

"THE JAPER OF ST. JIM'S!" LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN WITHIN!

The GEM 2^D

**READ ABOUT
TOM MERRY & Co.
IN THIS BUMPER BOOK**

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CHAPTER 1.

In Dark Disguise.

"I WANT to go back to St. Jim's!"

Monty Lowther spoke discontentedly, and he looked discontented. He was standing at the window of an old-fashioned room, with his hands in his pockets, staring out across the green, sunny meadows. A little old gentleman, with a bald head and gold-rimmed spectacles, looked up irritably from the newspaper he was reading.

"My dear Montague, I wish you would not harp on that subject. I have acted according to my best judgment, after serious reflection, for your own good. It is much better for you to remain at home, under my immediate care and under the care of your tutor, the worthy Mr. Philpotts, than to mix with all those rough boys at a Public school."

"But, uncle—"

"You are in my charge, Montague, and I must do the best I can for you, and I cannot think it best for you to go back to St. James' Collegiate School."

"It seems a thousand years since I have seen the chaps," said Monty Lowther, turning from the window. "I wonder what Tom Merry's doing now, and Blake, and that lot, and whether the School House is still rowing the New House the same as ever? Oh, uncle, I wish you would let me go back!"

"My dear boy," said the old gentleman, softening a little as he saw a suspicious moisture in the boy's eye, "I am acting in your best interests, which I have very much at heart."

"I know you have, uncle; but—but you don't understand what this means. I—I haven't had a row with anybody for weeks—it seems years—"

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Lowther triumphantly. "As I have always said, you were learning nothing but ruffianism—"

"Oh, there wasn't much harm in our rows!" said Monty. "We were always good friends at bottom. We used to chum up even with Figgins & Co. of the New House sometimes, and we've often helped each other out of scrapes."

"But I object to scrapes on principle," said Mr. Lowther. "I am sorry, but I must be firm. I was speaking to Miss Fawcett only yesterday, and she confided to me her fears for her ward, Tom Merry, who is now at St. James' Collegiate School."

The precise old gentleman never called St. Jim's by a shorter title than that. Monty grinned at the mention of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess.

"Oh, Miss Fawcett is a dear old soul, but she is nervous, and she doesn't know anything about boys," he remarked. "She used to send Tom Merry cod-liver oil and chest protectors, and he was chipped by all the Shell."

"Another proof that manners are not all they should be

THE JAPER



at St. James' Collegiate School," said the old gentleman severely. "Miss Fawcett fears for the health of her ward, who, I understand, is a delicate lad—"

Monty Lowther roared.

"Why, Tom Merry is as strong as a horse!"

"H'm! There is such a thing as an outward deceptive appearance of health, and a kind and watchful eye is needed," said Mr. Lowther. "I think you must make up your mind to remain at home, Montague. However, I will consult with Miss Fawcett again, and we will see what can be done. By the way, as I am leaving home for a few weeks on important business, I have made arrangements for you to stay at Laurel Villa, in the charge of Miss Fawcett."

Monty turned to the window again. Across the sunny fields could be seen the red chimneys of Laurel Villa, the dwelling of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess.

It was not an exhilarating prospect to spend a few weeks in that exceedingly quiet dwelling, and Monty groaned inwardly as he thought of St. Jim's, of the rows with

—RETURN OF MONTY LOWTHER TO ST. JIM'S AND LAUGH!

OF ST. JIM'S!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**



Figgins & Co., and the cosy little teas in the study, and the fun on the playing fields. Football would be in full swing at St. Jim's now, and he was out of it.

"I say, uncle"—he looked at the old gentleman again appealingly—"couldn't you let me go back for a bit—just while you're away?"

"I have already made arrangements with Miss Fawcett for your reception," said Mr. Lowther. "After doing so, it would be decidedly discourteous for me to allow you to return to St. James' Collegiate School instead."

And he rose to his feet with an air of finality. Monty Lowther said no more. An hour later his uncle walked him over to Laurel Villa, and left him in charge of Tom Merry's kind old governess.

Miss Fawcett was kindness itself, but she was a quaint old body, and Laurel Villa was a quiet old place. Huckleberry Heath, the village close at hand, was as quiet as a churchyard. Monty Lowther felt that he would perish of sheer boredom if something didn't happen. But nothing ever happened at Huckleberry Heath.

Miss Fawcett's favourite topic was Tom Merry, and she would talk about him by the hour together, when she could induce anybody to listen. Monty listened now. He listened by the hour with cheerful patience, for he had an axe to grind.

Miss Priscilla was alarmed by Tom's health. As he did not look at all delicate, and she was determined to believe that he was delicate, she feared that the outward semblance of health was only a proof that the evil was deep rooted.

"Yes," said Monty Lowther hypocritically. "I wish I were at St. Jim's, Miss Fawcett, so that I could keep an eye on his health."

Miss Priscilla looked thoughtful. Monty Lowther seemed to her a very serious and thoughtful lad, and the way he listened to her long explanations of her uneasiness regarding

her ward showed that he took a proper interest in the important subject of Tom Merry's health.

"Yes," said Miss Priscilla; "I am sure you would not join in the rough games of the boys, Montague."

Monty winked at the ceiling.

"You would watch over Tom, and see that he never wore anything next to his skin that was not properly aired?"

"Rather!"

"You would induce him to take his medicine at the proper time?"

"Certainly!"

"And if he neglected to take his pills and the mixture, you could find some means of administering them surreptitiously in his food or drink, so that he should not suffer?"

"Yes; I could easily manage that."

"You could write to me every day informing me of the exact state of his health, and take his temperature with a thermometer, and let me know the result?"

"Jolly good wheeze!"

"Eh?"

"I mean, it's a good idea, and perhaps may save Tom Merry from growing up an unfortunate, measly, crippled invalid."

"Yes," Miss Fawcett sighed. "I am half sorry that you are not going back to St. Jim's, Montague."

"Couldn't you try to persuade my uncle?" suggested Monty Lowther. "It seems a pity to think that Tom Merry may grow into a consumptive wreck for want of a little care."

"But Mr. Lowther is away, and will not be back for weeks; otherwise I should be tempted to do so."

This conversation was taking place on the second day of Monty's stay at Laurel Villa. Monty looked reflective.

"I know!" burst out Monty Lowther, a brilliant idea flashing into his brain. "I could go back under another name—as Jack Jones, or Tom Brown, or something!"

"But, my dear boy, you would be recognised!"

"Not if I wore blue glasses, and tinted my dial a little," said Monty Lowther excitedly.

"Tinted what?"

"My face," said Monty, abashed. "I've been in amateur theatricals at St. Jim's, you know, and I could work the oracle first-rate. They'd never guess."

"My dear Montague—"

"Look here, I've got the things, and I'll rig myself out, and you can see!" exclaimed Monty.

He dashed from the room, leaving Miss Priscilla in a disturbed and somewhat excited frame of mind. In ten minutes he returned.

He was certainly not recognisable as Monty Lowther. He had a red complexion, so well done that it looked as natural as life, and a slightly reddish colouring at the tip of his nose changed his aspect strangely, while an enormous pair of blue-tinted glasses completed the effect.

"What do you think now, Miss Fawcett?"

Monty pitched his voice in a high treble, and that was not recognisable either.

Miss Fawcett looked amazed.

"Is that Montague?" she gasped.

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**The prescription is medicine for
Tom Merry, but it is Figgins & Co.
who get the biggest dose—and YOU
who get the biggest laugh!**

"Yes, rather! Don't you think I shall pass muster?"
 "Yes, yes; I have no doubt of that, but—"
 "Then I am to go!"
 "Oh, no no; I cannot—"
 "It seems a pity to let Tom go into a decline, though, doesn't it?"

"Oh dear! What a terrible thought!"
 "It's worth a little trouble to save him from sinking into a miserable, crawling wreck."

"Yes, yes; you are perfectly right, Montague."
 "I would watch over him like a man in possession—I mean, like a brother—and give him his medicine just at the right time," said Monty temptingly. "If he wouldn't take 'em, I'd slop 'em down his throat while he slept. If he won't drink his cod-liver oil, I'll mix it in his coffee."

"Yes, yes; you are a thoughtful boy, Montague, and I am sure you could be trusted to carry out my instructions."

"I'll carry 'em out to the letter."

"You would not forget—you would not neglect them—when you were amongst your old playfellows again?"

"I promise, Miss Fawcett," said Monty, with dignity. "I solemnly promise to carry out all your instructions to the very letter, without deviating an inch from them. Tom Merry shall be soaked in medicine until he's a walking chemist's shop."

"I really think, Montague—"

"I can go?"

"Ye-es!"

"Hurrah!"

Monty Lowther capered about the room in glee. He knocked over three or four of Miss Fawcett's most prized ornaments, and trod on her lapdog, eliciting a fiendish yelp from the unfortunate animal.

It occurred to the lady that it wouldn't be a bad idea, in more ways than one, to let Monty go back to St. Jim's till his uncle returned home.

"I will arrange the matter," said Miss Fawcett. "Of course, you will have to keep your identity a strict secret, and Tom must not suspect that you are an emissary to watch over his health. You must be very careful of that."

"I'll keep it dark, never fear!"

"Then—then you shall go."

Miss Fawcett was still feeling a little dubious. But her anxiety for Tom Merry prevailed over every other feeling.

Monty Lowther was booked for St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

A New Boy in the School House.

"WE won't stand it!"

Tom Merry fairly shouted out the words. Manners, his chum, looked just as indignant, and he echoed the words of his leader.

"We won't stand it!"

"The idea!"

"Simply rotten!"

"It's not to be stood!"

So exclaimed Tom Merry and his faithful echo.

Blake, belonging to Study No. 6, put his head in at the door, and surveyed the Terrible Two in surprise.

"I say, you chaps, are you holding an indignation meeting here all on your lonesome?" he asked.

Tom Merry glared at him.

"Don't be funny, Blake. This is a serious matter."

Blake looked at them curiously.

The Terrible Two, whenever they were not disputing with Figgins & Co. of the New House, were usually at daggers drawn with Study No. 6 in their own House—the School House. But in times of stress and trouble, the juniors knew how to stand together, shoulder to shoulder.

"I say, is anything wrong, really?" exclaimed Blake. "Can we help you? We'll do anything we can, you know."

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Herries, who was with Blake, and had stopped at the door with him on hearing the excited exclamations of the Terrible Two. "Won't we, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! You know, it's only fair to bring our bwaains to the help of Tom Mewwy and Mannahs, as the poor kids can't think things out for themselves, don't you know?"

Tom Merry's hand slid in a casual way towards the inkstand.

"Pax!" exclaimed Blake, coming into the study. "You can leave the inkpot alone, Tommy, my son. Tell us what your trouble is. Has Lathom set you a big imposition?"

"No."

"Has Herr Schneider got on your tracks again?"

"No, no!"

"Has the master of the Shell insisted upon your doing your preparation properly?"

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"Look here—"

"Has the order gone forth that you are to wash your necks in the morning?"

"I tell you—"

"Then if none of those dreadful things have happened, what are you grumbling about?" Blake exclaimed.

"There's a new kid coming to St. Jim's."

"I believe that's happened before, and we didn't break our necks over it!" Blake remarked. "Is he coming into the School House?"

"Yes."

"What's the merchant's name?"

"James Edward Jessop."

"Well, there's nothing the matter with that. I can't see what you're tearing your whiskers over. Can you, Gussy?"

"Weally, I fail to perceive the weason of Tom Mewwy's stwange state of excitement," said Arthur Augustus. "We were all new boys once, and it is not rewy long since Tom Mewwy himself came to St. Jim's. I weally don't see what is the mattah!"

"They're going to shove him in this study!" hooted Tom Merry.

"When is the merchant coming?" asked Blake.

"To-day!" growled Tom Merry. "Coming suddenly in the middle of the term. I've only just heard from Kildare about his coming into my study. It's horrid!"

"Extwemely howwid!" said Arthur Augustus. "I should certainly wag him!"

"Ahem!" said a voice at the door.

The juniors swung round towards the door with startled looks. The athletic form of Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was visible there, and by his side was a youthful figure.

"I think it's time we were moving," said Blake; and Study No. 6 marched off.

They took a look at the new boy as they left, and giggled as they went down the corridor.

James Edward Jessop—for the boy with Mr. Railton was evidently that individual—was a lad of about Tom Merry's age, apparently, and he had a richly red complexion, and he wore an enormous pair of blue-tinted glasses. He stood staring into the study by the side of the Housemaster. The latter entered the room and looked significantly at Tom Merry.

"This is James Edward Jessop, your new study-mate, Merry," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tom meekly.

"You will shake hands with him, Merry?"

Tom hesitated for a moment. He had no animus against the stranger, but to shake hands with a fellow whom he didn't mean to welcome was not in his line.

"You will shake hands with him, Merry," repeated Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry unwillingly held out his hand. The blue-spectacled stranger gave him a hard grip.

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance, Master Merry," he said in a high-pitched treble voice. "Very much honoured, I assure you."

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "Where did you critter come from? And where did he dig up that voice? My only pyjama hat!"

"Manners, this is James Edward Jessop."

Manners held out his hand.

"Exceedingly honoured to make your acquaintance, Master Manners," went on the treble voice. "I am sure we shall all be happy together here."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Merry and Manners, I expect you to make your new study-mate welcome and to do everything possible to make him feel at home in his new quarters," said the Housemaster.

The Terrible Two were silent.

"You do not answer me, Merry."

"We'll make him welcome, sir," said Tom Merry, heaving a sigh.

Having given his word, he could not depart from it, and Gussy's suggestion of ragging the stranger into changing his quarters had become impracticable.

"Very good!" said Mr. Railton. "Jessop, you will remain here, and Merry will show you where to put your books and your belongings."

"Yes, sir."

The Housemaster quitted the study.

"You two fellows don't seem very glad to see me," remarked James Edward, who appeared to be an extremely self-possessed youth. He certainly did not look like a fellow whose first day this was at a Public school.

Tom Merry and Manners exchanged a glance.

"Well, to tell you the honest truth, we're not," said Tom Merry. "We don't want to be rude, you know, but we wanted the study to ourselves."

"That's rather greedy, isn't it?"

Tom Merry breathed hard. "Not exactly," he said. "You see, a chum of ours used to be third in the study, and we hoped he might come back to St. Jim's some time."

"Oh, I see! Who was he?"

"A chap named Monty Lowther."

"Oh! He wasn't much of a chap, was he? A miserable sort of specimen—eh?"

Tom Merry and Manners took a simultaneous step towards the stranger.

"I've told Mr. Railton I'll make you welcome here," said Tom, "but if you say a word like that again about Monty Lowther I'll knock you down and jump on you!"

"And I'll ram your beastly goggles down your neck!" said Manners.

The newcomer chuckled.

"But, I say, I've heard of that chap Lowther."

"Oh, have you?"

"Yes, I have. He lives near the place I come from, and he's a toad—"

James Edward was suddenly interrupted. Tom Merry's athletic grip was fastened upon him in a twinkling and he was jerked to his feet, and came down on his back with a thump.

"Sit on his head, Manners!"

"Here, chuck it!" gasped the new boy. "You'll damage my glasses! Pax!"

"Then withdraw what you said about Monty Lowther!"

"But—"

"Withdraw!" shouted Tom.

"Oh, all right, if you're so particular about it, I withdraw! I haven't said anything about him that I wouldn't say in his presence."

"I'd like to hear you call him a toad if he were here!" said Tom disdainfully. "He's worth a shipload of you, you goggled monkey!"

James Edward rose to his feet.

"So you don't want me here because you want to keep the place open for Monty Lowther," he remarked, without showing any resentment for the rough handling he had received. "That's it!"

"Well," said the new boy, "I want peace in the camp. So suppose we make an agreement?"

"What sort of an agreement?"

"I'll agree to clear out if Monty Lowther comes back to St. Jim's and wants his place in this study. Does that satisfy you?"

Tom Merry's face brightened up at once.

"Well, that's decent of you!" he exclaimed. "Yes, we'll agree, and you can stay here and welcome on those terms. It's a compact."

CHAPTER 3.

A Mysterious Boy—Tom Merry Plans a Picnic.

"JESSOP!"

"Hallo!"

"Mr. Railton wants to speak to you."

"I'm coming!"

And the new boy at St. Jim's jumped up and left the study. It was the second day of Master James Edward Jessop's stay at St. Jim's, and he was already quite at home in Study No. 10. He happened to be alone there now, when a fag came with a message from the Housemaster. He hastily left the study to see what Mr. Railton wanted. He had not been gone five minutes when the Terrible Two came in.

Tom Merry glanced at the table and grunted.

"Hallo! That fellow Jessop's left his papers and things

all over the place as usual. He's as untidy in his ways as Monty Lowther used to be."

