they couldn't help it. But Mr. Dalton evidently did not see the funny side of it. He glared.

"Silence, boys! This is no laughing matter! Does this mean, then, Muffin, that you have the temerity to deny that I saw you, when I am perfectly sure about the matter myself?"

"Yes, sir; exactly!" gasped Tubby. "You see, sir, the fact is, I've got a double!"

"What!"

"A—a double," stammered the fat junior, looking hopefully at the Form master. "They say everyone has a double. Well, I've one, you see. It's—it's jolly awkward for me, isn't it, sir?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, quite breathlessly. "You are trying to tell me that you have a double?"

"Just that, sir," said Tubby Muffin, with a little more confidence now that he had got it off his chest. "Bit rough on me when he starts blagging. That's not all he does, either. He's pinched something belonging to these chaps, and they think it's me. Rotten, isn't it?"

"Why, you hopeless idiot—" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, Silver!" roared Mr. Dalton. He fixed an almost shrivelling look on the fat junior. "You have the impertinence to expect me to believe that the person I saw this afternoon was not you at all, but someone like you?"

"That's it, sir."

"Someone who, by a strange chance, also wears Etons."

"Yes, he does wear Etons, sir," said Tubby eagerly.

"And a Rookwood cap."

"Exactly!"

"A Rookwood cap?" hooted Mr. Dalton. "And he is not you?"

"Not me at all, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Fistical Four, unable to restrain themselves, despite Dalton's portentous mien.

Tubby Muffin directed a reproachful look at Jimmy Silver and his chums.

"Don't take any notice of these chaps, sir," he said. "They never believe anything. Rather a low crowd, in my opinion. I—I hope you believe me, sir?"

Mr. Dalton seemed on the point of exploding with wrath.

"Believe you?" he roared. "So you expect me to believe this utterly futile fabrication, Muffin?"

"Oh, yes, sir! You see—"

"Then you are grievously mistaken!" snorted the master of the Fourth. "But for the fact that you are the most stupid and obtuse boy in the Form, you would not expect me to believe such a ridiculous story. I do not believe you, Muffin."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"By inventing this mythical double of yours," said Mr. Dalton darkly, "you have merely aggravated your already very serious offence. I have no alternative but to take you to the Head. Follow me!"

Tubby emitted a yelp.

"Oh crikey! Look here, sir, it's true——"

"Follow me, Muffin!"

"But it's really true!" howled Tubby, almost desperate now at the thought of being hauled before the Head.

"Look here, sir, give a fellow a chance! If I show you my double——"

"What!"

"If you see him and me at the same time, sir," gasped the fat junior, "will you believe me, then?"

Mr. Dalton paused.

"You are offering to produce this entirely imaginary person?"

"He's not imaginary, sir; he really exists!" said Tubby, who had almost begun to believe it himself now. "Look here, sir, you postpone going to the Head and give me a chance to show you my double!"

"Well, upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, in astonishment. "You are actually asking me to believe that you can do this impossible thing?"

"Oh dear! I'll do it, sir, if you'll only give me time."

"Preposterous!" said the Form master. "Is this—this pretended double supposed to be wandering about in the vicinity of the school, then?"

"Yes, sir. He seems here, there, and everywhere," said Tubby Muffin, drawing freely on his imagination as he saw

remarks of the leader of the Fistical Four. "The very thing!"

"Eh?"

"A regular brainwave!" said Tubby, the doleful look vanishing from his fat face all of a sudden. "I say, you chaps, it's quite true, you know. I really have got a double!"

"Rats!" yelled the Fistical Four, in unison.

"Well, you're jolly well going to see him, anyway!" grinned Tubby. "I'm off now! Ta-ta!"

And the fat junior rolled out of the Form-room at express speed, leaving Jimmy Silver and his chums staring after him in wonderment.

CHAPTER 3.

"In for a Penny——"

"WELL?"

Cyril Peele of the Fourth threw away the cigarette he had been smoking as Tubby Muffin entered, and rapped out the interrogation.

Tubby Muffin closed the door and calmly sat down in the armchair Peele had vacated.

"Not too well, old chap!" was his response. "Dalton had recognised me all right, and he cut up rusty."



Tubby Muffin, with Jimmy Silver & Co., chased after Tubby's double, who ran straight into the waiting arms of Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern House.

signs of Dalton relenting. "He doesn't belong to Rookwood, of course, but he trots around in the neighbourhood in Etons and a school cap, pretending to be me."

"Utterly impossible!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "Nevertheless, Muffin, I am going to give you a chance to prove your word, impossible as that task may be. That much is perhaps due to you."

"Thank you, sir! Of course, it may be difficult," said Tubby cautiously. "He may get to hear of this and keep out of the way."

"Nonsense! I will give you one day—twenty-four hours from now," said Mr. Dalton, "to show me this double you say you have. If you fail to do it, as, of course, you will, I will take you straight to the Head, who will, without doubt, punish you very severely indeed."

"Ow!"

"On those terms, I postpone consideration of the matter," said Mr. Dalton. "Remember, Muffin! Twenty-four hours!"

"Oh crikey! Of course, he may disappear——"

"I have nothing more to say!"

And Mr. Dalton stalked out of the Form-room.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, when the door had closed behind him. "Let yourself in for it this time, Tubby, haven't you? Of all the cock-and-bull yarns I ever heard——"

"Got it!" exclaimed Tubby just then, interrupting the

"You—you—didn't——"

Tubby Muffin smiled a fat smile.

"He, he, he! I say, Peele, you do look jolly white! Been thinking it over?"