"Yes; but we could stand it in Monty," said Manners.

"But—"

"But in this outsider we can't—and won't!" said Tom Merry. "I'll instruct him not to leave our study in a muddle like this."

And he began to collect up the new boy's belongings from the table.

"What are you going to do with them, Tom?"

"Well, I was thinking of the coal-locker."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's a good idea. James Edward can rout 'em out when he wants to, and it will put him up to a wheeze about leaving his things lying about."

"Hallo, hallo!"

"What's the matter?"

"Here's something belonging to me among his things."

"Belonging to you?"



While Tom Merry slept, the new boy arose and deftly dropped a pill into the open mouth of the sleeper!

"It must be—it's in Miss Priscilla's handwriting. Blessed if I know how it got there! I've never seen it before."

Tom picked up a sheet of paper, which was closely written on in the unmistakable hand of Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom's affectionate old governess.

Manners came towards the table, and looked at it.

"How on earth did James Edward get hold of it, then?" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Blessed if I know! It must be mine. I suppose my old governess wouldn't be writing to him; she can't know that kid. It's mine, but I've never seen it before."

"Perhaps it dropped out of a letter when you opened it, and you never saw it. You have a good few letters from Miss Fawcett."

"Possibly."

"Still, I don't see how it got among Jessop's papers."

"No, and I don't either, and we shall have to ask him some questions when he comes in," said Tom Merry seriously. "A chap has no right to be in possession of another chap's papers, and we shall have to show him that we don't allow that sort of thing in the School House."

"Yes, rather!"

Tom was looking curiously at the closely-written sheet.

"What does it say?" asked Manners.

Tom Merry laughed uneasily.

"Oh, it's rot!" he said. "Listen!"

"Cod-liver Oil. Two large spoonfuls to be taken before each meal, and before going to bed."

"Dr. Bones' Marvellous Mixture for Sorrowful Sufferers"

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Can be taken in tea or coffee, without the knowledge of the patient. Beneficial whenever taken, and the larger the quantity the better.

"Green Globules for Pining Patients. Six to be taken every day.

"If all the above cannot be administered, as many as possible should be given."

"My hat!" said Manners. "I shouldn't like to be the chap who got that little lot inside him. I wonder how long he would live!"

Tom Merry laid down the paper.

"Blessed if I understand it!" he said. "That is not written exactly as Miss Fawcett would have written to me."

"Hallo! Here's the new kid!"

James Edward Jessop, wearing his blue glasses as usual, came into the study. He started as he saw Tom Merry standing at the table.

"What are you two fellows up to?" he asked. "I didn't know you were here. I—"

"Where did you get this paper from?" asked Tom Merry, holding up the mysterious document.

Jessop started again.

"Have you been reading it?"

"Yes, I have. Why shouldn't I, when it's mine?"

"It isn't; it's mine!"

"Why, it's in my old governess' writing!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "I caught sight of it by accident, and I knew at once that it was mine."

"Well, it isn't," said James Edward, taking the paper from his hand. "It's mine. Can't Miss Fawcett take an interest in anybody's health except yours?"

"Do you mean to say that you know my old governess?"

"This looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Oh, then I beg your pardon!" said Tom, colouring. "If the paper belongs to you I had no right to read it. But you never told me you knew Miss Fawcett."

"Well, I do, you see, and that is my property. It's all right—natural mistake. Only don't jump to conclusions too quickly next time."

James Edward sat down at the table and took up his pen. The Terrible Two strode out of the study. Tom Merry was looking puzzled.

"There's something I can't quite understand about that chap Jessop!" he exclaimed. "He seems to me to be rather deep. It's queer he never mentioned that he knew Miss Fawcett. I don't like a chap who keeps secrets."

"And he's not clean, either," said Manners.

"How's that?"

"Didn't you notice him in the dormitory this morning? He hardly touched his face with the sponge. He doesn't like washing. Afraid it will spoil his complexion, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha! He is highly coloured, too. He looks a funny merchant in those blue glasses, and as for his eyes being weak, I don't believe it. They don't look weak. I don't take to that chap, and I'm not going to chum up with him, even if he is in our study," said Tom Merry. "We'll leave him out of the picnic."

"Yes, we don't want any outsiders," assented Manners. "A nice comfy little party of four or five will be enough, and as many as Juggins' boat will well hold. What about Study No. 6?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I was thinking of them. One or another of them is generally flummoxed, and they'll be able to stand their share of the exes. Let's go and see them about it."

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were not in their study, but the Terrible Two ran them to earth in the gym. Blake was attempting to induce Arthur Augustus to venture upon the horizontal bar, but the swell of St. Jim's surveyed it doubtfully through his eyeglasses, and shook his head.

"Hallo, Tom Merry! Don't interrupt the education of Arthur Adolphus!" said Blake, spotting the Terrible Two.

"I want to speak to you."

"Oh, go ahead! No more ideas, I hope?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly; only we were thinking of getting out Juggins' boat on the Rhyl, on Saturday afternoon, and having a picnic on the island."

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Blake, at once. "The most sensible thing I've heard you say for a long time, Tom Merry."

"Then you'll come?"

"Certainly; we'll all come. What is it—a whip round for the exes?"

"That's the idea."

"We'll stand our whack," said Blake. "You can come down, Gussy. Have you got a fiver in your pocket? If you have, you can hand it over."

D'Arcy gladly descended to terra firma.

"I am sorry that I haven't any fivahs!" he said. "I would gladly sping a fivah, but I am weally almost broke. I couldn't waise more than a pound or two."

Tom Merry laughed again.

"Well, as your share won't come to more than five bob, you're all right," he said. "My idea is to do the thing in style, but twenty-five bob'll be ample if we can raise it."

"I think we can stand five bob each," said Blake. "Juggins' boat is just the thing. Roomy enough and solidly built. What about the grub?"

"We'll get that in the village."

"You could get some of it in the school shop."

"Yes, we could," said Tom Merry—"but we won't. Some of the New House juniors would be bound to be there, and they would scent a feed. You know Figgins & Co. spotted us that other time through our getting grub at the school shop—the time we were on strike. Now, we don't want Figgins to get a hint of this."

"That we don't!" agreed Blake cordially.

"You see, Figgins & Co. would be bound to track us down and spoil our picnic," said Tom. "We're going to keep it very dark. We are enough, five of us, for a nice little party, and we needn't tell anybody a word about it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Manners and I are going to see Juggins about the boat," went on Tom Merry. "If you feel equal to the task, Blake, you can take the funds and visit the tuck-shop."

"That's just where I live!" said Blake emphatically. "Now you're talking!"

"Here's my five bob, then!" said Tom.

He handed over five shillings, and Manners produced another five. Blake dropped them into his pocket.

"Don't spend it all on tommy," was Tom Merry's parting injunction. "We've got the boat to pay for, you know."

"Trust me!"

"It will be all right," said D'Arcy. "I will go with him and see that he is not too extwagant, deah boys."

The Terrible Two left the gym, and went out at the gates, making their way down to the river. It was a sunny autumn afternoon, and school was over for the day. The Rhyl glistened in the sunlight, and more than one boat was out on the 'oad stream.

THE CITY OF FIREWORKS.

Big Bangs and Fizz-bangs for the Fifth.

GOING over a firework factory is great fun, boys! There are those jolly old chaps—rockets, whizzbangs, Roman candles, fountains of fire, crackers, catherine wheels—all being made. And it's some job, too!

You should see them at the Standard Fireworks factory just outside Huddersfield—400 men and girls working like lightning all the year round, just to prepare for your one night's fun on November 5th. Gee, how they get on with it!

This City of Fireworks, for that's what it amounts to, is made up of about a hundred buildings, all carefully separated from one another so that if one is accidentally blown sky high the others don't join in! Sounds a risky business, doesn't it? Here and there are places marked "Danger Buildings," where only two people are allowed to work at a time, at putting the kick into jumping crackers and rockets. One of these huts did blow up a little while ago. When it came back to earth a few seconds later, the roof was found a hundred yards away!

It's great fun watching the twinkling fingers of the factory girls shaping the fireworks, filling them with explosives, fitting the fuses, and finally pasting on the bright covers and labels—but not such fun as it will be letting them off when the time comes! Hurrah for November 5th, with its grand display of Golden Zodiacs, Diabolo Wheels, Mines of Serpents, Lighthouses, Guy Fawkes' Barrels, Robots, Shrapnel Guns, Rotalex Whirlers, and Little Demons. They're jolly well worth saving up for, eh? There are hundreds of kinds of fireworks to choose from, ranging from simple coloured fire and sparklers to giant rockets and cannons—something to please everybody. The most popular by far, though, are the big noises. The ear-splitting Big Demon Cannons, Thunderbolts, Star Shells and Thunder Crashes will appeal to every boy, especially as they are quite cheap, and give very good value for money.

Poor old Guy Fawkes, who was put to death for treason three hundred years ago, must have been burnt on a bonfire more times than any other man who ever lived! He wasn't much of a success in his lifetime, but he certainly has his uses now!

Probably, as the truck-loads of fireworks are rushed away at top speed to the busy shopkeepers and eager customers as Plot Day approaches, the manufacturers silently bless the traitor who all unknowingly laid the first foundation of their prosperous business. Three cheers for Guy Fawkes, the patron saint of fireworks! Long may his memory live! Long may November 5th be the noisiest, jolliest, and most thrilling day of the year!

And now for the big bang with the "Standard" Fireworks. They're the best of the bunch!

Figgins & Co. of the New House were getting a skiff from the boathouse. Figgins looked up and nodded to Tom Merry. They were the rivals of the Terrible Two, but very good-natured rivals.

"Hallo, Merry! Like to come on the water?"

"Thanks, no!" said Tom. "You're very kind, Figgy, but we've got an appointment."

"Thought you might like to steer for us," said Figgins. "Of course, we shouldn't expect a School House chap to be able to row!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Not much!" said Kerr, the Scottish partner in the Co. "They don't know how to handle an oar in the School House. Hardly!"

Tom Merry picked an oar out of the boat Figgins & Co. were taking out.

"Don't I?" he remarked. "I'll show you! Is that all right?"

He pushed the end of the oar against Figgy's chest, and Figgy sat down in a remarkable hurry.

"You horrid beast!"

"How's that, Kerr?" asked Tom pleasantly, bringing the oar to bear upon Kerr, and pushing him over. "Think I can handle an oar?"

Kerr staggered and fell.

The skiff the Co. were carrying went to the ground, of course, and Fatty Wynn, the Welsh partner in the Co., let go of it, and seized the other oar.

"Here, what are you up to?" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he received the end of the oar in his ribs. "Look out!"

"Go for him, Fatty!" gasped Figgins.

Fatty Wynn charged at Tom Merry like an ancient knight with his lance. He caught his foot in a stretcher, and went down in a heap, and the oar caught Figgins a crack on the head.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Tom Merry. "Go it, Fatty! Come on, Manners! Those kids can sort themselves out without our assistance."

The Terrible Two marched off, arm-in-arm. Figgins scrambled to his feet, rubbing his shoulder ruefully. He looked after Tom Merry and his chum with a glitter in his eyes.

"Those two bounders are up to something!" he exclaimed. "What are they going up the river for, on their lonesome? They could have a skiff out here, if they liked."

"There's something on," said Kerr.

"That's it."

"And I think it's something we ought to see into," went on the Scottish partner in the Co. "It's some time since we've really taken the School House kids down, and they'll be putting on side if we don't give 'em a lesson!"

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "And if there's a feed, or anything like that in the wind, why, that's where we come out strong. It would be a howling joke to collar their grub. We've done it before, and there's no reason why we shouldn't do it again."

"Trust Fatty to think of the grub!" said Figgins. "Blow the grub! It's taking down the School House kids that I'm thinking of. Those kids have gone up the river, and if they're going anywhere in particular, it's to Juggins' boat-house!"

"That's so," said Kerr. "My hat, you've hit it. You know that big barge of Juggins—he calls it a boat, but it's big enough for a family to live in—the fellows sometimes have that out for a picnic. I wonder if that's the game?"

"I'm going to see!" said Figgins determinedly.

"Aren't you coming in the boat?"

"Yes; but we'll pull up the river, and I'll land near Juggins' cottage and keep an eye open for Tom Merry."

"Good wheeze! We shall be there before them!"

"Come on, then!"

And in a couple of minutes Figgins & Co. were pulling hard up the river.

CHAPTER 4.

Figgins Gets on the Track!

"HERE we are!" said Tom Merry.

About a mile from St. Jim's, up the river, stood the boathouse and cottage of Mr. William Jugg, known as Juggins to the irreverent juniors of St. Jim's. Mr. Jugg kept several boats, and in the fine weather he did a thriving business with the boys of St. Jim's and the anglers who came up the Rhyl to ply the gentle craft.

One specially big and solidly constructed boat was often used by parties of the youngsters. It was called the Daisy. It was the Daisy Tom Merry wanted now. Mr. Jugg was seated on a bench outside his cottage, smoking his pipe and looking out over the river. He touched his cap to the boys.

The Terrible Two were good customers to him. At the cottage could be had ginger-pop and other light refreshments, and many a time and oft had the Terrible Two sampled them.

"Hallo, Juggins!" said Tom Merry. "We've just run down to ask you if we can have the Daisy for to-morrow afternoon?"

"I'll keep her for you, Master Merry," said Mr. Jugg. "I expect there will be others wanting her, but you shall have her."

"Thanks, old chap; but, mind, if any other chap comes asking about the boat, don't let on that we're going to take her out."

Mr. Jugg grinned. He knew all about the rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's, and had seen something of the conflicts between the Terrible Two and Figgins & Co.

"Right you are, Master Merry. I understand."

There was a rustle in the trees close to the bench the old boatman was sitting on. The juniors did not notice it.

"You see," went on Tom Merry, "we're making up a party for a picnic, and we're going to take the grub in the Daisy, and camp on the island up the river. We've got to keep it awfully dark, or there will be ructions. If we started from the school boathouse, the New House rotters would be on the track at once. We shall bring the grub here in bags, and shove it into the Daisy."

"I'll be careful, Master Merry. If Master Figgins comes asking questions, he won't get anything out of me."

"You know Figgins, of course? A long-legged, funny-faced sort of waster!" said Tom Merry, unconscious of the hidden ears that heard his flattering description of the chief of the New House juniors. "You know him, Juggins?"

"Oh, yes, very well!"

"Not a word to him, mind!"

"Not a word, Master Merry!"

"We'll be along for the boat about half-past two."

"Right!"

"And you can shove half a dozen ginger-beers and some cakes and biscuits in the locker," said Tom, "and some apples and oranges. Make it five bobs' worth."

"I will, Master Merry."

"That's all right, then! Good-afternoon, Mr. Jugg!"

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!"



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"And mind, not a word to that waster, Figgins!"

The Terrible Two walked away. Mr. Jugg resumed his pipe and his contemplations of the river. A hidden listener stole silently from the thicket. He emerged into the sunlight, and Figgins was revealed. Taking care to keep out of sight, Figgins scuttled away to the willows, where the skiff was waiting in cover, with Kerr and Fatty Wynn. The Co. looked at him eagerly as he jumped in.

"Found anything out?" was their simultaneous question.

Figgins chuckled.

"Well, I should say so!"

"Go ahead!"

"Old Juggins was smoking his pipe on his favourite bench," said Figgins. "I only had to stick in the trees and wait for Tom Merry and Manners to come along. They came, and I heard every word. All's fair in war, you know. I was a giddy scout watching the enemy."

"That's so. What did you discover?"

"Tom Merry and a party of School House kids are going to have the Daisy out, and go up to the island in the river and picnic there."

"My hat!"

Fatty Wynn passed his hand ecstatically over the fifth button of his waistcoat.

"We shall be there!" he remarked.

"Yes," said Figgins emphatically; "we shall be there! I expect Tom Merry has chummed up with Study No. 6 for the picnic, and that will make five. If they have that new chap with the blue goggles, it will make half a dozen. I don't suppose there will be more than that."

"We shall have to get help for half a dozen," said Kerr. "No good the three of us tackling twice our number."

"We shall be a dozen," said Figgins grimly. "I'm not going to leave anything to chance this journey. We'll pick out nine of the best. That will make twelve of us. We'll pull up to the island an hour before Tom Merry starts, hide our boat, and ambush there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be a surprise-party for Tom Merry, and no mistake! I was thinking of a picnic for to-morrow afternoon," said Figgins. "If the School House kids provide it for us, all the better. It will come cheaper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I say," said Fatty Wynn nervously, "there's one thing you haven't thought of, Figgy."

"What is it?"

"Why, if there's only half a dozen in Tom Merry's party he will only have laid in grub enough for six."

"What about that?"