"Fat idiot!" growled Peele, making an effort to appear nonchalant which, despite his acting ability, was not very successful. Then he added, with an anxiety which he could not conceal: "What did you tell Dalton? Did you drag my name into it?"

"Thought you said it didn't matter, anyway," grinned Tubby Muffin. "I'm jolly glad you've changed your mind, Peele—it makes it better for me."

Peele clenched his fists.

"If you don't tell me quickly what you said to Dalton——"

"All serene, old chap!" said the fat junior, hurriedly. "I haven't told him—I wouldn't, you know!"

"Oh!" Peele looked considerably relieved. "Well, thanks for that, anyway, Fatty!"

Tubby Muffin nodded.

"I should jolly well think so, too! My opinion is that you ought to show your gratitude. One good turn deserves

another, you know. As a matter of fact, there's a little favour—"

"If it's money—" said Peele.

Tubby grinned.

"Well, of course, the least you can do now is to hand over that money you filched from me this afternoon. Thanks, old chap!" The fat junior promptly pocketed the notes that were handed over. "But there's one other thing I'd like you to do to help me out of the hole I'm in with Dalton. And you, as a matter of fact, are the only chap in the Fourth who can do it."

"What is it?" asked Peele uneasily.

For answer Tubby leaned forward and whispered. What he whispered was apparently by no means pleasing to the black sheep of the Fourth. Peele recoiled, glaring.

"You silly fat idiot! Think I'm going to run my head into a noose?"

"You can do it," said Tubby—"you're the only man here who can. It'll pay you to try, anyway."

"What do you mean?"

The fat junior grinned.

"I haven't said anything to Dalton yet; but that's not to say I shan't before I've finished."

From that point the conversation developed on somewhat heated lines. The argument lasted quite a long time. It was twenty minutes at least before Tubby at last emerged from the study.

When, eventually, he did so he was looking quite pleased with himself. Apparently the duel had ended in his favour.

Quite a crowd of juniors met him in the Hall. They greeted him with a yell—the story of Tubby's latest had quickly spread.

"Here he is!"

"No, he isn't! It's not Tubby—it's only his double!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby stopped for a moment.

"I say, you chaps, I hope you won't be too quick in jumping to conclusions now that the truth's out. If some rotter looking just like me raids your tuck, or anything like that, you'll know now that it isn't me at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to laugh at!" declared Tubby seriously. "It won't be long before you happen to spot the two of us at the same time. You'll jolly well believe me then, I hope!"

"You mean we won't jolly well believe our eyes, old bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors, evidently disagreeing with Tubby's opinion that it was nothing to laugh at, were still roaring when he left them.

The fat junior had already created something of a sensation at Rookwood. But during the next hour he doubled and trebled the effect of it.

For reasons best known to himself Reginald Muffin had decided that it had suddenly become safe for him to place any crime he committed at the door of his "double." That decision involved certain temptations in a fellow of his peculiar temperament.

After leaving the Hall, Tubby's first move was to the study of Bulkeley of the Sixth.

In his time he had raided all sorts and conditions of studies in search of provender; but he had always stopped short of raiding the supplies of the mighty men of the Sixth.

The considerations which had previously stopped him, however, no longer seemed to weigh. It was a case of "in for a penny in for a pound," now, with Tubby.

He helped himself liberally in Bulkeley's study.

Then he went out of the House and rolled cheerfully over to the school tuckshop.

Sergeant Kettle, the proprietor of the little shop, did not trouble to come out from his back parlour at Tubby's approach.

"No tick!" he said stolidly, as Tubby rolled through the doorway.

Tubby's answer to that remark was surprising. He leaned over the counter, calmly picked up a big pork-pie from its stand, and rolled out.

Sergeant Kettle jumped up then without any hesitancy.

"Why, you thievin' young varmint—come back!" he roared.

But Tubby was deaf to the voice of the charmer. He broke into a run, tucking his prize under his arm, and made tracks for the rhododendron bushes, in whose thick foliage he was quickly swallowed up.

Half an hour later he emerged and stood for a few moments reflectively gazing across the quad.

Mr. Manders, the unpopular Housemaster of the Modern House, came into his view as he stood there.

Tubby's eyes gleamed. He had suddenly remembered

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several old scores he had always been wanting to settle with Manders.

No sooner the thought than the deed. Tubby brought out a peashooter and tossed a number of peas into his mouth.

A moment later there was a yelp from Mr. Manders.

"Oh! Ah! What—"

Tubby fired a regular hail of peas in the direction of the Modern master, and Mr. Manders began to dance about like the proverbial cat on hot bricks.

"Muffin! You—you— Oh! Ow! Oh!"

"Hallo, hallo! What on earth—" came a yell, as juniors began to run down from the school buildings to take a closer view of the astonishing scene.

"Tubby's double!" roared Kit Erroll, who was leading.

"And he's pelting Manders! Great pip!"

Tubby Muffin came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for him to make himself scarce. He doubled back and once more sought the shelter of the rhododendrons. Under their friendly protection he quickly made his way round to the school wall and out of the gates.

He left the quad in an uproar.

The House was still seething when, one hour later, the fat junior—who was by this time the central figure of the entire school—coolly rolled up the steps.

Behind him, having spotted him from the quad, came Mr. Manders and Sergeant Kettle; and Bulkeley, who had in the meantime been investigating certain losses from his study, stalked on the scene from the Hall.

All three closed round him at the same moment.

Simultaneously, by a lucky chance, Mr. Dalton turned up. A moment later Mr. Dalton's ears were being assailed by a clamour of voices.

"This thievin' young varmint, sir—"

"Mr. Dalton! My study has been raided, and I strongly suspect—"

"Pelted me, sir! This utterly abandoned young ruffian actually pelted me with peas!"

"Muffin! What—" gasped Mr. Dalton in bewilderment.

"Not true, sir!" said Tubby calmly. "It was my double—must have been!"

"Bless my soul! Can it be possible that there is, after all, something in the boy's extraordinary statement?" asked Mr. Dalton, evidently disinclined to credit that Tubby was capable of so many offences at once.

And then he explained to the three fuming victims the twenty-four hours' grace he had given Tubby in which to produce his troublesome double.

And, amazing as it seemed to the onlookers, Tubby "got away" with it! Mr. Dalton asked them to postpone the matter until the following day.

Mr. Manders and Bulkeley and Sergeant Kettle went their respective ways in the end, still fuming.

Tubby Muffin, grinning cheerfully, went up to his study. By which time the entire school was in a roar, and there was but one topic of conversation.

That topic was Tubby Muffin's double.

CHAPTER 4.

Not a Success!

"ONE hour left, Tubby!"

Jimmy Silver made that remark the following day as he and a crowd of juniors stood sunning themselves on the steps.

"And then Dalton'll come down like a ton of bricks," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I'd get ready for a long jump if I were you, Tubby."

"By the way, what's all the mysterious whispering you were doing with Peele after classes?" asked Teddy Graco.

"Is he in the merry plot?"

"There's no plot," answered Tubby calmly. "The fact is—" He broke off suddenly and pointed towards the tuckshop. "There he is!"

The juniors wheeled round and looked.

What they saw made them blink.

Rolling across the quad towards Sergeant Kettle's little shop was a youth in Etons and a Rookwood cap, who, from the distance, looked to be the living image of Tubby Muffin.

"Ye gods!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Then—then it's true!"

"Fetch Dalton!" said Tubby excitedly.

But there was no need. Mr. Dalton, having apparently seen the unexpected vision from the Hall, had already joined the group.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed.

Master and boys watched the "double" of Tubby Muffin with fascinated eyes. He rolled up to the tuckshop, looked round cautiously, and went in.

A moment later he was out again, carrying a cake under his arm.

Jimmy Silver jumped to life.
 "After him!" he yelled.
 "Never catch him!" gasped Raby. "He's too far away!"
 "No good trying," said Muffin. "Anyway, now you've all seen, and I hope—"

"There's Tommy Dodd and his crowd!" roared Lovell.
 "Tell 'em to bag him! All together!"

"Look here, you chaps—" said Tubby Muffin, displaying sudden agitation.

But nobody heeded Tubby now. They all joined in a yell that fairly woke the echoes of the quad.

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern House, who were between the flying fugitive and the gates, looked round at that yell and saw what was wanted.

Without wasting a moment they lined up. There was a short, sharp struggle, then Tubby's mysterious double crashed with the three Tommies swarming over him.

"Bagged him!" chortled Jimmy Silver. "Now to solve the giddy mystery!"

"I—I say, sir," gasped Tubby, "if he tells you I put him up to this—"

"You may reserve your remarks, Muffin!" said Mr. Dalton grimly.

Then he led the way across the quad.

As the buzzing crowd drew nearer they could see that certain structural alterations had taken place in the captive. He no longer looked so much like Tubby Muffin as he had looked from a distance. His waistcoat had come undone, revealing a pillow used for padding underneath, and he was still struggling to free his mouth from wads of cotton-wool which had apparently been used to stuff out his cheeks.

A sudden yell went up.

"Peele!"

"Jolly old Peele!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "So that whispering did mean something deep, after all. Well, my hat!"

Mr. Dalton recovered the powers of speech of which he had seemed for the moment to have been deprived.

"So—so you, Peele, are Muffin's alleged double!" he

ejaculated. "You, then, are responsible for all the misdeemeanors which had been credited to Muffin—"

"Oh dear! Not at all, sir!" gasped Peele, his hair almost standing on end at the thought of the crimes which might now be laid at his door. "I—I only did this to get Muffin out of a fix."

"Well, I cannot help remarking that you did your work exceptionally well," remarked Mr. Dalton. "That is the only word of congratulation that is likely to be heard in connection with this amazing matter. Muffin!"

"Ow! Ye-es, sir!"

"I think I begin to see what lies behind all this now," said the master of the Fourth, in deep, deep tones. "Having some kind of hold over Peele, and knowing that he is an accomplished amateur actor, you forced him to do this to mislead me."

"Oh crikey!"

"The whole thing is disgraceful beyond words!" said Mr. Dalton. "I shall hand it over as it stands to the Headmaster. Follow me—both of you!"

"Oh lor!"

They followed him.

The interview that followed in the Head's study was a lengthy affair. The curious crowd that hung about in the neighbouring passages began to wonder when it would end.

End it did, eventually. From the direction of the Head's study came the steady sound of swishing; then a yell, then a louder yell, followed by a chorus of yells, growing louder and louder every moment.