"Why, if we go a dozen strong, there won't be enough to go round. You see, all the fellows we take will expect to share in the loot. Fellows are so selfish!"

"They'll be entitled to, I should think," said Kerr. "Hang it, we can't collar the grub at all without help!"

"Yes, I know that, Kerr; but, as I was saying, grub provided for six won't go far among twelve," said Fatty Wynn. "That's an important point, Figgy, and it's no good overlooking it."

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed, Fatty!" said Figgins.

"Tom Merry always does things in style, and there's sure to be plenty of grub. I heard him order five bobs' worth from Juggins, and they're going to bring the rest in bags."

Fatty smacked his lips.

"That sounds well," he said. "Still, if we went only nine strong it would make assurance doubly sure."

"Why, we want to be in full force to make sure of getting the best of the School House kids," said Figgins.

"I mean, it would make assurance doubly sure about getting enough grub to go round," said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, drown him!" said Figgins. "Suppose you make it a point to eat only twice as much as is good for you, then there will be plenty left. Dry up! Now, let's settle what fellows we are going to let into the game. We've got to be careful to keep the whole business a dead secret."

And as they floated down the current to the school Figgins & Co. turned over their plans, and settled that question. Meanwhile, the Terrible Two, unconscious that there had been a "chiel among them taking notes" during the visit to Mr. Jugg, walked back to St. Jim's quite satisfied with themselves.

"I think that picnic will be a howling success," said Tom Merry. "When Figgins hears of it afterwards he'll be ready to tear his hair for not spotting us and making a raid."

"Yes; we'll tell him about it ourselves afterwards," said Manners considerably. "I only wish old Monty were here to come along with us."

"Yes, that would be jolly!"

They entered the study. The new boy was there, seated in the easy-chair, with his feet on the table, reading. His

blue glasses were pushed away from his eyes, but as soon as he saw the Terrible Two he let them slide into their place again.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said lazily. "What are you doing with yourselves to-morrow afternoon? It's a half-holiday, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose you'll be going out?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I hear that when Lowther was here you always went out in a party. They called you the Horrible Three, or something."

"They called us the Terrible Three," said Tom, breathing hard.

"I can't see anything terrible about you myself," said the new boy, staring at them through his blue glasses. "Still, I'm quite willing to revive the Horrible—I mean, the Terrible Three. I'll come out with you to-morrow afternoon."

"Will you?" said Tom pointedly.

"Oh, yes, I don't mind!"

"I dare say you don't; but we do!"

"Why, what's the matter with you?"

"I don't take to you," said Tom Merry; "you're too secretive! You strike me as a chap who keeps secrets, and isn't open and above board!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling about now?" demanded Tom Merry.

"You! You amuse me!"

"Do I? I don't know what your little game is, Master James Edward Jessop, but you are going the quickest way to get a thick ear!" said Tom.

"Don't lose your ickle temper!" urged James Edward.

"I heard you muttering something or other about a picnic. I'm on in that scene!"

"No, you're not!"

"Don't be inhospitable!"

"I don't want to be, but we've made up our party, and if we were going to increase it there's a good many fellows I'd rather take than you," said Tom Merry. "I always speak my mind, you know, and if you don't like what I say, I'm willing to come to the gym with you and have it out, with or without gloves!"

"Now, that's what I call really kind!" said the new boy. "Still, I won't intrude on your kindness. As for your old picnic, you can keep it! I think it's quite likely you'll be sorry afterwards that you didn't press me to come."

"I think we'll risk that," said Manners.

"Yes, rather!" Tom Merry said emphatically.

The new boy grinned. When he was left alone in the study again he broke into a loud laugh. Something in his talk with the Terrible Two seemed to amuse him highly.

He opened a drawer in the table and took out a little box, which he unlocked. It contained two bottles and two pill-boxes.

One of the bottles was labelled "Dr. Bones' Marvellous Mixture for Sorrowful Sufferers," and the other, "Cod-liver Oil."

The two pill-boxes were labelled also, one "Dr. Bones' Green Globules for Pining Patients," and the other, "Dr. Bones' Specials."

The new boy opened the last-named.

It contained a dozen pills of very considerable size, of a yellowish colour.

Master James Edward nodded his head.

"Must begin to-night!" he murmured. "I must keep my solemn promise to Miss Priscilla, even if I—ha, ha!—don't want to. One Special every night, by hook or by crook!"

He closed the Special box, and opened the other.

It was full of little pills of greenish colour.

"If I remember correctly," murmured the new boy, "these give you a pain in the tummy, as if you had been swallowing tinctures. Miss Fawcett says it's good for you, and I dare say she knows; but I'm jolly well not going to try. If it does people good, there's no reason why Tom Merry should have all the benefit. The question is, how am I to get at their tommy, and dissolve a sufficient number of Green Globules for Painful Patients in it?"

He chuckled as he slipped the box of green globules into his waistcoat pocket.

"The cod-liver oil can stand over," he reflected. "I'll swamp some of it into Tom Merry when I get a chance. The Marvellous Mixture is the thing to improve the picnic. It has a taste like ink and quinine and unripe tomatoes all rolled into one, and a little of it sprinkled on sandwiches and cakes and put into the currant wine will work wonders. I said they'd be sorry for not asking me to the picnic!"

And Master James Edward Jessop slipped the bottle of

Marvellous Mixture into his pocket, and put the little box away again.

If the new boy at St. Jim's had his way, the picnickers were certainly in for a high old time.

CHAPTER 5. Night Operations!

TOM MERRY sauntered into Study No. 6 later on, and found the chums of the Fourth Form in rapt contemplation of a heap of good things piled on the table.

"I see you've got 'em," said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yes, we've got 'em," said Blake. "I've laid out all the cash, after all, and haven't left anything to pay for the boat. Mother Murphy had such a fine selection that I simply couldn't resist it. I've got a lovely assortment. I told you you could trust me to lay out the money."

that. We're not giddy spongers. I say, I think we shall have a jolly good time if the weather keeps as fine as this."

"I think it will," said Blake. "It was a ripping idea of yours, Tom Merry, to have the picnic on the island. No chance of being spotted by the New House fellows there."

"No. It's a jolly Robinson Crusoe sort of place to picnic in," said Herries. "Jolly lonely and all that, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! It makes one feel quite adventurous, don't you know?"

"I hope you didn't let Figgins spot you bringing the grub in," said Tom Merry anxiously. "He's so beastly sharp!"

Blake snorted.

"Do you think we're such asses?"

"Well, it has happened before."

"It hasn't happened now," said Blake. "As a matter of fact, Figgins & Co. were up the river all the time, and I saw 'em come in and put away their boat after we had got the grub into this study."

Tom Merry looked relieved.

"That's all right," he said. "You can't be too careful



Fatty Wynn charged at Tom Merry like an ancient knight with his lance. He caught his foot in a stretcher and went down with a bang, while the oar crashed on to Figgins' head!

"Well, you are a giddy donkey," said Tom Merry. "I warned you particularly not to spend all the tin on the tommy."

"You can't get good things in this world without paying for 'em," said Blake, "and it's no good trying. But it's all right. Gussy is going to stand treat for the boat."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look at these things," said Blake, with an air of pride. "Precious few caterers could do as much on twenty-five bob, Tom Merry!"

"Yes, it's a nice lot."

"There's puddings and pies and sandwiches and cakes and rolls and biscuits," said Blake.

"And red-currant wine and ginger-pop and lemonade," said Herries.

"And apples and oranges and nuts. And, weally, I think that Blake has done us down extremely well!" said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, I like the look of that little lot," he assented. "Makes one want to start now. But I've already ordered five-bobs' worth of old Juggins, so that will be a shilling more each. As for the boat, we'll whip round to pay for

with those horrid bounders. We should look pretty blue if we found a dozen New House kids on the island ready to lift the picnic."

"No danger of that. Figgins hasn't the slightest suspicion so far as I am concerned," said Blake. "He won't get to know anything, unless you or Manners give it away."

"Of course, that's rot!" said Tom Merry. "We're safe. Now, about the grub. I suppose it had better be left here for the night?"

"Here, or in your study."

"Here would be safer. There's that new merchant in goggles in our study, and I don't trust him farther than I can see him," said Tom Merry, shaking his head.

"That red-faced kid Jessop, do you mean?"

"Yes, that's the merchant."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know exactly, but I don't trust him. He's secretive. He gives you an impression of laughing at you up his sleeve," said Tom, "and that's not nice."

"I should say not!" said Blake emphatically. "If anybody laughs up his sleeve at me, I'd provide him with

something to laugh at! Why don't you make the study too hot to hold him? He's only an outsider!"

"Yaas," said Arthur Augustus, "why don't you take my advice, Tom Mewwy, and wag him?"

"Can't be did," said Tom Merry. "I've given my word to Railton."

"Oh, that alters the case! Are you going to bring the goggle merchant on the picnic?"

"Not much!" said Tom. "I don't like him, and I'll see him farther first. I'm not going to chum with a chap who keeps secret and looks mysterious. So you'd better keep the grub in this study till to-morrow."

"Right! We'll shove it out of sight, so as not to tempt any of the kids who may happen to come along," said Blake. "This box will do first-rate. There isn't any lock, but we'll lay some books on top of it in a careless way, and nobody will suspect what's inside."

"That's a good idea!"

All the juniors lent a hand at stowing away the provisions, and the box, which was a fair-sized one, was filled to the brim.

The lid was closed, and some books and papers laid on the top in an elaborately careless way. Certainly no one who had not an inkling of what was inside would suspect the box contained one of the best feeds ever provided in the School House at St. Jim's.

"That's safe enough," said Tom Merry. "Good-night, you kids!"

"Who are you calling kids?"

"Ahem! I forgot. Good-night, gentlemen!"

"Good-night, fathead!"

And the rivals, allies for the time, parted on good terms. It was getting near bed-time, and after a last look at the precious box the chums of the Fourth left the study.

The new boy, James Edward Jessop, had been assigned

the bed in the Shell dormitory formerly occupied by Monty Lowther.

He looked curiously at Tom Merry as the Shell went up to bed.

"I say, Merry, you're not looking well," he said.

"Rats!" said Tom cheerfully.

"I'm afraid that that red flush in your cheeks is dyspeptic—no, that's not the word—I mean, hectic, and indicates—"

Tom walked up to the new boy.

"Look here," he remarked, "I'm getting fed-up with your funny ways! Just you let my looks alone. Do you want to be laid across that bed and spanked?"

"Not particularly."

"Well, that's what you'll get if you do any more chin-wagging!"

"But, really—"

"Oh, dry up!"

The new boy dried up, but there was a humorous twinkle in his eyes behind the blue glasses. He did not remove those glasses till he was in bed, and then his face was immediately buried in the pillow. Mr. Linton, master of the Shell, who boarded in the School House, came to see lights out. He found the Shell all tucked away in bed.

The light was turned out, the master of the Shell closed the door, and silence and slumber reigned in the dormitory.

When the next hour boomed forth from the clock tower of St. Jim's it was heard by only one pair of ears.

While the rest of the Form slept soundly, James Edward Jessop was awake.

He rose as twelve boomed from the school tower. He stepped quietly from the bed, and after a faint scratch there was a flare of a match, and a light glimmered in the dark dormitory.

The new boy at St. Jim's lighted a candle and drew a small box from under his pillow. It was labelled: "Dr. Bones' Specials."

James Edward grinned, and, taking the candle in one hand, and the pill-box in the other, he stole towards Tom Merry's bed.

Tom Merry was sleeping the sleep of the just. His head was thrown back on the pillow, and, as it happened, his mouth had become open, and a deep and steady breathing told that he was in deep slumber.

The new boy looked at him as the candle glimmered on the unconscious face. Tom Merry may have been dreaming, but he did not dream of what was coming. Monty Lowther opened the pill-box and selected one of the Specials.

Taking it in his finger and thumb, he bent over Tom Merry. There was a grin on his face, and a twinkle in his eye. Neatly and deftly he dropped the pill into the open mouth of the sleeper, so that it fell close beside the tongue and remained there in the mouth.

The moisture of the mouth was pretty certain to melt it away before long, and Tom Merry, all unconsciously, would have taken one of the Specials which Miss Priscilla Fawcett fondly believed would do him an immense amount of good.

A faint, almost inaudible chuckle broke from the new boy as he saw that the pill had lodged in the desired place. He stole back to his bed and extinguished the candle with his thumb and finger.

"That's done!" he murmured. "Rather rough on the patient, but I must keep my word to his old governess. A promise is a promise."

He listened for a few minutes in the darkness. There was no sound in the dormitory but steady breathing, with an occasional snore. Tom Merry had not awakened. Reassured, James Edward glided silently to the door and out into the corridor, closing the door silently behind him.

Down the stairs in the darkness he went to the Fourth Form study, and opened the door of Study No. 6. He entered, and then he relighted the candle. The light glimmered over the well-known quarters of Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy. The new boy looked round him inquisitively.

"It must be here," he murmured. "I know perfectly well that Blake was getting in the grub for the picnic, and as it isn't in our study, Blake must have kept it here. It's only a question of finding it."

He began to search the study diligently. The cupboard revealed nothing, but in a few minutes he noticed the box, and looked inside, and then he uttered an exclamation.

"Eureka!"

There was the prize. The new boy did not remove any of it. He was not there to raid, nor did he wish to leave behind any trace of his visit. What he did was mysterious.

But when he closed the lid of the box again there was an empty Marvellous Mixture bottle in his hand, which had been full when he started, and a Green Globule box was in the same state. James Edward Jessop chuckled hugely.

"Nothing like taking care of the health of your nice schoolfellows," he murmured, "especially when they don't

(Continued on page 12.)

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(Continued from page 10.)

ask you to a picnic. There's not many fellows get up in the middle of the night to do good like this."

He left the study and quietly closed the door. The Shell dormitory was still silent and slumbering when he re-entered it. In a few minutes more James Edward Jessop was back in bed, and sleeping the sound sleep of one who deserves well of his fellow-mortals.

CHAPTER 6.

The Picnic.

TOM MERRY opened his eyes and yawned. The sun was glimmering in at the high windows of the dormitory, but the rising-bell had not yet gone.

Tom did not usually awaken before rising-bell, and now as he glanced along the row of beds he saw that the rest of the Shell were still sleeping.

"Hallo!" he murmured. "I seem to be the first awake. I wonder what that funny taste in my mouth is? Horrid—whatever it is!"

He sat up in bed. There was certainly a most peculiar taste in his mouth which he could not account for. It was not exactly like anything he had ever tasted before, and how it had come there he hadn't the faintest notion.

"It's beastly!" he murmured. "What the dickens can it be?"

He got out of bed with the idea of washing out his mouth. He tasted a peculiar bitterness in his mouth and down his throat, just as if he had taken some extremely unpleasant medicine overnight.

He washed out his mouth, but the taste was a clinging one, and it continued to cling, and it was still clinging when the rest of the Shell were awakened by the rising-bell.

Tom was also feeling a little out of sorts. He had a sensation similar to the beginning of sea-sickness, which he was at a loss to account for.

"Hallo, Merry!" said James Edward Jessop. "Feeling out of sorts this morning?"

"Yes, a little bit," said Tom.

"I told you last night you weren't looking well."

"Oh, rats!"

"If you'd like some medicine—"

"If you show me any medicine I'll pour it down your neck!"

"Well, that's what I call gratitude!"

"Oh, ring off!"

The Shell went down to breakfast. Tom made a less hearty meal than usual, for he was feeling quite queer. During the morning, however, the feeling wore off. When morning school was over, the fresh air in the quadrangle made him feel himself again.

Blake met him immediately the midday dinner was disposed of in the School House dining-hall.

"Ready, Merry?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You're looking a bit off colour," said Blake. "Anything wrong?"

"N-no! I woke up with a nasty taste in my mouth this morning."

"You'd better wire to Miss Fawcett for some medicine."

Tom Merry reddened.

"Oh, don't rot! The fact is, I feel just as I did once after I allowed Miss Priscilla to persuade me into taking one of Dr. Bones' special horrors!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You haven't been scoffing any of those things, surely?"

"No, I haven't. It's quite mysterious."

"I say, you feel up to the picnic, don't you?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I'm all right now. What about Figgins? We don't want him to spot us carrying the bags."

Blake grinned.

"Oh, that's all serene! I was going to tell you—Figgins is gone."

"Where is he gone?"

"D'Arcy saw him going down the road to Rylcombe, with Kerr and Wynn. He's gone to the village, and that's the opposite direction from the island up the river."

"Good! If he's gone down the river, and we go up, we shan't see anything of him, that's a cert. Jolly good thing, too. Is the grub all right in your study?"

"Yes, Herries and Gussy are packing it into the bags now."

"It hadn't been spotted?"