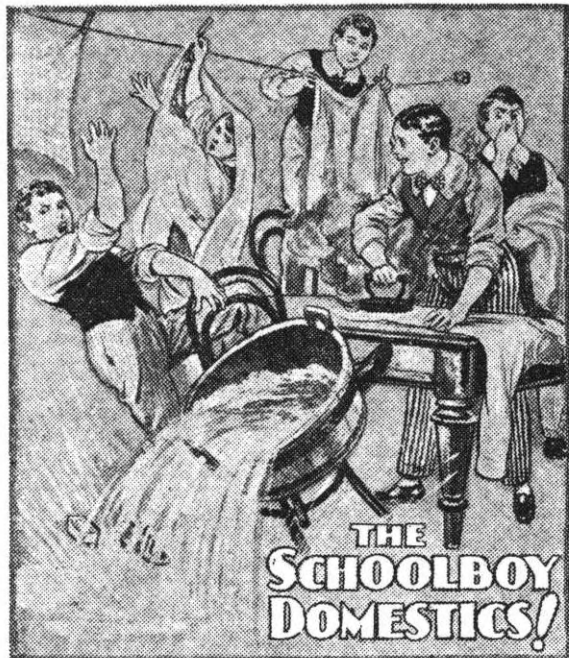
Laughter was the order of the day in the Common-rooms and studies of Rookwood till bed-time that night. It was a long time since anything quite so funny as Tubby Muffin's double had cropped up.

But Muffin and Peele in the dorm saw nothing funny about it now. From their point of view Tubby Muffin's double was decidedly and emphatically not a success.

THE END

(Tubby certainly got himself into trouble that time, but it was nothing to the trouble Jimmy Silver gets into in "SILVER'S NARROW SQUEAK!" next week.)

The GEM 2^d



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By
RICHARD RANDOLPH.

Rod Gets a Letter!

RED HARMAN had played many good innings. He played the innings of his life that day in the match with Surrey. He said afterwards that he had come out of the committee-room with his tail up, and it had not gone down.

He never made a mistake from first to last, and always he was scoring fast. Others did good work, and no one pottered; but Rod was the dominant batsman. Rod made his own modest 40 in less than half an hour and that was good enough. He was just wondering whether he ought to declare the innings closed when the problem was solved for him by Ginger's being caught in the long field by Gregory. Ginger and Rogers had actually added 41 for the last wicket—the ninth in Hyde's absence—in under twenty minutes. Nothing scientific about it, though some of Ginger's strokes were not half bad, but of rare value.

Surrey were set to get 251 in a trifle under three hours, allowing for the possible half-hour's extension. Some sides would have rested content with first innings' points. But the men from the Oval are for the most part quick scorers, and their captain has no belief in the timid game. They would go for the runs.

And here came in Rod's opportunity to show that he could lead a side in the field. Norlandshire was none too strong in bowling, and, with the possible exception of Rogers, their bowlers were none too good at the placing of the field against versatile batsmen. It must be for the boy thus put in charge to do most of the thinking.

But that he was so very sure they liked and trusted him he would have felt uneasy. Even as it was, he knew that he could not move his men to the best effect as Fender had done his—only to be beaten by the forcing tactics of Norlandshire in the event. But Rod had watched closely what Fender had done, and had forgotten nothing.

If he could but get Hobbs and Sandham parted very soon! Should both get fairly set they were quite capable of hitting off the runs.

There was plenty more in the way of good batting to come after them; but they formed his first problem.

He tackled it resolutely. He thought it out. Tommy Coote bowled the first over at his best pace. And, though both the Surrey cracks knew Tommy from of old, they had to be careful with him now.

Then Rogers bowled to Sandham. It was not often the veteran went on first; it looked as though the youthful skipper had made a big error here. Roger was hit for fifteen in the over, and did his best to look disconsolate. But he did not really grieve, it was all according to plan. Those runs had been given away.

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Coote bowled a maiden—first-rate fast stuff that might not have fared as well with inferior batsmen in. Fours come off casual snicks to the chance-your-luck man. But Hobbs and Sandham seldom send the ball into the slip territory except by design.

Then Rod himself went on.

The reason seemed obvious. He believed in contrast. He could not trust Rogers again yet, and his normal bowling had much in common with that of the old hand. But even the astute Sandham was deluded by him. His first ball was a slow; but his second was hardly less swift than Coote's, and fairly zipped off the pitch. It was played, though not easily. There had been no longer run, no apparent change in delivery. This had known things.

Slow or fast, that third ball? It got Sandham guessing.

And, after all, it was neither. It was not slow, he realised before it reached him; but it was not as fast as its predecessor, and the stroke he made for it was made too soon. The ball went up, and Ginger's sure hands were under it as it fell.

Then Tommy Coote put in a fine piece of work for his side. He clean bowled Ducat

and Shepherd—two rare good ones gone for less than double figures each, and three wickets down for 38.

But there was a groan of dismay from the crowd when Rod made a double change of bowling, putting on Stanton and Rogers for Coote and himself. The boy must have gone mad, some thought; but among these were not the old hands in the pavilion.

If he was mad, there seemed to be method in his madness. For Roger Rogers was not like the same man who had sent down that one early over. He was at his best now, and he kept Hobbs comparatively quiet; while for half a dozen overs Stanton bowled length stuff from the other end that could not safely be hit much.

Then Coote, having had a spell, came on again for Stanton, and produced his best pace as at first. Tommy did not look like one who needed nursing; but Rod had seen that he was not as fast or as good after his few opening overs. Alured Hyde had never realised that, and had kept him on.

Rogers was still persevered with, though Hobbs and

**PROFESSIONAL CRICKETER
TURNS AMATEUR!**
Thrilling match between Surrey
and Norlandshire.

Barling were making runs at a pace that did not render the possibility of victory for Surrey small. The veteran was pitching on the leg stump, and going away, not across. The crack got him round. There was never a four in it, for Conrad Beal was on the boundary in the long leg direction; but safe twos and threes came.

Until Rod moved silently, swiftly, from his post at short slip, behind the stumper, to a place that has no name in any manual of cricket instruction, and Rogers sent down one just a little outside the leg stump, and Hobbs swung round, and Rod took a catch almost off his bat—a hit of such force that it might almost have gone through him had he failed to hold it!

Hobbs had started down the pitch, surprised that Barling made no move. Then he turned, and saw the ball thrown up.

He took his right hand from his bat and extended it to Rod.

"Can't think how you did it, my boy!" he said. "But you've taken me in completely."

It was the generous speech of a great sportsman, and the crowd roared applause at Hobbs as well as at Rod Rodney. The England's man's words had not been heard, but his action was significant.

All seemed going well for Norlandshire. But now came a check. With Barling and Gregory together a long stand was made. Barling was very solid, but never slow; the Croydon man scored fast off all the bowlers. Tommy Coote seemed to have shot his bolt; Stanton did not look like getting a wicket; Rod and Rogers had to do most of the work, and when they were on together the bowling was too similar in style.

The total was 173 when Rod put on Walter Deeks. No one believed in the bowling of Deeks. It was of the type that used to be called donkey-drops. He tossed the ball high, with no pace to speak of and hardly any break, but always on the wicket. "Might get out a girls' school eleven," Red Harman had once said.

But Deeks troubled Barling, who perhaps had never met anyone like him before. And when Rod saw Barling troubled, he said to Roger in passing him:

"I suppose you could slip in a fast one at a pinch, Roger? Really fast, I mean."

"I'll have a shot," replied the old hand. "It will most likely mean four, though."

It would have meant that had Barling met it fairly and squarely; but, though he knew it was faster, he did not gauge its true pace. He played too late, and the ball towered behind the wicket, in the long leg region.

Ginger switched round, and ran for it. But—

"Beal's catch!" came Rod's voice, lifted high.

Beal was farther off than the little stumper, but he was running in to the ball, with a better chance of judging it. Like a deer he ran, like a hawk he watched the course of the leather, and another mighty cheer arose as he took the catch—took it as though it were the easiest thing in the world to do so—yet with no sign of swank.

Ginger might have missed it. To judge a ball going from you is very difficult. Rod was sure Conrad would make no mistake.

But Norlandshire had still one big barrier to leap, apart from Gregory—and Gregory was well set.

Fender was to be dreaded. Half an hour of him at his best might settle the issue. Rod hoped that he would start in to hit at once, and to that end kept Deeks on for another over after he had done his work, though he had not taken a wicket. But Fender had glanced at the clock as he came out. He had no need to slog, and he can abstain from slopping when he chooses. He was careful with Rogers.

Gregory did not dread the supposed wiles of Deeks as Barling had done. He hit three fours in an over—all drives, almost straight, one of them, indeed, right over the bowler's head. Beal was too far off for any chance of a catch. Fender had two boundaries off Rogers, and, to the surprise of nearly all who watched, Deeks was kept on for another over.

Rod, who had fielded point to the left-hander, was mid off to Deeks. But as the first ball was bowled he shifted his position, moving behind Deeks, and Gregory, his eyes on the man with the ball, failed to notice the move.

Another lofty drive—far too high for Deeks even to jump for it—but not too high for Rod with a mighty leap to grab the leather in his right hand and hold it above his head as he fell on his back.

Exit Gregory. Exit Fender, his unaccustomed prudence of no avail, for Rod had gone on in Deeks' place now, and got the Surrey skipper with a ball that might have bowled anyone.

The extra half-hour was claimed with 22 runs wanted and two wickets to fall.

That sturdy yeoman, Allan Peach, was at his best. For

a few minutes Maurice Allom hit hard—a couple of 4's, and several strokes that might have gone to the boundary but that the Norlandshire men, one and all, were heading magnificently. Their young captain had lifted them as Hereward had done in his time, as Hyde could never have done. The spirit of the men made all possible response to the leader's appeal; they played as though their lives were on the issue.

Red Harman made a fine catch, and Allom went back to the pavilion.

And still Fender did not regret that he had not sat tight on the first innings points, but had gone for the gloves. Brooks and Peach would not fail for want of pluck, he knew, and, even though Surrey were beaten in the end—gad, what a finish! This was cricket!

Peach tried to keep the bowling, and Brooks played up to him loyally. But with 7 runs wanted Rod got a chance at Brooks, and sent his off-stump back!

The crowd rushed for Rod—Rod for the pavilion! Rod won, though only by a yard or two.

They were shaking him by the hand—grave seigneurs of the county committee, old players like that good fellow who led the second eleven, Surrey men—Fender, Allom, Hobbs, Ducat, Sandham, Peach. His own comrades were patting his back. It would have been the great hour of his life but for one thought that damped his enjoyment of it all.

He had put that thought out of his mind till now. But now he could keep it out no longer.

John Redgrave—Aunt Mary—Ralph! John and his wife had been so good to him. Ralph was an utter rotter—a bigger rascal than Rod had ever thought he could be; but Ralph might be dying, and he was the son of those two good friends!

As soon as he possibly could, Rod hurried away to the house that had become home to him.

On the way thither he was stopped by Harry Hiam, who thrust an envelope into his hands.

"I'm doing a bunk!" said Harry hoarsely. "My old man's cut his lucky without a word to me. He sees the game's up. If you don't know anything about it yet, I reckon you'll know soon."

Harry Hiam had not been a friend of Rod's—as far as Rod knew, that is. He was a friend at heart. But Rod was aware that Ginger thought something of him, and Harry's look of distress appealed to Rod's generous heart.