"No; everything was just as we left it."

"That's good! The picnic is going to be a big success. Figgins & Co. will be wild when we tell them about it afterwards."

"Ha, ha, ha! We'll let 'em know what they missed, too!"

The Terrible Two accompanied Blake to Study No. 6, where five bags were being packed with the comestibles. The bags were of a good size, and pretty full when the packing was finished. The five juniors took one each.

"We'll go out singly so as not to attract attention," said Tom Merry. "We'll rendezvous at Juggins' cottage."

"That's a good idea."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry departed first. He kept his eyes about him, but Figgins & Co. were conspicuous by their absence, and none of the New House juniors seemed very alert. Many of them were on the playing fields, but a good many seemed to be away from the school.

Tom Merry walked through the wood to the boatman's cottage where he found old Mr. Jugg, who had the Daisy all ready for the juniors.

Tom deposited his bag in the boat, and waited for the rest to join him. They were not long in doing so. Within a quarter of an hour the whole party were gathered at the rendezvous, and each reported that nothing had been seen of Figgins & Co.

"Oh, we've pulled the wool over their eyes nicely," said Blake. "Figgy will be ready to tear his hair to-night. Come on."

They took their places in the boat.

Four strong pairs of arms carried the Daisy along at a rapid rate.

Ahead of the boys rose the tree-tops which marked the island in the very centre of the stream. They pulled on to

Potts, the Office-Boy.



the landing-place. It was an extremely lonely spot; and, as a matter of fact, picnickers had no right on the island, but a little thing like that did not enter into Tom Merry's calculation.

The grass, sloping down to the water, looked very inviting in the bright sunshine.

Blake held the boat fast, and the others got ashore, and then the bags were handed out, and the supplies Mr. Jugg had stowed in the locker.

"We'll make the boat fast to that post," said Blake, jumping ashore. "Here we are! Now for the picnic!"

"Go for 'em!"

The School House juniors started as the loud shout rang from the trees. They knew the voice—the voice of Figgins!

The shout was followed by a rush of feet, and the enemy bore down upon the picnickers in full force.

CHAPTER 7.

Figgins & Co. on Top!

TOM MERRY was the first to recover from the surprise. A dozen New House juniors were rushing from the trees, led by Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

It was too late for the School House party to beat a retreat.

The boat was moored and the provisions were ashore, and they could only stand their ground, and do or die.

The School House juniors sprang shoulder to shoulder for defence.

It was of little avail.

Figgins closed with Tom Merry, and they rolled on the ground in a deadly embrace. Kerr clutched hold of Blake, and they reeled to and fro in furious strife. Fatty Wynn closed with D'Arcy, and Herries was seized by Pratt and another New House junior. Manners was gripped by two of the foe, who rolled him over and sat on him.

Then the rest of the New House party came on pell-mell, and Figgins & Co. received timely aid. Tom Merry had succeeded in getting Figgins under, and was sitting astride on his chest, when two pairs of hands were laid upon him, and he was jerked off, and in a moment he was being sat upon by two plump juniors.

Figgins staggered to his feet.

There was a thin red stream trickling from his nose and a suspicious blueness settling round his left eye, but his face was joyful and triumphant.

Each of the School House party were pinned down by two or more New House fellows, and the capture was complete.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "Done 'em brown! Done 'em to a beautiful brown! I say, you kids, who's Cock House at St. Jim's?"

"New House! New House!" roared his followers.

"Who provided the picnic?"

"Tom Merry did."

"Who's going to scoff the grub?"

"We are!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's the music! How do you feel now, Tom Merry?"

"Lemme get at you!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Some other time!" said Figgins. "Who takes the cake this time? Ha, ha, ha!"

"How did you know, you beast?"

"Oh, a little bird told me!" said Figgins airily. "Bless

your innocent hearts, you School House kids ain't up to our form, you know. You can't expect to come out top dog in our little rows. You haven't got it in you, you know."

"You—you—you—"

"Yes, what? You look excited, Tom Merry. So do you, too, Blake. Hallo, hallo! What's the matter with Arthur Adolphus?"

The voice of the swell of St. Jim's was heard raised in complaint.

"Wynn, you howwid bwute, get off my chest! Pwatt, get off my beastly legs! You have uttably spoiled the cwease in my trousahs, and you are wumplin' my waistcoat in a shockin' way. I will give you my pawole, if you like, but I insist upon you allowin' me to wise!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "Let him 'wise' if he gives his 'pawole'."

D'Arcy gave his parole, and was allowed to get up. He dusted his clothes, with an air of considerable indignation.

"Now," said Figgins, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the prisoners. "I don't quite know what to do with these critters. We don't want to kill 'em—"

"Then turn your face away!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Don't look at us, Figgay! It is cweulty to animals, you know!"

"You're right about the animals," said Figgins. "Nasty, crawling School House animals! Shall we chuck 'em in the river, chaps?"

"Certainly!" said Kerr. "A wash would do them lots of good, though it might come as a bit of a shock!"

"You will not throw me into the wivah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I have only worn this waistcoat once, and the watah would uttably wuin it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! We musn't wuin his waistcoat. I suppose we had better shove 'em into the boat and let 'em rip!"

"That's the idea!"

"Better take the oars out, or they might come back and worry us," said Figgins, with great thoughtfulness. "They can steer and go with the current. We'll leave the oars at Juggins' cottage as we come back, Merry. We've got our boat on the other side of the island. In you go! Bundle 'em in, chaps!"

The School House juniors, struggling frantically, were bundled into the boat. The oars being taken away, the boat was shoved off, and it went dancing and rocketing away down the river.

Figgins waved his hand.

"Good-bye, my bluebells!"

The School House party did not reply. Their feelings were too deep for words. They could only shake their fists furiously at their victorious rivals.

Tom Merry took the lines, and the boat steadied and floated away down the river towards Juggins' distant cottage.

"Well," said Blake at last, "of all the giddy, ghostly frosts—"

He looked back to the island.

Figgins & Co. and their comrades were seated upon the grass under the shady trees by the water, busily unpacking the supplies for the picnic.

The New House party were going to enjoy themselves.

Tom Merry gave a groan.

"It isn't only the grub," he said, "but the way the New House will snigger at us. How on earth did that horrid Figgins get on the track?"



Too Fresh!



"He's like a giddy bloodhound!" growled Manners.
 "Most likely it was Fatty Wynn scented out the grub," said Blake. "He's got a nose like a sleuth-hound for tommy, Fatty Wynn has."
 "Well, they've got the tommy now. Oh, my hat, how can we face the chaff?" said Tom Merry. "They'll crow over us no end!"

"Yaas, it is howwid!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "Those bwutes have completely spoiled that nice cwease I had in my twousahs—"

"Oh, blow your trousers!"
 "That is a wude wemark. You have not yet apologised to me, Tom Mewwy, for your obnoxious expressions on the island!"

"Oh, dry up! Chaps, how are we to get our own back on Figgins? I—"

"I will not dwy up. I insist—"
 "We can't let the matter rest here. We're going—"

"Tom Mewwy, I have not yet received that ap—"
 "Oh, kill him, somebody!"

Manners and Blake threw D'Arcy upon his back and sat on him. They were getting "fed-up," as Blake expressed it, with his ways. D'Arcy continued to utter ineffectual protests, but the juniors did not budge until Juggins' cottage was reached.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, as he steered the boat in. "Here's your boat, Juggins, and here's the tin. We haven't had it quite so long as we intended. By the way, we've left the oars with some friends of ours, who will bring them along presently."

That was the explanation Tom Merry gave; but it is probable that Mr. Jugg guessed a great deal more, for there was a very quizzical smile upon his weather-beaten countenance as he watched the juniors walk off through the wood towards the school.

As they went the juniors turned over in their minds various plans of vengeance upon Figgins & Co. But, had they only known it, they were avenged already.

CHAPTER 8.

An Amazing Discovery!

FIGGINS & Co. were joyful.

The victory over the School House was exhilarating, and the prospect of a picnic satisfying in every way to the victors in the fight.

"Tain't an ordinary picnic, you see," said Figgins. "We've earned it with the sweat of our brow, so to speak—won it by our giddy valour. That's what makes it so jolly ripping!"

"Rather!" said the Co. heartily.

"That's the best of it!" agreed the nine good men and true who had followed Figgins & Co. to the battle. "Still, the feed looks pretty good."

Fatty Wynn rolled his eyes in a kind of ecstasy.

The feast looked more than pretty good, as a matter of fact.

The bags were unpacked, the good things were spread out on the grass, and the victors feasted their eyes upon them.

Fatty Wynn's anxious fears lest there should not be enough to go round among twelve were entirely without foundation.

The supplies had been brought on a generous scale, and there was quite sufficient to make a very good picnic for a dozen juniors. Fatty's anxiety having been relieved upon this score, as the good things were spread out to view, he was completely happy. Life had nothing more to offer him.

"Let us feed," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "I don't suppose we shall see these School House kids again. They can't come back without help, and if they go to St. Jim's to gather the clan they couldn't get back here for a couple of hours. So we've plenty of time to have a really enjoyable gorge."

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn.

"These veal pies are about my mark," said Figgins. "Go ahead, all of you! There's plenty here, and we got it cheap. Wire, in!"

"Hear, hear!"

The New House juniors wired in.

They had thoughtfully brought very extensive appetites with them, and they wired into the feed with a right hearty good will.

But as the feed progressed the jollity began to die out of some of the youthful countenances.

"Funny taste these sandwiches have got," Kerr remarked, eyeing a sandwich, which he had half consumed, in a very thoughtful way.

"Just what I was thinking about this veal pie," said Figgins. "I suppose it's gone off a bit. I'll try that pudding, Fatty Wynn."

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Fatty was making a wry face.

"Shouldn't advise you to," he said. "I—I've got a pain in my inside. There's something funny about that pudding."

"Why, it looks all right. And see how rich the gravy looks!"

"Ye-es, it looks too rich! It tastes like—like medicine!"

"Oh, that's rot!"

Figgins tasted the pudding, then he twisted up his features very expressively.

"Don't like it, Figg?"

"Like it?" growled Figg. "It tastes like mouldy ink! Here, let me have some of that currant wine to wash the taste away."

He let the currant wine gurgle out into a mug and took a deep, deep draught of it.

The next moment the mug went down with a crash into a piedish, and Figgins sprang to his feet, with a fiendish yell.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" gasped Kerr.

"I'm—I'm poisoned!"

"You're what?"



A terrific fight ensued between Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. who were as determined to retain it as they were to win it.

"Poisoned! There's something awful in the wine!"

"There can't be."

"Can't there? Taste it yourself, fathead!"

Kerr tasted the wine and made a wry face.

"What does it taste like?"

"Like—like liquid blacking and rotten gorgonzola cheese," said Kerr, after some reflection.

Complaints were rising on all sides now.

One fellow was frantically washing out his mouth in the river after a deep bite into a cake. He declared that he had bitten on something that melted in his mouth and tasted like some fearful poison. He thought it must be a pill which had been shoved in in mistake for a currant.

Two or three were contorting themselves curiously after drinking currant wine, and some were spluttering and choking over pudding and pie.

There was not one who had not swallowed something that disagreed with him, and all the juniors were looking white and sickly, some of them wrathful.

"This is a trick of Tom Merry's!" gasped Kerr. "He's put something nasty in the grub on purpose!"

"It can't be that," said the bewildered Figgins. "They were just going to eat it themselves when we rushed them." "Then somebody has been playing a trick on Tom Merry."

"I don't see it. Blake was with him in the picnic, so it couldn't be Blake. I don't understand it. It's rotten!"

"The grub is," said Patty Wynn, flinging his pudding into the river, "awfully rotten!"

Figgins was looking amazed and dismayed.

It had been such a complete and sweeping victory, and this was the result.

A feast that they could not eat.

A feed that had already made them feel ill.

"I don't understand it!" gasped Figgins.

"I should say you don't!" growled Pratt. "Nice sort of leader you are, to lead us into a ghastly frost like this!"

"It's not my fault."

"Rats! You ought to have known better!"

"How should I know there was anything wrong with the grub? Tom Merry didn't know himself, for I'm certain



Co. A hamper was at stake, and the School House juniors and New House juniors were to bag it!

those kids would be eating it now if we hadn't scoffed it from them."

"Why couldn't you let them eat it, then? Nice sort of victory this is, to save Tom Merry from being poisoned with this rotten grub, and get poisoned ourselves!"

"You've done 'em a good turn, Figgy," said another junior. "Tom Merry ought to be grateful to you. Yah!"

"Oh, shut up, you grumbling asses!" said Figgins. "Blame me when anything goes wrong! I'll leave you out next time there's a feed to be captured."

"I wish you would if it's anything like this one."

"I feel as if I've been on the Channel."

"I feel horribly ill."

"I shall never get this taste out of my mouth."

"I've got a pain in my inside."

The complaints rose crescendo on every side. Only the Co. loyally stood by Figgins, and they were looking very grim and glum, too.

Fatty Wynn, in fact, looked as if his heart were broken. The feed had gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream, and it left an aching void.

"Well, it's no good sticking here," said Figgins at last. "We can't eat that stuff. We'd better be getting back to the school."

In glum humour the New House juniors got into their boat, taking with them the oars to be left at Mr. Juggs' cottage. They drifted down the stream, to the tune of endless grumbling. Figgins, like most unsuccessful captains, had to pay the penalty of failure.

During the return the juniors explained all that they thought of him and of his mental capacity, and their thoughts were not flattering.

Mr. Juggs' cottage came in sight at last. Figgins steered for the shore, and ran the boat to the landing-stage.

"Hallo, there's that goggle merchant!" remarked Kerr. "That's the new thing they've got in the School House. They keep it in Tom Merry's study."

The new boy in the School House was seated upon Mr. Juggs' bench, blue glasses and all. A St. Jim's skiff was moored to the planks. James Edward Jessop was consuming a glass of ginger-pop, and there was another bottle on the bench beside him, as well as a cake and a bundle of sandwiches.

"Looks as if he's enjoying himself!" growled Figgins. "Good mind to chuck him into the river for luck!"

He stepped ashore, and tossed out the oars belonging to the Daisy.

James Edward Jessop looked at him curiously.

"Hallo, Figgy, you look cross!"

Figgins frowned at him.

"Who are you calling Figgy, you cheeky new kid?"

His frown did not seem to portend the merchant in blue glasses in any way.

"Anything gone wrong?" he asked. "Haven't you enjoyed your little selves? I've had a nice pull up the river from St. Jim's. Have you seen anything of Tom Merry and his party?"

"Yes!" growled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha! Did they have their picnic?"

Figgins looked at him curiously.

"What are you cackling about, you goggled image?"

"The best joke of the season!" said James Edward Jessop, chuckling. "I don't know that I ought to tell you, but it's too good to keep."

"What's the joke?" asked Figgins, beginning to feel suspicious.

"Ha, ha, ha! Only that I've shoved a lot of medicine and pills into Tom Merry's grub, and when they start feeding, it will be a little surprise for them."

And the new boy at St. Jim's roared.

Figgins exchanged a glance with his followers. They crowded ashore to join him, with meaning looks. Figgins stepped towards the hilarious James Edward.

"So you shoved a lot of medicine and pills into the grub, did you?"

"Yes, rather! They'll enjoy— Hallo, hallo! What are you up to?"

Figgins had grasped him, and in a moment more Kerr and Wynn had pinned his arms. James Edward struggled.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"You funny merchant!" said Figgins, in measured accents. "So it was you who shoved that horrid stuff into the grub, was it?"

"Yes, it was. What's the row?"

"Nothing; only Tom Merry and his party didn't eat that grub."

"Why not?"

"Because we raided it from them."

"You—you raided it?"

"Yes, and we ate it—at least, some of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Strikes you as being funny, doesn't it?"

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

"Well, here's some more fun for you. I'll teach you to bung your filthy medicine into grub that I want to scoff!" said Figgins. "Duck him, kids!"

"Here, chuck it!"

"We're going to. Chuck it into the river!" said Figgins. James Edward struggled frantically.

"Don't! Help! My glasses—"

"I'll take care of your glasses," said Figgins, removing them. "Now, in with him!"

The New House juniors were too wild to care for James Edward's protests. His trick had really been played on Tom Merry, but they had got the benefit of it, and they were badly in want of vengeance.

They gave James Edward a run down to the water, and sent him in headlong.

The water by the landing-place was too shallow to drown a child, and so James Edward was in no danger; nevertheless, the experience was an unpleasant one.

He disappeared into the water with a tremendous splash, and a howl of laughter greeted his reappearance.

He was dripping with water, his hair hung in wet locks, and there were weeds streaking it; and, strangest of all to relate, his face had gone extremely pale compared with its former rich red complexion.