"Don't do it, if there's nothing against you!" he answered hastily. "They can't punish you for what your governor's done. You stick tight, and your pals will stand by you!"

"If you opened that envelope you might—" began Harry.

He might have gone on to say, "think me a pal of yours." But he was not sure. He had been forced to play a double game. And Rod did not give him a chance to finish.

"I don't care what's in it," he broke in. "You cut along and see Ginger. His head is screwed on all right, and he'll give you good advice. Can't wait now."

And he rushed off, thrusting the envelope into a pocket. He had forgotten all about it within ten seconds, though not about Harry.

To Pay The Price!

BUT he remembered it when he reached the Redgraves' house, and was told by John Redgrave himself that he could not see Ralph yet.

"The doctor's with him, and a nurse," said John. "His mother's there, too. Don't talk to me, Rod. I'm trying to puzzle this all out, and if it's as bad as Joseph Hyde seems to think it is, I could wish that my boy had never been born. You may know more than I do, but don't tell me yet."

Rod sat down. Then he thought of the letter, took it out, and slit the envelope.

A queer-looking thing. Scraps pasted together on a backing of stiff paper—some of them dirty, but still readable. Pasted neatly, too, for Harry had spared no pains.

He read, and for half a minute he failed to understand what all this meant. Then he knew, and a great wave of joy swept over him. All his difficulties were smoothed away as though by magic. The way was open to him to prove that he could be to Norlandshire a second Arthur Hereward. He was very young; but no one had taken much account of that fact to-day, and even if he had to wait a year or two before the captaincy was entrusted to him he would not mind—well, not very much, anyway.

And then he looked at John Redgrave, whose face was buried in his big hands.

Less than two days ago and this would have been glad

tidings to John. At the moment it would only add to his grief to be told. For he would surely ask how this letter had come to Rod in such a strange way, and Rod would have to tell him that it was because his son had purloined it, and had taken it to his confederate, Hyde. Two or three lines in Harry Hiam's scrawl had told Rod how he had got possession of it.

John Redgrave rose, having to lift himself with his hands on the arms of his chair as though he was old and feeble.

"Do you know anything about this, Rod?" he asked.

A pearl necklace was flashed before Rod's astonished eyes. He had never seen anything like it before in his life.

"I don't," he answered; and Redgrave had no doubt he spoke truly.

"My wife found it hidden under the mattress of your bed," said John.

Rod could not answer. There was a great lump in his throat, and his eyes had overbrimmed. He could find no words, and could not have spoken them though they had come to his mind. And yet in some sort he did answer, for a strong arm went round the sturdy shoulders of the stricken man, and comforted him, if but a little.

The doctor came down.

"I think it well to tell you, Redgrave," he said, "that I can see no hope of recovery. The fractures might be cured, but I fear the internal injuries are mortal."

"How long do you give him, doctor?" returned the father, in curiously dry tones.

"Can't be sure. Hardly more than forty-eight hours, I think."

The doctor wrung John's hand, and went.

"I ought to go to the police with this thing, Rod," said Redgrave.

"Not now, Uncle John. Leave it."

"That's all very well, if Ralph owns up. I shall have to make him."

"Don't! I'd rather you didn't."

"You never liked him. There wasn't any reason why you should. Why are you willing to take the risk of being thought the fellow who stole this string of useless shiners?"

"There's not much risk. Nobody's going to believe I did it, and if they did believe they couldn't prove it. No, Ralph and I were never pals. But you and Aunt Mary—no one ever had better friends than you have been to me."

Again John Redgrave's face was buried in his big hands. But he soon looked up.

"I'll take you at your word, Rod," he said. "There's sore disgrace coming upon this house; but I know one who will stand by the people in it through all, and that's you. I shall say no word to Ralph unless he offers confession. Do you want to see him?"

"I'd rather not," answered Rod; and John Redgrave understood.

Ralph did confess, though only a few minutes before the end came.

"It's bound to come out," he said faintly, having learned from his mother how matters stood. "I played it low down on Rodney, I know. But I hated him from the first."

"You don't—you can't—hate him now, Ralph!" pleaded the heart-broken mother.

"I don't know. No, I don't really think I do. But he wasn't my sort. I hope Alured Hyde won't get it in the neck for all this."

So Ralph clung to the end to his poor, pitiful loyalty to the fellow who had ruined him. Well, perhaps even that mistaken loyalty was better than none.

John Redgrave would have hoped that Hyde would get it in the neck, but for his regard for the young rascal's father. It hardly seemed possible that he should escape, anyway.

"It's all over, Rod," said John Redgrave, coming downstairs half an hour later.

Rod's only reply was a hand grip.

"You ought to be on your way south," Redgrave continued.

The match with Middlesex at Lord's was next day.

"We go by an early morning train," Rod replied. "But ought I to go at all, Uncle John? I may be wanted here."

"Don't you worry about that. I'll attend to things. If they do want you they know where to find you, don't they? I shall see Joseph Hyde, and hear what he has to say. You get on with your cricket."

"That—that's not the only thing that matters to me. Oh, it does matter a lot! But you and Aunt Mary—"

"We only want you to have your fair chance; and it looks like a big chance now. You can't help us here; but you can help Norlandshire at Lord's. I reckon."

Rod saw that it was true. He could do no good in North-chester. But his heart ached for those he was leaving behind to their heavy grief.

John Redgrave saw Joseph Hyde that night. They sat

long together, and others came to take counsel with them. Most people wanted the trouble hushed up. That would not be easy; but it seemed just barely possible. The evidence the police could get together was comparatively slight. Mr. Hyde thought that the pearls might be restored to their owner without bringing the police into the business at all. Since the conspiracy against Rod had failed completely there was no use in going into that. Nothing seemed more certain than that the gang which had so long troubled the district had come to an end of its activities.

"As soon as he's fit to travel he goes abroad—and he stays there!" said Joseph Hyde of his son. "If he comes back I've done with him, once for all. They may not let him go; but I'm hoping they will. John, old friend, your son is no more dead to you than mine is to me."

So did two pay the price; and perhaps the price Alured Hyde paid was a higher one than Ralph Redgrave did, as, indeed, it should have been.

Geering, Yankoo, Horry Hiam—all of these had cleared out. It was some weeks before Hyde could go, and even then he went on board the liner for New York in an ambulance. But he went, and none tried to stay him. Whatever case the police had was altogether too incomplete to be worth pursuing.

Top of the Championship!

"I'VE seen Harry. He says he's going to take your advice and stay on," said Ginger to Rod at breakfast in the train next day.

"Good!" answered Rod. "I'm sure he is really straight, and there ought to be something that can be done for him."

There proved to be so. Harry was not even questioned by the police. His father's disappearance might have been connected by them with the mystery into which they could see such a very little way. But Harry really did not count in their estimation.

Through the influence of the Norlandshire captain a place was found for him on the ground staff—not among the players, for Harry would never make a cricketer. But both secretary and head groundsmen found in him a useful aide; and within a year or two he had become the head groundsmen's right-hand man. He learned quickly and remembered well; he grew to be an expert in the matter of preparing and renovating pitches. There are not many such experts. The way was open to Harry to make good, and he took it.

He and Rod and Ginger and Conrad Beal were soon fast friends.

But this is telling in advance of the story, though perhaps it is best told here.

Rod had been confirmed in the captaincy for the Middlesex match. No one disputed the fact that he had done well for his side in the Surrey game, and, anyway, there was no one else available.

He had as yet said nothing to anyone but Ginger and Beal about the letter telling of his accession to a fortune. They rejoiced. Well they knew that the barrier between amateur and pro—a lower barrier now than of old—would not exist as between Rod and them.

"I should let Mr. Yarnold know, if I were you, Rod," said Beal.

And Rod took his advice when, on the second day of the match at Lord's, Jarvis Yarnold turned up and sent for him.

"Why, that's wonderful! It removes all our difficulties—except that my good friend White will still be saying that you're too young," Yarnold told him. "To appoint a pro. of your age to the regular captaincy of a county team might seem absurd, though I don't see it so myself. With you able to play as an amateur there will be less bother. They'll soon forget that you're only a boy, after all. And I'll tell you something—Joseph Hyde had offered the committee, by way of amends for the ill-doing of that graceless son of his, and because he is a sportsman, to put you into a position to come up out of the pro. ranks. I told him I'd broach the matter to you, but I was not sure you would accept. There's no need you should now."

Rod was not sure either. It would have been a temptation, and he could not have accepted without dishonour. Yet it was far better as things were. Mr. Hyde himself admitted that when he heard.

The victory over Surrey had put Norlandshire at the top of the championship table. A win over Middlesex, doing much better this year than last, would go far to establish their position.

Middlesex had about their best team in the field, with Nigel Haig as skipper. There were Hendren and Hearne and Sandy Lee and Price, Ian Peebles and R. W. V. Robins,

H. J. Enthoven, and G. C. Newman, the lengthy Jack Durston, and Hulme, the Arsenal footballer. Norlandshire played the same side as in the last game.

There had been some rain, and afterwards the sun shone out and the pitch was not ideal for batsmen. Haig won the toss and took the first innings. The home side made 224—Hendren 71—and at drawing of stumps Norlandshire had eight wickets down for 104. No one had done much for the Northern county; but Rod had stood firm through a bad time and had 31 to his credit. Only Ginger and Rogers remained to help him.

It was now that Ginger began to make the name as a batsman that was later to be his.

Against the wiles of Peebles and Robins, against Durston at his best pace, against Hearne and Enthoven, he presented a solid defence. And he scored now and then, though for the most part he left the run-getting to Rod. They stayed together until lunch was near, adding 128. Then Ginger was beaten, but he had made 29 without a chance or even a bad stroke, and had laid the foundation of a batting career.

Rod had passed the hundred, amidst uproarious cheering, before that. But Roger Rogers did not yield his wicket readily. Every run added now was of great value, as long as runs came quickly, and the old hand knew that his young skipper was to be trusted for that.

He stonewalled, therefore. Rod hit, not caring if he lifted the ball, though he did try to avoid lifting it anywhere near Patsy Hendren.

The imagination of the crowd had been seized by the thought of this boy captaining a great side. His every stroke was applauded.

In twenty minutes he slammed up 45 runs, four times hitting the ball well over the ropes. Then he put up one that Hendren got to ere it could follow its predecessors; and Roger Rogers carried his bat for a valuable single, and Norlandshire had a lead that might mean much.

But it was not for points on the first innings Norlandshire strove. The men were all out for victory.

Haig and Lee, batting stubbornly, wiped off the deficit. But then Haig left. Jack Hearne and Lee looked as though they had taken root, but did not score very fast. Rod changed his bowlers frequently, but no change seemed to make any impression on those two. They pursued the even tenor of their way, and were still together at the finish of the day, when Lee had made over a hundred and Hearne over seventy.

On the face of it all the advantage gained by Norlandshire seemed to have gone west. They could hardly take more than first innings' points now, most people thought.