"The joke doesn't seem so funny now, does it?" said Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha! This is where we do the laughing! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House party.

"Hallo! What's the kid doing?" exclaimed Kerr.

James Edward's actions were certainly remarkable. Instead of trying to scramble ashore, he had turned away, and was swimming out into the river.

Figgins looked after him in amazement.

"Come back, you silly cuckoo!" he called out.

James Edward made no reply, but manfully breasted the stream. Again Figgins called after him, but he took no notice.

"Off his rocker, I expect," said Figgins. "We'll pick him up in the boat, kids!"

They embarked in the boat and pushed off again. It did not take them long to overtake the swimmer, and Figgins leaned over and grasped him by the hair.

"Leggo! M-m-m-leggo!" spluttered the new boy.

"In with him, chaps!"

Several hands grasped James Edward, and he was hauled into the boat. Then, for the first time, the boys got a good look at his face since his immersion. There was a shout of astonishment, for, the blue glasses being gone, the features were revealed without disguise, and the water of the river had washed off the artificially red complexion and the darkening of the eyebrows.

A face that had once been well known at St. Jim's was revealed; the one name was uttered in a simultaneous shout by the New House juniors, in various tones of amazement—"Monty Lowther!"

CHAPTER 9.

Monty Lowther Faces the Music.

MONTY LOWTHER lay in the boat, drenched and dripping, and staring at Figgins & Co. with a ghastly grin on his face.

It was Monty Lowther, right enough. The disguise which had served the turn of Master James Edward Jessop was gone, and the missing member of the Terrible Three was revealed in his own proper person.

"Monty Lowther!"

"You humbug!"

"You horrid impostor!"

"You horrid sham!"

Monty Lowther grinned. He rubbed the water out of his eyes and blinked at Figgins & Co. and the amazed juniors of the New House.

"You—you bowled me out!" he spluttered.

Figgins' brow grew exceedingly stern.

"Yes, we bowled you out, you horrid humbug! And now explain what you mean by it."

"Eh?"

"What do you mean by it?" roared Figgins. "What do you mean by coming back to the school in disguise like a giddy burglar?"

"Let me see. I suppose you're curious?"

"Curious?" said Figgins. Not at all! You needn't tell us if you don't want to; only, if you don't we shall tie a rope to your ankles and tow you back to St. Jim's behind the boat! Don't let me persuade you; do just as you like!"

The discovered impostor chuckled.

"Now, don't get waxy, Figgins. If I tell you the yarn, will you promise not to give me away in the school?"

Figgins shook his head decidedly.

"No, I won't!"

"But look here—"

"I'm looking, and I can see a beastly horrid humbug! I don't approve of humbugs. Besides, there's twelve of us here, and the thing would be certain to get out. A secret like that can't be kept among twelve people."

Monty Lowther made a grimace. There was certainly something in what Figgins said. The secret of his identity being known to twelve juniors, it was hardly feasible to think of trying to prevent it from becoming common property at St. Jim's.

His little game had come to a sudden termination. His promise to Miss Fawcett had been faithfully kept so far, but now he was to be deprived of further opportunities of looking after Tom Merry's health.

The game was up, and when the story was all over St. Jim's, it would soon come to the ears of the masters, and

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then his departure from the school would follow. Still, it had been very funny while it lasted.

"Well, if you won't keep the giddy secret, I won't tell you a word," said Monty Lowther, "so there you are, Figgins! You can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"All right," said Figgins. "We'll take you back to St. Jim's, and show you up. I dare say Tom Merry will be interested to know about your shoving that stuff into his grub."

"Which you ate! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Figgins crossly.

"Ha, ha! How do you like the Marvellous Mixture?"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Are you fonder of that, or the Green Globules for Pining Patients?"

Figgins turned red.

"Look here, you've got to keep your mouth shut!" he warned.

"Rats! I want to know, you know. You've had a good dose of both Marvellous Mixture and Green Globules, and I want to know— Oh, ow!"

Figgins had picked up a boathook and given the humorous Monty a dig with it.

"Now, if you don't want to get a sock on the napper," said Figgins, "you'll dry up!"

Figgins looked as if he meant it, and Monty Lowther accordingly dried up. That is, he dried up in a vocal sense. He was too drenched to dry up in any other way.

The boat reached the school boathouse. The juniors landed, and Monty was yanked out of the boat.

"Bring him along!" said Figgins. "We'll show up the horrid impostor to all the school. We'll teach him to disguise himself like a giddy burglar, and take us in. We'll teach him to shove Marvellous Mixture into grub that we went to collar!"

"Look here—" said Monty Lowther.

"Shut up!" said Figgins, prodding him with the boathook. "You're not talking in this act. This is where you keep your mouth shut."

"Forward!" said Kerr.

With one of the company on either side of him, Figgins walking in advance, and the rest of the New House party bringing up the rear, the unfortunate humbug was marched on.

It was useless to attempt to escape, and he did not attempt it. He entered somewhat into the humour of the situation, but he was not quite without uneasiness.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were lounging at the gates of St. Jim's. They stared at the New House juniors, and then at their captive, in amazement. Of course, they knew Monty Lowther at a glance now that he was undisguised.

"Monty!"

"Lowther!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Yes, Monty Lowther," said Figgins. "We found it in the river. It belongs to Tom Merry, and we're taking it to him."

"It's his property," explained Kerr. "Have you seen Merry, Blake?"

"Yes. He's in his study. But—"

"Come on, kids!"

"But, I say, where did he spring from? What does it all mean, anyway?" demanded the amazed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! What does it all mean, dear boys?"

"This," said Figgins, pointing at Monty Lowther with the boathook like a showman, "this is the goggled merchant."

"The what?"

"The goggled merchant. He came to St. Jim's in blue glasses, and called himself James Edward Jessop. We've bowled him out."

"My only Aunt Maria Jane!"

"We're taking him back to his owner," said Figgins. "You can come along if you like. March, kids! Forward!"

They marched on to the School House. The amazed chums of Study No. 6 joined them. At the door of the School House the followers of Figgins & Co. dispersed, to spread the strange tale over the school; but Figgins & Co. did not relinquish their prisoner. They marched Monty in, and Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy followed.

"I say, Blake," muttered Lowther, "get me out of this. Stand by a School House chap against these horrid New House bounders!"

"Rats!"

"Remember how they collared your grub on the island." Blake and his chums looked at one another. The temptation was strong to avenge that reverse now that Figgins & Co. had ventured into the lions' den by entering the walls of the School House.

But honour forbade. The enemy had come in in good faith, and any attack upon them would not be "cricket." So Blake shook his head, though he shook it slowly.

"No, Monty, old man, it can't be did!" he said. "It's pax now between us. Besides, you're going to be shown up for being such a horrid humbug!"

"But I say, Blake—"

"Nuff said. Quick march!" said Blake decisively.

Monty Lowther was marched on, right to the door of Tom Merry's study in the new wing of the School House. Figgins kicked at the door.

"Hallo, there! You can come in."

The chief of the New House juniors opened the door, and the procession "processed" into the room.

Tom Merry and Manners were busily engaged examining some photographic prints, and they did not even look up.

"What do you want?" asked Tom Merry, without turning his head.

"Got something that belongs to you," said Figgins casually. "We picked it up in the river, and brought it to you as lost property."

The Terrible Two looked round. Their eyes fell upon Monty Lowther, and they gave a simultaneous jump.

"Monty Lowther!"

"Old Monty!"

They rushed forward and seized him. They grabbed him away from Figgins and hugged him.

"Hallo, he's all wet!" said Tom Merry, making that discovery as the water from Monty's clothes soaked over him. "What has happened?"

"Didn't I say we picked him up in the river?" said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the Co. "They don't see the joke."

Tom Merry stared.

"What joke?"

"Look at this merchant. Take a good look at him. You know him, don't you?"

"Yes, of course we do," said Tom. And Manners added: "Have you gone clean off your silly rocker, Figgins?"

"No. When did you see him last?"

"Why, the time his uncle fetched him away from St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha ha! Not since then?"

"No."

"Ha, ha ha! Then, you don't know your study mate again? I admit he's a bit changed without his complexion or his goggles."

"What on earth are you driving at, Figgins?"

Figgins waved his hand to Monty.

"Allow me to introduce you to Master James Edward Jessop, the biggest humbug that ever came to St. Jim's," he exclaimed.

"Jessop?"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you it is. His complexion is washed off, and here's his blue goggles. It was Monty Lowther all the time!"

"Im—impossible!"

"It seems swange," said Arthur Augustus, "but it is twue, Tom Mewwy."

"But—but—but—"

"Don't you know his clothes again?" said Figgins.

"Besides, the horrid humbug won't deny it! He knows he's bowled out! Bless you, all St. Jim's knows it by this time!"

Monty Lowther gave a sickly grin.

"Go on, Monty! Give us the facts!"

"Well, it's true," said Monty Lowther. "I was the giddy goggled merchant. I never thought the game would end up so suddenly as this, though."

"You horrid bounder! And you ran down Monty Lowther to us, yourself, all the time!"

"Yes; and really, Tom, old chap, I never felt more inclined to speak out than when you wanted to punch my head for running myself down! But—"

Tom Merry assumed his sternest expression.

"A joke," he remarked, "is a joke! But a joke played on us is another matter. You've no business to play your little jokes on your own study! You've got to give an awfully satisfactory explanation, in the presence of these gentlemen, or else we shall scrag you and rag you."

"Good!" said D'Arcy. "Wag the howlid boundah!"

"It really wasn't my fault!" said Monty Lowther, grinning. "I wanted to come back to St. Jim's, and my uncle wouldn't agree. Then he went on a journey, and left me with Miss Fawcett, and she agreed to let me come like this, to look after Tom Merry's health."

"What do you mean?"

"I was to give you medicine and pills," said Monty

Lowther. "I've done it, too! I put one of Dr. Bones' Specials in your mouth last night—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co.

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"You—you beast! That accounts for the horrid taste in my mouth this morning!"

"I couldn't help it! I had promised Miss Fawcett, as a condition of my coming here, and a chap can't break his word," said Monty virtuously.

"N-n-no, I suppose not!" said Tom Merry suspiciously.

"And you didn't want to, either, you image! I—"

"That's really why I shoved pills and medicine into the grub in Blake's study," said Monty Lowther. "I thought I'd do you all a good turn, you know."

"You did what?" exclaimed Blake. "Then Figgins—"

"We couldn't eat the stuff!" said Figgins. "It nearly poisoned some of us!"

Study No. 6 roared with laughter.

"Well, you've explained, Monty," said Tom Merry severely. "And I don't consider your explanation at all satisfactory."

"Far from it," said Figgins & Co. with one voice.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've taken in your old chums and made yourself a general nuisance," said Tom Merry, with the air of a judge.

"You are found guilty of playing the giddy ox, without any extenuating circumstances."

"Hear, hear!"

"You might have poisoned me with that horrible Marvellous Mixture and those fearful Green Globules for Pink People," said Tom, with still more severity. "I grant your promise to Miss Fawcett, but—"

"I had to do it, you know! I—"

"You've taken us all in! You're a humbug! You're a sham! You're a hollow mockery! You're a delusion and a snare, and I sentence you—"

Tap!

A knock at the study door interrupted the sentence of the self-constituted judge.

"Oh, come in, fathead—whoever you are!" said Tom Merry.

The door opened, and Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, entered. Tom Merry turned as red as fire. He had not guessed that it was the Housemaster at the door.

But Mr. Railton appeared not to have noticed his polite form of address.

"Is Jessop here?" he said. "Jessop, you—why—what—what is this?"

Monty Lowther reddened.

"Please, sir—"

"You are wet-soaked! What—"

"I've been in the river, sir. Figgy pulled me out. I—"

Mr. Railton's eyes were fixed upon him sternly.

"I have just heard a most singular story," he said. "I came here to question you, Jes—I mean Lowther. But I need not do so now. The story is evidently true."

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! Then you will kindly come with me to the Head and explain the meaning of this masquerade!" said the Housemaster. "Or, rather, you will dry yourself and change your clothes, and then follow me to the Head's study."

And Mr. Railton quitted the room.

The juniors looked at one another ruefully. All thoughts

(Continued on the next page.)

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of reprisals upon Monty were gone now. He was freely forgiven, in the face of the storm that was pretty certain to burst in the Head's study.

"Well, it was bound to come out!" said Monty Lowther resignedly. "As well soon as late! It was funny enough while it lasted! I'd better change my things! Anyway, as I don't belong to the school I can't be punished. That's one comfort!"

Mr. Railton had proceeded straight to the Head's study. He found Dr. Holmes with a letter in his hand.

"I am glad you have come, Railton!" said the Head. "I have had a most extraordinary letter from Miss Priscilla Fawcett."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, indeed! You remember the boy Montague Lowther, who was taken away from the school some short time back by his uncle?"

"Yes, I remember him perfectly well."

"Well, this uncle has left England on business, and he left the boy with Miss Fawcett. Now he writes to her to say that, as his business would keep him away from England for some considerable time, instead of the few weeks he originally supposed, he has decided to yield to his nephew's wish and allow him to return to St. Jim's. This is what Miss Fawcett has written to me; but this is not the extraordinary part. The lady states that Montague Lowther is, as a matter of fact, already at the school."

"Really?"

"Yes. Being anxious about the health of Tom Merry, she allowed Lowther to carry out a harebrained scheme of coming here under another name, he promising on his side to keep a careful watch on Merry and to send her daily reports as to his health."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The whole thing is absurd! Lowther, of course, knows very well that Merry is the picture of health, and that his governess' fears are groundless. But he appears to have been glad of the chance of coming back to St. Jim's on any terms. I can sympathise with the lad's attachment to his old school, and his desire to return, Mr. Railton!"

"So can I, sir—heartily! As a matter of fact, Lowther's little deception was revealed by accident to-day, and I have told him to come here and explain to you. I did

not know that Miss Fawcett had written and explained already."

"It is an absurd business," said the doctor, smiling. "However, Lowther shall certainly remain at St. Jim's now that he has his uncle's permission. Ah, here he is!"

There was a timid tap on the door. "Come in!"

Monty Lowther entered the study.

"Lowther," said Dr. Holmes, with a severe expression, which the twinkle in his eyes belied, "I have just received a letter from Miss Fawcett, explaining the absurd trick in which you have been engaged. She also tells me that your uncle will remain abroad for some time, and that he gives his permission for you to return to this school if you wish."

Monty Lowther's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, sir—"

"Upon the whole, I shall not punish you for this absurd prank," said the Head. "But remember—nothing of the kind must ever occur again!"

Monty could safely promise that!

"You are very kind, sir! I wanted to come back to St. Jim's very much! This will be awfully jolly! I mean, I am very glad I can stay, sir."

"Very good, you will stay! Under your proper name, of course! You may go, Lowther!"

"Thank you, sir."

Monty Lowther went.

He went directly to Study No. 10, where the juniors were still waiting to hear the verdict. He came in beaming, and in a few words explained.

"I'm to stay! Hurrah!"

"Bravo!" said Blake and Herries heartily. And Arthur Augustus chimed in: "Bwavo!"

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins & Co. cordially.

Tom Merry and Manners took a hand each of the restored member of their honourable company, and shook it high in the air.

"Hurrah!" said Tom. "Now we're the Terrible Three again! And you had better look out, Figgins & Co!"

(Hurrah! Good old Monty Lowther's back again! And the Terrible Three have great plans for celebrating the Fifth, in "The 'Gunpowder Plot' at St. Jim's!" next week!)

The GEM 2^D



THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,227.

IT GOES WITH A BANG!

The Special

"GUY FAWKES" NUMBER

of the

GEM!

If you look at the small cover reproduction alongside you will see that someone seems to have scored over Tom Merry! But Tom plays a considerable part in:

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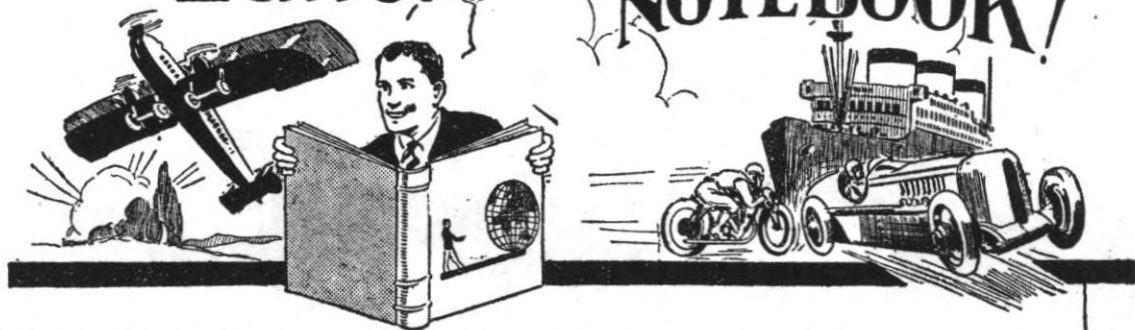
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"BETTER than ever!" said the office-boy. "What is?" I asked. "Why, next week's GEM," was his reply. And I agreed. It certainly is better than ever, and that's saying something. But I'll leave you all to judge when you sample the contents of your favourite paper next Wednesday. The tit-bit of this feast of fiction is, of course, the long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. Oh, yes, they celebrate the "Glorious Fifth" all right, and then some! In

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REFLECTIONS!