Could they not? Their young skipper was of another mind.

No wonder he should be full of confidence. Things had worked out wonderfully for him, and he felt that he must play his luck to the uttermost.

Tommy Coote got Lee early on the third morning.

And then came the turning-point of the match, as was seen afterwards if not at the time:



When Rod reached the pavilion he was surrounded. Members of the committee, Surrey men, and men of his own team were thumping him on the back and shaking him by the hand!

Rod was on in the next over to that which had seen Sandy Lee go. He sent down one to Hendren which was driven back straight at terrific speed, only a few inches from the ground.

Rod shot down a hand, and a thrill of intense pain went through him. One of his nails had caught the toe of his boot and had been ripped right out. But the hand to which it belonged had grasped the leather, and the other—the left—closed upon it.

A yell of appeal came from the field. "You'll have to go, Patsy," said big Dick Burrows, umpire.

"I know. That was a catch all right, though not one man in a hundred could have made it," answered Hendren.

Lucky it was his right hand, thought Rod, though even had it been his left he would have gone on bowling. It was not self-conceit that told him he had a far better chance of getting wickets than any of the rest, except Tommy Coote, when he came on again after being spelled.

Between them Rod and Tommy had all the ten wickets, and Rod's share of them was seven, taken at a cost of 64 runs.

Norlandshire wanted 241 to win, and must make their runs fast to have any chance.

"Any risk we like, skipper!" asked Red Harman, with a grin—for he knew what the answer would be.

"All out!" replied Rod.

And Rod and Conrad Beal went all out for a precious half-hour, during which they slammed up 65.

But then came a slump—a dreadful slump!

It was not that the hearts of the other men failed them. But Peebles was at his best, and Durston bowling his speediest and making pace off the pitch, and if Peebles needed a rest Robins was brought on, and Haig and Enthoven both bowled well.

Rod, going in first wicket down, saw seven comrades depart with only 95 runs added, and he had made most of those.

Again only Ginger and Roger were left to help him, and 81 runs were wanted. It was hardly to be hoped that

those two should rise to the occasion again, after men of reputation had failed.

But Ginger did.

Rod was almost afraid when he saw Ginger's face.

It was tenser and paler than he had ever seen it before.

But that did not mean funk. Ginger was quite incapable of finking anything.

He gave a chance when he had been at the wicket only a minute or so. But it was not a bad one; the fieldsman who missed it could only get the tips of his fingers to it. And it did not discourage Ginger; rather, it seemed, did it put heart into him.

The scoring was left to Rod, and Rod did it.

Neither Peebles nor Robins could tempt Ginger. He kept a straight bat and risked nothing. Durston he did not mind; he had found that he could see fast bowling a bit better than most men, and that means much, either on the defensive or the offensive. Haig and Enthoven troubled him more than any of these three; he did not know why. And an over from Joe Hulme did put the wind up him a bit, for one ball all but grazed his off stump, and he lifted another weakly. Fortunately, no one was near enough to make a catch of it.

But Rod slashed Hulme, and was not bothered by any of the others, except that once he mistook a googly from Peebles, and made a rank bad stroke.

It went for four—all in the luck of the game.

Sixty had been put on, and still Ginger stayed, though he had made but six of the number. It looked as though Rod would score his century, if only his partners could give him the needed aid.

But Ginger got a blow over the heart from a delivery from Durston, and writhed in agony on the ground. He had to be helped to the pavilion.

Rogers came out. There seemed little hope now.

"I'm no end sorry," said Durston to Rod.

Rod nodded. He knew that the tall bowler spoke sincerely. But the accident to his pal had shaken him, for all his coolness. Ginger had looked like death as he was helped off.

Rogers was shaken, too. But he had seen more such happenings than had Rod, and was quicker to recover his nerve.

Then was seen a strange thing. The veteran bowler, who had never been counted of any worth as a bat, took

on his shoulders the burden, and bore it bravely. For three overs Rod had but two balls to play; the old man did the rest.

There was no style about him. But what did style matter? He made a few runs, and he shepherded Rod.

And now Rod was all right again. Ginger had waved to him from the players' balcony.

Fifteen wanted; Roger went, bowled all over his wicket by Robins.

The end had come. Rough luck for Norlandshire.

No one had thought of the possibility of Ginger's batting again. He was not fit to bat; he could hardly walk.

But as the players turned to leave the field someone gestured them back, and Ginger came out.

Rod saw what he must do. The first straight ball would dispose of his comrade in that condition. Rogers had gone to the last ball of an over. It was for Rod to see that Ginger did not have to face the bowling.

The Middlesex men were on their toes. But Ginger, weak and in pain, kept his wits about him, and backed up Rod.

Now Rod scored his century. He could hardly under-

stand why the crowd cheered so lustily. Norlandshire had not won yet, and his whole heart was in the winning.

Four wanted, and Rod lifted one from Peebles from the Nursery end right into the pavilion.

The game was won, and after it came in due course the winning of the championship. Before that there were times of anxiety—one match when Beverley Lyon and Walter Hammond and Charles Parker put it all across the side, another when Yorkshire got through, after a fine fight, by a couple of wickets. But in the event Norlandshire stood ten points ahead of the second on the list, Gloucestershire.

And Norlandshire knew that they had in their young skipper one in whom was alive the spirit of Arthur Hereward—one who might almost have been Hereward come to life again, utterly courageous, using his brains to the full, and loved by the men.

THE END.

(Rod Rodney has won his way to his ambition, and there we must leave him! Next week a gripping new series starts. It is called "THE WINGER!" Look out for thrills.)

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