"I wonder if I look all right?" That thought must have passed through the mind of a daring parachutist who was contemplating breaking the world's record for "high jumping." And with the thought out came a pocket mirror, and the leather-clad parachutist, preparatory to hurling life and limbs into space, studied a reflection that seemed to say "O.K." With that, the jump into space—a high

jump, too, for the plane was travelling at a height of 6,504 yards above the earth—commenced. People safely rooted to mother earth watched that thrilling descent with open mouths, but they had an extra thrill when it was discovered that the parachutist was a member of the fair sex! That explains the pocket mirror mentioned above. The "high jumper" in question belongs to Rumania, and it took her twenty-one minutes from the time she gazed into the pocket mirror up aloft in the aeroplane before she touched earth. Doubtless the thrill in the knowledge that she had beaten the existing parachute record for her sex was but of secondary importance to what she looked like when some obliging friend hastened forward with congratulations and another mirror.

GROUND SPEED!

One thousand seven hundred and sixty yards to go. How long would you take to do it running at your top speed. Not in the marvellous time of 4 mins. 9 1-5 secs., otherwise you would give the sporting fans of France something to worry about. Their crack runner, Jules Ladoumègue, did the mile in that "flying" time quite recently in the Stade Jean Bouin at the Auteuil meeting, thus beating the world's record of 4 mins. 10 2-5 secs. set up by the famous Finnish runner, Paavo Nurmi. Twenty-five thousand frenzied spectators acclaimed the Frenchman when he breasted the tape, for this was a record that they had set their hearts on winning. Amongst them were some of Ladoumègue's fastest rivals, who incidentally had paced him in his successful attempt.

A FLOATING CITY!

"You are in the wrong street, sir. Take the first turning on the left, the second to the right, pass the main square and the picture palace, and you'll find the street you want." That sounds strange language to hear on board ship, but it's likely to be in common use when the "hush-hush" liner that is being built by France makes its maiden voyage some time early next year. All the latest gadgets are being introduced into this vessel, so that the passengers will find it hard to realise they are in a ship and not a miniature city. In this super craft, which will be 1,020 feet long, will be found streets and squares, a picture palace, a hospital, chapel, swimming baths, laid out playing grounds, and even a motor garage. When the 2,132

passengers all start to walk the "streets" at once for their early morning exercise, the illusion of a miniature city afloat will be complete. But when the ship begins to roll and high seas are encountered it is extremely doubtful whether the illusion will last. After all, you don't experience the pangs of sea sickness in a real city, no matter what tricks the fickle weather clerk plays!

HEARD THIS ONE?

Schoolmaster, to promising new boy: "Give me a brief definition of a net." "A lot of holes tied together, sir!"

HOW IT'S DONE IN GERMANY!

"Hallo, it's going to rain." The English visitor in Berlin looked up at the heavens and shivered, for he had sallied forth without either his raincoat or his umbrella. His German companion merely smiled, took him by the arm, and walked him to an automatic machine. In exchange for a few coppers out popped an umbrella, at sight of which the Englishman jumped. He eyed it in disfavour at first, for naturally it didn't compare at all favourably with his own gamp. But it saved him from a nasty drenching, for all that. This automatic umbrella is composed largely of oiled paper, the handle being of wood. It's a rough and ready shelter from a storm, in point of looks, but its practical value speaks for itself.

"SAFETY FIRST!"

"Hi! We're going to crash into the hangars!" How many people taking their first flip aloft have thought that as the machine, travelling at fierce speed, made to land. In many cases their alarm has been justified, but with the idea of making aerial travel as safe as walking on the ground, the experts in the world of designing and engineering have been working overtime. One of the "gadgets" that emerges from their prolonged studies and experiments is a reversible propeller, which acts as a brake if the pilot lands at too great a speed. By a single touch of a control, the pitch of the propeller is changed or reversed, thus enabling the pilot to land in a much smaller area than he could otherwise do. Another gadget calculated to reassure the nervous aerial traveller is the carrying of a collapsible rubber boat which he wears on his back in the same manner as a parachute is worn.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,237,

THE PLOTTER OF THE FOURTH!

By

OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1.

Counsel for the Defence!

"ERROLL wanted!"

"Dalton's after his blood!"

"Where is he, Morny?"

Jimmy Silver & Co., otherwise known as the Fistical Four of Rookwood, looked into Stuly No. 4 in the Fourth passage, and addressed their questions simultaneously to Mornington.

Valentine Mornington, Kit Erroll's study-mate in Study No. 4, looked up with a yawn. Judging by the number of sheets of writing that were littered over the table where he was sitting, the dandy of the Fourth had been busy.

"Glad to see you fellows!" he remarked, with a languid nod. "Glad to see anyone, after spendin' hours writin' up impot arrears for Dalton. Erroll's not here. I believe you asked for him?"

"Ass! We can see he's not here!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "Where is he? Dalton wants him; I fancy it's trouble."

"In fact, it is trouble, if what we've heard is correct," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "What's happened to him, Morny?"

Mornington looked up at the Fistical Four rather sharply.

"Nothin' much; he's gone to Bagshot Town. But what merry idiot is suggestin' that my eminently staid an' respectable colleague, Kit Erroll, is in for trouble with Dalton? Surely you chaps know that dear old Kit, unlike his disreputable study-sharer, has lived his fifteen years of life without sin?"

"Well, we know nothing against him, certainly!" said Jimmy Silver, with a laugh. "But he seems to have gone off the rails a bit this time, if what Muffin told us is correct. Happen to know why he went to Bagshot, Morny?"

"No secret about it, old bean!" responded the dandy of the Fourth. "He went to see a talkie—somethin' frightfully upliftin', about racketeerin' and robbery with violence, I believe. He wanted to stay an' watch me write lines, but I made him go an' see the film instead."

"All serene, then!" nodded Jimmy Silver. "I hope he'll be in a position to prove he went to the talkie. We've just heard that Carthew of the Sixth has reported him to Dalton for attending a greyhound-racing meeting at Bagshot, instead, you see, and—"

"What!" yelled Mornington.

The dandy of the Fourth, shocked for once out of his

usual languor, was on his feet, staring at the leader of the Fistical Four in sheer amazement.

"Fact!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You're seriously tellin' me that Kit Erroll is on the carpet for goin' to the greyhound track at Bagshot this afternoon?" gasped Valentine Mornington. "Why, the Head would almost sack a Rookwood man for lookin' at it. You're potty!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"I think you'll find we're not far wrong. Tubby Muffin told us. He'd been listening to Dalton and Carthew when they came in together this afternoon, and Tubby's reliable when it comes to eavesdropping, if nothing else!"

"Anyway, Dalton wants Erroll now, or as soon as he comes in," said Raby. "He and Carthew are waiting for him, so it looks as if there may be something in it!"

"Good gad!"

Mornington almost blinked at them. The news that Kit Erroll, his chum, the steadiest fellow in the Fourth, was being accused of attending the unsavoury Bagshot greyhound-racing track left him quite breathless for a few moments.

"Of course, it's all rot," declared Jimmy Silver. "None of us believes for a moment that old Erroll would be such

an ass; but there it is, as Tubby gave it us, in case you want to do anything."

Mornington drew a deep breath.

"Good gad! I believe I begin to see somethin' behind it now! You say Carthew reported him?"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Not that a chap like that has any right to report a chap!" he remarked. "Considering the number of times he breaks bounds to go down to the Bird-in-Hand, it's about time he was reported himself!"

"Exactly. Which is possibly what explains this little happenin'!" nodded Mornington, beginning to smile. "Good old Carthew!"

"What's the idea, then, Morny?"

"Quite an easy one, when you know your Carthew!" smiled Mornington. "I happen to know that he has been goin' to the dog-meetin's at Bagshot on occasional half-hols. He went to one this afternoon—an' met Dalton comin' out. See?"

"Oh, great pip! You mean—"

"That on the spur of the moment he said he had seen Erroll goin' in an' went after him, in the interests of duty

**Carthew believed all that he saw
and all that he heard—but he was
wrong both times!**

am' so on—just that!" said the dandy of the Fourth. "Thousand-to-one he saw Erroll on the train, alone, an' knew it was a safe bet to drag him in!"

"My hat! Surely he wouldn't be rotter enough——"

"Carthew would be rotter enough for anythin'!" yawned Mornington. "Hallo, hallo! Here's Erroll himself. This true about your goin' to the dogs, Erroll?"

"If going to the talkies is going to the dogs, then I've been!" answered Kit Erroll, with a laugh. "What's the joke, Morny?"

"Somethin' more than a joke, I'm afraid, dear man!" replied Mornington, with unusual seriousness. "Seen Carthew of the Sixth this afternoon?"

Kit Erroll nodded.

"Yes; I noticed him on the train, going to Bagshot. But what the thump——"

Before Erroll could finish his question, an interruption came. It was in the shape of Mr. Richard Dalton, the popular master of the Fourth at Rookwood; behind him the juniors saw Carthew, the cad of the Sixth.

Dicky Dalton's glance rested on Erroll. The master of the Fourth was looking very serious.

"So you are back, Erroll! Where have you been this afternoon?"

"To the pictures, sir," answered Erroll, apparently surprised by the severity of the Form master's tone. "I was within bounds—at Bagshot."

"You admit, then, to being at Bagshot," said Mr. Dalton, with a nod. "Will it surprise you, Erroll, to learn that Carthew, here, has reported you to me for attending a greyhound-racing meeting in that town?"

Kit Erroll jumped.

"Me? At a greyhound-race? Surely Carthew's joking, sir!"

"There is no joke about this, Erroll!" declared Mr. Dalton sternly. "Carthew, as a prefect, definitely states that he followed you into this greyhound-racing enclosure——"

"But it's ridiculous, sir!" gasped Erroll. "Carthew must be mad!"

"The report comes from a prefect, and I should be able to accept his word without question," Mr. Dalton said. "Since you have always been well-behaved, Erroll, I am only too anxious to listen to what you have to say. You admit to having gone to Bagshot. Have you any means of proving an alibi by which you can show that you actually went to the picture show?"

Kit Erroll stared blankly at the Form master.

"I—I went on my own, sir. It's possible that an attendant or someone saw me and would confirm it, but the chances are against it——"

There was a laugh from Carthew who was, for once, keeping in the background.

"Distinctly against it, as you spent the afternoon in the greyhound-racing enclosure! I don't think there'll be any alibi from you, Erroll!"

Kit Erroll looked from Carthew to Mr. Dalton, then back to Carthew. He seemed overwhelmed by the unlooked-for emergency, and in his temporary stupefaction seemed hardly capable of uttering a word in his own defence.

But someone was at hand to act as counsel for the defence. As Mr. Dalton opened his mouth to speak again, Valentine Mornington lunged to the front of the group.

"If I might say somethin', sir——"

"Well, what is it, Mornington?"

"Did Carthew come to you with this yarn about Erroll, or did he trot it out when it was necessary to explain somethin' he'd done himself? I'd hate to make suggestions, sir, but circumstances alter cases, don't they?"

"Why, you cheeky young rascal——" spluttered Carthew furiously.

"Silence, Carthew! So far as my inquiry concerning Erroll goes, Mornington, the question does not arise; but there is no harm in your knowing that I ran into Carthew when he was coming from the greyhound track. He then explained that he had been in for the purpose of looking for Erroll."

"Naturally, sir!" said Mornington blandly. "One wouldn't expect him to tell you he'd been on the ran-dan, would one?"

"You cheeky young sweep——" gasped the furious prefect.

"Please do not indulge in recrimination, Carthew!" snapped Mr. Dalton, his eyes fixed disapprovingly on Mornington's languid figure. "Mornington, you are being impertinent!"

"You mean truthful, sir!" retorted the dandy of the Fourth. "The truth's so rare that people sometimes do mistake it for impertinence!"

There was a gasp from the rest of the juniors in Study

No. 4. Calm, contemptuous cynicism from a junior to a master was something decidedly unusual. It didn't crop up much from Mornington these days, but the Fistical Four were reminded now of the time when Valentine Mornington had been the wildest and most reckless junior at Rookwood, habitually given to talking to those in authority in this strain.

Jimmy Silver & Co. quite expected the master of the Fourth to send for a cane and punish Mornington there and then. But Dicky Dalton didn't always do what was expected of him, and he didn't on this occasion.

Instead, he turned his attention from Mornington to Erroll, and then, after a long and searching look, to Carthew.

"I have decided, Carthew, to postpone consideration of this matter," Mr. Dalton said eventually. "This does not mean, necessarily, that I am doubting what you have told me——"

"I hope not, sir!" said Carthew savagely. "If you're thinkin' of what Mornington was sayin'——"

"Partly, I am. Mornington's recklessly made suggestions are too grave for me to think of accepting them as in any way true. But the fact that he dares to make them is sufficient to cause me to give the matter very full consideration."

"Thank you, sir," said Kit Erroll. "I can only tell you that I haven't been anywhere near a race-track."

"I trust not, Erroll. Judgment is deferred, anyhow, for a few days. Perhaps something will crop up in the meantime to make the problem easier. Failing that, I must tell you that I shall have to take Carthew's complaint to the Head."

"Oh, sir!"

"That is all, then—for the present!" said Mr. Dalton, turning to go.

He quitted the study. Carthew, after directing to Mornington a look which would have done credit to the demon king in a pantomime, followed him.

"An' that's that!" remarked Mornington, as the door slammed after the cad of the Sixth. "Erroll, old top, let me tell you that for once in your innocent life you're up against it; but round one has gone to the counsel for the defence! What's goin' to happen in the remainin' rounds remains to be seen!"

CHAPTER 2.

Mornington Breaks Out!

"I SAY, you chaps——"

"Silence for Tubby!" grinned Jimmy Silver, as Tubby Muffin of the Fourth rolled up to the group that was gathered round the notice-board in the Hall.

"How did you hear it, Tubby—were you tying up your shoelace outside someone's door, or swotting a fly on a handy keyhole?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Silver!"

"Better get it off your chest before you bust!" advised the leader of the Fourth. "Say on, Maoduff!"

Tubby Muffin grinned a fat grin.

"He, he, he! I say, you chaps, it's not funny, really; I must say I'm surprised at Mornington taking up blagging again——"

"Eh?"

"He's been on the tack a long time now, you know!" grinned the fat junior. "But I always said he was bound to break out sooner or later, and—— Yoooop! Wharrer you doing, Erroll, you silly ass!"

"Shaking a fat idiot!" answered Kit Erroll, though the explanation was really hardly necessary. "What's this fat-headed yarn about Mornington?"

"Ow! It's true, anyway!" hooted Tubby Muffin. "If you doubt my word, you can jolly well go up to Peele's study and look through the keyhole——"

"How It's Done—by an Expert!" said Jimmy Silver, and there was a roar from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit Erroll did not join in the laughter. He was still holding Tubby Muffin by the scruff of the neck.

"What do you say is happening in Peele's study?" he demanded.

Tubby Muffin snorted.

"Mornington's smoking Peele's rotten cigarettes and playing cards with Peele and Gower! And all I can say, Erroll, is that if a pal of mine carried on like that, I'd jolly well—— Whoooop!"

Erroll didn't wait to hear what would have happened to a pal of Muffin's who carried on like that. He flung the fat junior aside and hurried off towards the staircase leading up the Fourth passage.

There was a buzz of voices from within as Kit Erroll reached Peele's study. Mornington's chum tried the door.

It was locked. He heard hurried movements going on inside and the sound of a window being thrown up. Then, after a brief interval, the door was cautiously opened.

It was Mornington himself who stood there. There was a peculiar smile on the face of the dandy of the Fourth.

"Hallo, Erroll! Just in time for a little game!" he drawled. "We're playin' banker, if you feel like it. The smokes are good, too!"

Kit Erroll stared at his chum in astonishment.

"Morny! I imagined you'd given up this kind of rot for good—"

"Nothin' like a change, now an' again!" smiled Mornington. "Trot in, old bean! You'll like Peele and Gower!"

"Are you mad, Morny?" asked Erroll in amazement. "This'll be all over the school in no time; Tubby's got it already! Ten to one a prefect'll get to hear—Carthew, for instance—"

"Dear old Carthew!" said Mornington affectionately. "He'll be quite pleased to know I'm back in the fold again! Well, if you're not comin' in, old bean—"

"I'm not, and you know it!"

"All serene, then! See you later!"

And Mornington, with a nod, went in again and closed the door, leaving his chum staring at the panels in utter bewilderment.

That incident was the first of quite a series of similar happenings. During the day or so that followed Mornington appeared to have broken out again. Several times he was seen in the company of Peele and his rather shady associates. Rumour even had it that he was contemplating one of the little midnight expeditions out of bounds for which he had been notorious in the bad old days.

Kit Erroll simply couldn't understand it. It was the old Mornington—but with a difference. Apparently he still wished to remain on perfectly friendly terms with his study-mate, and he was particularly careful not to fall foul of Dicky Dalton.

Strolling round the quad after tea two evenings later, Erroll tried to get to the bottom of the mystery. But Mornington cheerfully refused to discuss the reasons for his extraordinary change of front.

What he did discuss, in considerable detail, was an expedition he proposed to make to the Bagshot greyhound racing-track that evening.

Since the trouble about the celebrated resort was still hanging like a cloud over Kit Erroll, Erroll was staggered to think that his chum could be so foolhardy as to entertain such a wild project. But Mornington seemed set on it. Stopping under the windows of the School House before they went in, he explained his plans.

"It'll be dead easy, dear man!" he said. "Naturally, I'll want to get away before bed-time. That'll be simple; I'll just tell Dalton I've got a headache an' ask to go to bed early. He won't object, of course, an' by the time you all come up I'll be well away."

"You—you utter ass—" gasped Kit Erroll.

"I'll rig up a bolster in my bed, so the prefect who sees to 'lights out' won't notice anythin'!" said Mornington cheerfully. "Rather useful that my bed's in a darkish corner where it won't be conspicuous! It'll be dead easy, I tell you, an'—"

"S-sh!" hissed Erroll, glancing up at the windows above.

He grabbed Mornington by the arm and fairly dragged him away. When they were inside the House he stopped.

"Well, of all the thundering asses—" he said disgustedly. "Do you realise, Morny, you fathead, that we were talking underneath Carthew's window? And that there was a movement up there as if someone was looking down?"

"Shouldn't be at all surprised!" replied Mornington cheerfully. "Matter of fact, old bean, I'm perfectly sure I saw Carthew lookin' out before we stopped there!"

"Then what, in the name of thunder, do you mean by—"

"Wait an' see, dear man!" advised Mornington.

And Kit Erroll gave it up.

CHAPTER 3.

Carthew's Chance!

CARTHEW of the Sixth chuckled.

It was not often that Carthew saw the funny side of things. Usually he was rather a sour-tempered individual. But, for once, he found himself fairly glowing with good-humour.

Carthew had had many narrow escapes in the course of his career at Rookwood. But he had never been quite so near to really unpleasant trouble as on the occasion, two days before, when he had been caught by Dicky Dalton in

the very act of walking out of the Bagshot greyhound track.

On the spur of the moment, as Mornington had shrewdly guessed, Carthew had explained matters by dragging in an entirely innocent party.

A prefect who saw a junior boy enter forbidden premises had every right to follow him and make inquiries. Carthew had justified his presence at the dog races by the plea that he was performing that duty. Realising that the story would sound a little "thin" without a name to lend it substance, he had boldly accused Erroll, whom he knew to be in the town on his own. It was all quite simple.

Another fellow might have felt uneasy at having to get an innocent junior into trouble to clear himself. But Carthew was not built that way. To the unscrupulous Sixth-Former it didn't matter who sank so long as he swam.

But for Mornington, Carthew felt that he would have convinced Dalton. Mornington had made Dalton dubious. Carthew had longed to discredit him in Dalton's eyes since that scene in Study No. 4.

And now Carthew smiled. Just as if Providence was playing into his hands, he had overheard Mornington explaining to Kit Erroll his plans for getting to the Bagshot track that night.

Carthew left his study, fairly exulting. Within a few hours now he would be able to discredit Mornington, and at the same time to show himself to Dalton in the light of a keen and zealous prefect—which would surely result in his getting the benefit of the doubt over the Kit Erroll case.

In the Hall he saw Mr. Dalton and stopped for a moment.

"Have you made any decision yet regarding Erroll, sir?" he asked coolly. "I am rather concerned about it; I feel in a sense that my reputation is at stake."

"That coincides with my own view of the matter, Carthew," was Mr. Dalton's reply. "I, too, feel that your reputation is at stake, and I find it very difficult to come to a decision."

"You are still thinking of what young Mornington said?" suggested Carthew. "I don't feel flattered, sir, that you should take his word before mine. Mornington is not very reliable."

Mr. Dalton raised his eyebrows.

"I have always found Mornington to be most reliable, Carthew. Recently, at all events, he has been almost a model junior."

"Not quite such a model as you think, sir, perhaps," said Carthew, with a curl of his lip. "Possibly if you knew all about Mornington, you wouldn't hesitate as to who you believed of the two of us."

Dicky Dalton frowned.

"Well, the matter is still in abeyance, Carthew. I have not said that I disbelieve you, yet. I will see you again later."

And the master of the Fourth passed on with a nod.

Carthew went his way, smiling. He felt he could afford to smile, in view of what was coming.

All that evening the cad of the Sixth was careful to keep Mornington in sight. He hovered about the Fourth passage and the Junior Common-room like a ghost bent on haunting the dandy of the Fourth.

Mornington was apparently unaware of Carthew's sudden interest in him. He visited one or two studies with Erroll, went down to the Hall for a time, then adjourned to the Common-room.

From that noisy apartment Carthew eventually had the satisfaction of seeing him emerge alone.

Carthew watched him go to Dalton's room. Carelessly strolling past the half-open door the Sixth-Former heard him ask the Fourth master if he might go up to bed early on account of a headache.

Carthew walked away after that. He had heard enough; now he could bide his time.

Bulkeley saw lights out in the Fourth dormitory that night. Bulkeley was not an officious kind of fellow, and he was usually content to wish the Fourth "good-night" and depart.

That was what he did on this occasion. Certainly Bulkeley had no reason to suppose that the life-like figure curled up in Mornington's bed was merely an artistically-arranged bolster.

Ten minutes after Bulkeley had gone, the door opened again, and a tall figure moved quietly across the dormitory to Mornington's bed.

An electric torch flashed in the darkness, and several startled juniors, sitting up in bed, saw Carthew of the Sixth pull back the bedclothes and bring to light the bolster which Mornington had left there.

They heard a grunt of satisfaction from Carthew. Then the torch was extinguished, and the Sixth-Former walked swiftly out of the dormitory.

CHAPTER 4.

Morny's Big Surprise!

THE fathead!" "Fathead's not the word for it," said Jimmy Silver, from his bed. "Morny's the dafdest, silliest idiot I ever— Hallo, hallo! What the thump—"

"Morny!" yelled Lovell.

Quite a roar went up from the dim dormitory. And no wonder! For in the midst of the chorus of condemnation of Mornington, a pyjama-clad figure emerged from underneath the bed, and the Fourth recognised Mornington himself.

"Morny! You—you—" gasped Kit Erroll.

"Quiet!" hissed Mornington, as he swiftly made up his

bed. "Dear old Carthew's gone to fetch Dalton. He's goin' to tell him I've gone greyhound-racin' an' left a bolster in my place. I fancy Carthew's in for a surprise."

"Oh, great pip!"

"Then—then it's all a plot!" gasped Erroll. "Morny, you old ass—"

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!" said Mornington, tumbling into bed. "Remember, we're all asleep; don't spoil the fun by laughin' before it's time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me, chuck it!" urged Mornington.

And the Fourth "chucked it," and waited silently and breathlessly for developments.

They hadn't long to wait. Less than five minutes elapsed before there was a tramp of footsteps in the passage outside, coming to a stop outside the dormitory.

The door opened. No sound but the sound of deep, somnolent breathing came from the Fourth.

"The boys are asleep," the Fourth heard Mr. Dalton say. "We must make as little noise as possible, Carthew. You have a torch?"

"Yes, sir. I brought one in case it might be needed. You will find, as I say, that Mornington is out of bounds and that he has left a bolster in his bed to resemble the figure of a human being."

"Do I gather that you have been here already, Carthew?" There was a smothered gurgle from some of the Fourth as they heard Carthew reply:

"Oh, no, sir! As I explained, Mornington's projected escapade came to my ears accidentally. Unfortunately I was unable to take action previously owing to being called to the telephone to answer an urgent call from home."

"And you say that he has gone to this greyhound-racing stadium?"

"Undoubtedly. Erroll would have gone, too, but for having had a fright at my seeing him visit the place last Wednesday."

"Disgraceful!" declared the master of the Fourth. "If this is the truth, Carthew, both Erroll and Mornington shall be taken before the Head to-morrow. I do not doubt that he will expel them."

"I am sorry for them; but I have my duty to do," the eagerly-listening juniors heard Carthew say. "Well, here's the torch, sir."

"Thank you, Carthew."

Master and prefect moved quietly across the dormitory. In a state of breathless excitement the Fourth watched from their beds.

Mr. Dalton reached Mornington's bed first. He switched on the torch; but Mornington had pulled the sheet over his head and nothing but bedclothes met the master's eye.

"A well-arranged dummy, you see, sir!" chuckled Carthew. "But as soon as I pull back the clothes like this, you find what it really— Whoooooop!"

A wild yell rang out suddenly through the Fourth dormitory. It came from Carthew.

If there was one thing on earth Carthew was certain



When Carthew pulled back the bed-clothes, a white-clad figure sat up in the bed, and Carthew leapt into the air with a howl of fright!

about when he pulled back the bedclothes of Mornington's bed, if was that nothing in human shape was concealed underneath.

Carthew was prepared for a bolster and for nothing else. But as soon as he tugged at the sheet, there was a sudden movement from the bed. A white-clad figure sat up suddenly, and Carthew, in his overwhelming astonishment, jumped a clear foot in the air and emitted a wild howl of sheer terror.

"Ow! Keepimoff! It's a ghost! It's—"

"Carthew! Ridiculous boy! What on earth is the matter with you?" hooted Mr. Dalton. "Turn on the lights, one of you boys!"

Jimmy Silver, almost bursting with suppressed mirth, jumped out of bed and turned on the lights in the centre of the dormitory. In the sudden blaze of light the Fourth saw Carthew standing quite a distance from Mornington's

bed, fairly quivering with fright, while Mr. Dalton stared at him in utter amazement.

"M-M-Mornington!" stuttered Carthew, as he blinked at the unperturbed dandy of the Fourth.

"That's my name, certainly!" yawned Mornington. "What's the matter, sir? Is the school on fire?"

"Not at all; there is no need for alarm, my boy," said Mr. Dalton, whose expression was a study in surprise and disgust. "Carthew!"

"S-sir!"

"I am loath to believe that you have endeavoured to play a practical joke on me—"

"It—it wasn't a joke!" gasped the Sixth-Former, mopping his perspiring brow. "Mornington broke bounds to go to the dog races to-night; I saw him—that is to say—"

"Utterly preposterous!" hooted Mr. Dalton. "It is not more than three-quarters of an hour ago when Mornington asked my permission to go to bed early on account of a headache. Mornington, was it your intention to go to Bagshot to-night?"

"Bagshot? Certainly not!" answered Mornington, with well-feigned surprise. "Who on earth said it was?"

"You are not in the habit of breaking bounds to go to this wretched greyhound-racing place?"

"I've never been there, sir, an' haven't the faintest

intention of goin'!" said Mornington cheerfully. "Why should I?"

"You are sure you have made no attempt to break bounds to-night?"

"Not the slightest. I came up to the dorm after I left you an' I've been here ever since!"

"But ten minutes ago you weren't!" began Carthew.

Then he dried up. Having told Mr. Dalton that he had not visited the Fourth dormitory previously that night, he could hardly say otherwise at this late hour! Carthew came to a dead stop, his face almost scarlet with rage and mortification.

Mr. Dalton glared at him.

"Carthew, I have come to the conclusion that you are either suffering from delusions or that you have been telling me deliberate untruths!" he snapped. "You have created unnecessary alarm in a sleeping dormitory, dragged me up here on a fool's errand, and endeavoured to bring a charge of bound-breaking against a boy who was fast asleep in bed! Have you anything to say in the matter?"

"I—I—" gasped Carthew.

There he stopped. Carthew had come to the conclusion that, in all the circumstances, the safest plan was for him to keep silent.

"I can only conclude that you are an utterly foolish and irresponsible youth!" said Mr. Dalton, still glaring balefully at the wretched Sixth-Former. "Two days ago, Carthew, you brought a similar charge against another junior. This incident has quite decided me in regard to him. Erroll!"

"Yes, sir!" said Kit Erroll, from his bed.

"You may take it that I entirely dismiss from my mind the accusation which Carthew thought fit to bring against you on Wednesday."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!" said Kit Erroll happily, while a subdued cheer went up from the Fourth.

"As for your position in connection with that incident, Carthew," said Mr. Dalton, "I am strongly inclined to report the matter to the headmaster. Since I am not accustomed to acting harshly, I will refrain from doing so on this occasion and give you the benefit of the doubt. But I warn you that from now on I shall keep a very strict eye on you!"

"Oh!" gasped Carthew. That seemed as far as he could trust himself to speak.

"Now get to sleep again as quickly as you can, boys," said Mr. Dalton briskly. "I am sorry indeed to have awakened you. Are you all ready?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very well! Come, Carthew!" said the master of the Fourth, turning out the lights as he spoke. "Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The door closed behind Dicky Dalton and the unhappy Carthew.

The Fourth waited till their footsteps had died away down the stairs. Then they gave vent to their feelings in one long howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jever see anything like old Carthew's face?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, I suggest we pass a vote of thanks to our old pal Mornington for giving us the treat of the term!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it was all a plot!" said Kit Erroll, as the laughter eventually died away. "All the smoking and card-playing and the rest of it were just designed to lead Carthew up the garden so that he'd fall for it when you wanted him to believe you were going out on the tiles to-night! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm not responsible for what Carthew cares to think, am I?" chuckled Mornington. "Anyway, it puts 'paid' to his little wheeze for gettin' himself out of a mess by puttin' you into it, young Erroll, an' that was all I wanted!"

"And believe me, I'm grateful, old bean!" said Erroll earnestly. "It was a deep enough plot—bit too deep, perhaps; but it came off, and that's everything!"

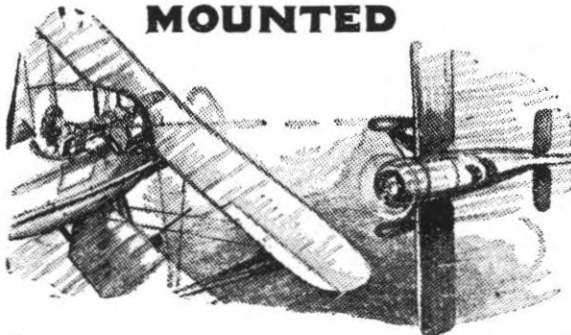
"For further testimonials, apply to Carthew!" grinned Lovell.

And the laughter started again. And even when midnight was chiming out from the Rookwood clock tower the Fourth dormitory still echoed to a chuckle or two from wakeful juniors who were still enjoying the memory of the gorgeous climax that had been achieved by the plotter of the Fourth!

THE END.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

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THE WINGER!



CHAPTER 1.

The Winger's Audacious Announcement

"MY dear, can it really be true? Has the Winger accepted your invitation to the party?" gushed a young lady who sat in Lady Jargold's boudoir. "Why, you'll have a thousand gate-crashers."

Lady Jargold waved her delicate handkerchief and smilingly nodded.

"I sent out a radio en clair asking him, and instantly got an answer saying that the gentleman would be happy to attend," she said.

Outside in the streets of London, all sorts and conditions of Londoners were talking about the latest audacity of that reckless young crook.

"Crikey, if the Winger goes to 'er lidyship's 'ouse, old Thomas of the Yard'll nab him sure," growled a robbery-with-violence crook in an East End dive.

"Heard the latest of the Winger, Jim?" shouted one errand boy across the street to another. "He's goin' to Lady Jargold's party to-night."

Snap Fane, seated in Sergeant Hull's police office at Limehouse Reach, looked serious as he dangled his legs.

"He's asking for it this time, Mr. Hull," he said, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. "What's Detective-Inspector Thomas going to do about it?"

Sergeant Hull flung around, his face creased to a frown of joy.

"Do! Why, catch the cheeky fool, of course!" he snapped. "Lady Jargold's house is in Goutmann Square. It'll be surrounded, and every guest in it minutely questioned. The man's mad—mad!"

He glared out at the Thames. For many weeks now the Winger had teased the police, so much so that Scotland Yard had detailed Detective-Inspector Thomas especially to lay him by the heels.

So far he had failed ignominiously. In face, if it hadn't been for Snap Fane, the Winger would have made a clean sweep every time he set out to do anything.

"What the devil did Lady Jargold want to ask him to her party for?"

"That's easy, Mr. Hull," grinned Snap Fane. "She always likes to have the social lion at her crushes. What beats me is, why did the Winger accept? Great sardines, he'll be nabbed this time!"

"Serve him right, too!" snapped Sergeant Hull. "Well,

clear out, Snap. You'll read all about it in to-morrow's papers. I'm busy!"

"Of course you'll read all about it in to-morrow's papers, Sergeant Hull," purred a sleek voice from the small radio set standing on the desk. "Why, Lady Jargold's parties are always written up by the very best Society editors."

Snap sprang off his perch and grinned. That voice belonged to the Winger himself. He had been listening-in to their conversation in that office.

"Winger, Snap speaking!" cried Snap, switching on the full power. "What's your game this time?"

A cheery laugh came back instantly.

"Well, Snap, it'll be nice to attend such a swagger party as her ladyship gives," laughed the Winger. "Think of the music, the food and wines, the select company in which I shall find myself. Why, think even of that ass, Sergeant—I beg his pardon, I mean Detective-Inspector Thomas trying to catch me."

"Watch out, Winger!" grinned Snap.

"O.K., little boy!" retorted the crook, with his tuneful laugh. "Sorry I can't ask you to attend, too. Well, good-bye. Cheerio, Mr. Hull!"

Silence followed. Sergeant Hull, his face red as a beetroot, glared at the radio set as if it were the invisible crook.

"Well, cheerio, Mr. Hull!" laughed Snap, making for the door.

Drifting down the Thames aboard his little home-made paddle-boat, Snap did some powerful thinking. Surely this was the Winger's most audacious stunt. Often in the past he had given easy clues as to what his future movements might be.

But never yet had he definitely said he would attend a party at a private house.

Snap knew enough of Scotland Yard's methods to know that Lady Jargold's house would be surrounded. Detectives would be mingling with the guests. Policemen would be everywhere.

Pellis House, her home in Goutmann Square, stood in its own grounds, surrounded by a grey stone wall. Once in there, the Winger would be in a trap. The police could easily make every man and woman account for themselves—test their identity beyond dispute or doubt.

Lying back in the boat looking up at the clouds, Snap's merry green eyes lost their usual sparkle. Although the Winger was a crook, he liked him for his cheek and polish.

The Winger never robbed anybody who would miss what he took. He never did more than shoot to wing a man who tried to arrest him. And his methods of robbery were so simple, that after a stunt, every detective in London gnashed his teeth for not having guessed the simple method adopted by the Winger.

How would the aristocratic crook accomplish his latest stunt? How could he possibly attend Lady Jargold's party and not get arrested?

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SNAP FANE SUCCEEDS AT LAST!

The Winger winged—and captured.

Snap steered his boat into Barking Creek and moored her on a mud flat.

Then he took a bus to the West End and spent his last coin on a decent suit of clothes, a hair-cut, and a bottle of hair dye.

In a mews he dyed his red hair brown. Then he cut his long eyelashes and changed into his smart suit. His emerald green eyes he could not alter, so he must risk that.

It was late afternoon when Snap stood in the servants' hall at Pellis House, wearing the uniform of a page-boy.

The kitchen was crowded with extra waiters and page-boys, maids and others of the permanent staff, for this party was to be the most exciting of any London had experienced for years.

Snap had got a job as temporary page-boy, and as he attended to his duties in the kitchen, he picked out three waiters as being Scotland Yard men.

Other detectives would be among the guests. The house would be surrounded.

The butler burst into the kitchen and closed the door.

"I say, we're going to have some fun, ladies and gents," he smiled sourly. "Her ladyship's asked every guest to come dressed in the clothes he thinks the Winger'll come in."

A respectful giggle responded to this announcement on the part of Mr. Perkins, the butler, who took it as a personal compliment, and bowed stiffly.

"But that'll make it very difficult for the police to identify the Winger, won't it, sir?" asked a grey-headed old waiter, whose credentials were from the Hotel Asturias, and was hired for the day.

"Bah, trust Scotland Yard, my man," answered the butler pompously. "They'll get him all right in spite of every gentleman guest being toggled up to represent what he thinks the Winger'll look like."

"Of course, sir, of course!" mumbled the grey-headed waiter respectfully, gliding from the room bearing a huge silver salver upon which clinked crystal glasses.

Snap eyed every one of the temporary servants. He was cute enough to know that, although the Winger had accepted her ladyship's invitation, he might not attend as a guest.

Two or three of the younger men might be the Winger in disguise, in spite of their bad grammar and shuffling ways.

"You'll attend in the cloak-room in the 'all, sonny," the butler told him, "and mind, all tips goes into the box for sharing out later."

"Yes, sir!" grinned Snap, darting off to his post.

Where was the Winger? Sharp at nine o'clock the first guests began to arrive. Young men were dressed to look like what they thought the famous crook looked like. Elderly men had deliberately made themselves look younger in the hope of being arrested by the detectives.

Lady Jargold had struck upon London's greatest novelty in the way of amusing her guests.

"I say, old bean, what if the jolly old Winger doesn't turn up?" gurgled a young man who came under the name of Sir Felix Hissen.

A general laugh followed this remark, some even suggesting that maybe he himself was the crook.

Snap scrutinised every male guest as he arrived, trying to find something about him that made him think of the Winger.

"I'd know the Winger's laugh anywhere," he told himself. "But he's so dashed smart at disguises, that blow me if I can be sure."

The more he examined the guests, the more puzzled he became. At least a dozen might be the Winger.

"Silly what these Society people will do, isn't it?" remarked the grey-headed old waiter as they entered the glittering salon together, carrying trays of cocktails. "Her ladyship's offering prizes to every guest who is troubled by the detectives."

Snap grinned at the bent little man, and noticed how tired were his faded old eyes.

Then they parted, each going a different direction, carrying their loaded trays of refreshments among the gay throng.

The grey-haired waiter looked into a mirror at Snap, then a slow smile spread across his face.

"So the young beggar's still after me!" he murmured to himself.

Greyhead was the Winger. His counterpart, Freddy Hale, of the Hotel Asturias, was being entertained by Blake, the Winger's first lieutenant, at his secret rendezvous in Essex.

Once again the Winger had kidnapped a man and taken his place. Freddy Hale was all right. The Winger would not harm the old waiter for worlds.

"I just wish to borrow your identity for a few hours, old chap," he had told him.

Now he was shuffling around the salon, serving the

excited guests who had all come in the hope of meeting him.

"Have to watch Snap!" the Winger mused, as he trotted off for a fresh supply of drinks.

Snap, all unconscious that he had actually spoken to the Winger, went with him to the ante-room to refill his own tray.

"Have you seen the Winger yet?" asked the Winger, in a cracked voice.

Snap eyed the man out of the corner of his eyes. Every man was suspect to him. Even this old man could be the crook.

"Not yet, Mr. Hale," he answered.

"A pity!" mumbled the Winger. "Point him out to me if you think any of the gentlemen are him. I lead such a quiet life that it would give me a thrill to see him."

Snap grinned and said he would. Then, once again they went back to the crowded salon, the Winger carrying his tray straight to Detective-Inspector Thomas, of Scotland Yard, who stood with a glittering gold chain drooping from his waistcoat pockets.

The Winger moved on, a mischievous smile flickering around the corners of his mouth. But he kept close as he could to the detective whose special duty it was to arrest him.

Out of the corner of his eyes he saw Detective Thomas fumble for his watch, then stare down at his waistcoat and hurry across to where Lady Jargold stood, and whisper something to her.

Sidling past a bunch of young men standing talking and laughing, the Winger coolly dropped Detective Thomas' gold watch and chain into the tail pocket of one of them.

At that moment Snap turned round and saw him.

"Jingo! What's Freddy Hale doing with his hand in that chap's pocket?" he asked himself, swiftly gliding across the floor to the spot.

"Yes, your ladyship, someone has stolen my watch and chain," he heard Detective-Inspector Thomas remark as he passed by.

Snap edged around the back of the young man, and cautiously felt his tail-pocket.

"Gosh! Mr. Thomas' watch and chain are there. Old Freddy Hale shoved 'em into that chap's pocket!" he gasped.

Like a flash he was across the room, hot on the heels of the aged waiter. He caught him in the ante-room, which was deserted, and raced to his side.

"Hallo, Winger!" he grinned.

The Winger turned and smiled blandly.

"Hallo, Snap!" he laughed.

That laugh. Nobody had one like it. Snap was sure now. Freddy Hale from the Hotel Asturias was the Winger.

"What's your game this time, Winger?" he snapped.

"Jewels, Snap—jewels!" smiled the Winger. "Her ladyship's got a wonderful collection, and the guests are wearing some very valuable baubles, which is no compliment to the Winger, eh?"

Snap edged away. The very coolness of the crook made him feel uneasy.

"Going to give the game away, Snap?" asked the Winger, coolly helping himself to a drink.

Snap nodded, then tried to turn suddenly. Something fell over his head. A heavy hand was clapped over his mouth, stifling the cry he gave. Fingers of steel wound around his ankles, and a pair of strong arms pinioned his arms to his body.

"Sorry, Snap, but I'm desperate this time!" came the muffled voice of the Winger through the folds of the velvet tablecloth.

Snap tried to struggle free. He was held as in a vice and lifted off his feet and rushed somewhere.

Unseen men gagged and bound him. The velvet tablecloth was wrapped around him, and a door closed and bolts were shot.

Then silence. Dimly the sounds of the orchestra floated to his ears.

He had found the Winger, but he had been too rash. The Winger had accomplices in the house, maybe his whole gang.

Back in the salon, the Winger was doing the duties of Freddy Hale.

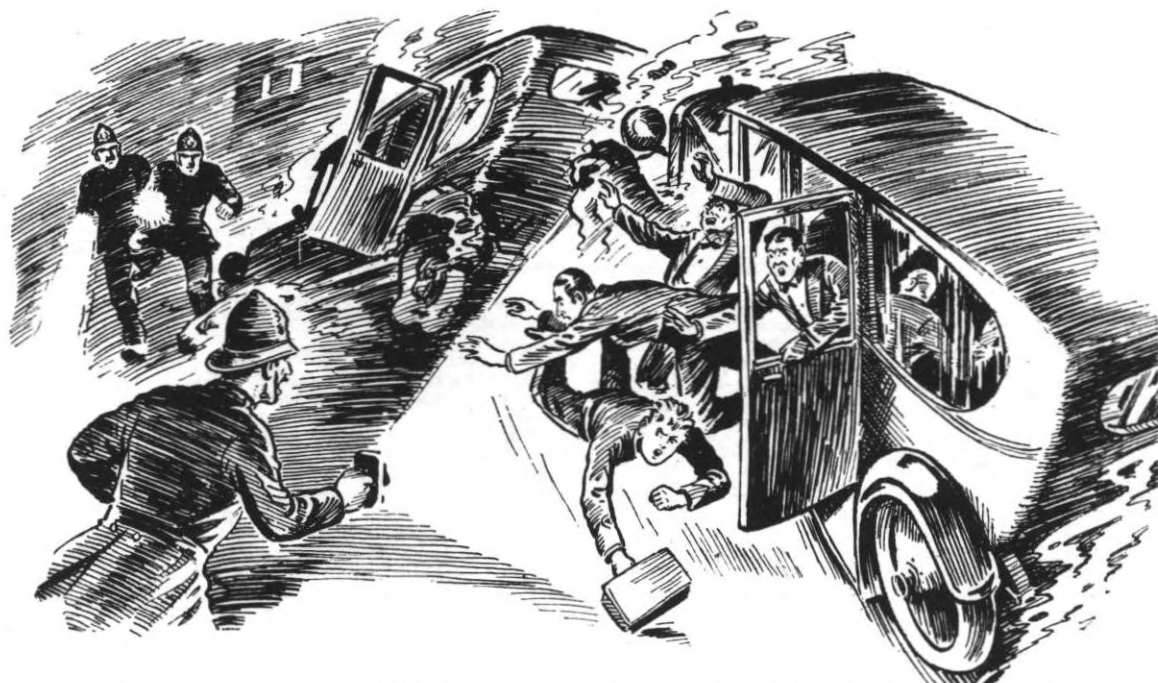
"Snap will be quite safe until we quit, No. 5," he whispered to a liveried footman standing at the doorway. "Nos. 7, 8, and 4 have taken him to a bath-room and locked him in."

"What time have you arranged for the grand coup, chief?" asked No. 5, without moving his lips.

"Midnight."

The Winger shuffled away, just as a young man dragged Detective Thomas' gold watch and chain from his pocket.

No. 5 stood immovable as the Scotland Yard man strode straight for the young man and snatched the watch away from him.



As the crooks jumped from the car, Snap hurled himself in front of them, clutching the case in his hand!

"Come with me, Winger!" he hissed. "You're too smart this time, eh?"

"By Jove, I've won a prize!" shouted the young man jubilantly. "Are you a police officer, sir?"

"Detective-Inspector Thomas, of Scotland Yard, and you know it, Winger!" snapped the officer grimly.

"Jove, that's fine!" laughed the young man. "I say, I've won a prize by being arrested for the Winger! Cheers!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Winger Carries On!

THE detective led the young man into the ante-room. A crush of guests tried to follow, but he thrust them back.

"Clear out of here, you!" he barked at the Winger and two other waiters who were in the room.

"Yes, sir! The Winger, alias Freddy Hale, went from the room.

Outside, the Winger touched his two fellow-waiters.

"Take up your stations in the salon," he whispered. "I'll be ready in two minutes. Now's your chance! Those fools of police will all be in the ante-room with Thomas and that young man."

He cast a cautious glance around, then sped up the stairs to her ladyship's boudoir. In the bed-room next door was the maid. Silently the Winger turned the key in the communicating doors, then darted to a small safe set in the wall.

Swiftly his tapering fingers worked. The lock clicked, and the door came open to a gentle tug. There was not a safe in London the Winger could not open.

"Good!" He looked inside, then tore off his waiter's clothes, leaving himself standing in an immaculate suit of evening clothes.

Swiftly he transferred the jewels to his capacious pockets, then stole from the boudoir.

He had accomplished the deed in seven minutes. The maid in the next room was still humming softly to herself as he sped past the half-open door and down the grand staircase to the main hall.

Everybody was talking at once about the arrest of the young man with the stolen watch and chain.

Straight across to a raised dais walked the Winger, pausing here and there to speak to others of his gang.

He held his hand up for the orchestra to stop, then faced the roomful of people.

"Lady Jargold, ladies and gentlemen,—I have much pleasure in showing myself to you all as the Winger!" he cried, in silky tones.

Conversation ebbed away. A deathly silence fell over the room.

Standing on the dais, the Winger smiled and bowed.

"I regret that I cannot prolong my stay, ladies and gentlemen!" he laughed, and his laughter echoed from end to end of the room. "It is not that I fear the police. They are all locked in the ante-room, and cannot get out. But in the bath-room I have locked a small boy called Snap Fane. He is too sharp even for me sometimes."

Snap Fane, in the bath-room, had managed to get the tablecloth off. Now he was biting savagely at his wrist bonds.

"Gosh, I wonder what's happening?" he gurgled, tearing the rope to shreds. "He'll act quickly now he knows I've recognised him."

His wrists were free. He felt for the electric light switch and snapped it down. No light came.

"Golly, he's cut the wires or fused every light in the house!" he gasped. "That means he's busy now."

Desperately he tore at the knots about his ankles. His finger-nails broke as he dragged the knots apart.

He was free. Frantically he tugged at the door. It was locked on the outside, but over it was a fanlight. Groping about, Snap found a chair and stood it against the door. A minute later he dropped into the corridor outside.

The door of the grand salon was closed, and from inside there came a perfect babel of excited voices.

"All right, Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10?" asked the Winger's voice, close to Snap.

"O.K., chief!" came the answer from several invisible men in the inky-black hall.

They stepped outside, Snap following them. What of the police surrounding the house? He stared right and left.

"Thanks to that idiot, Thomas, the way is clear!" said the Winger, with a carefree chuckle. "Make for the cars, lads! We'll catch the train to Liverpool Street Station. That'll connect us up with the morning boat for Holland."

Snap grinned. Mixing with the crooks, he passed unnoticed, although he actually rubbed against some of them. Out of the gates went the Winger.

A policeman was standing opposite, and he strode across as they all emerged.

"Ah, good-evening, sergeant!" laughed the Winger. "You're too late! Mr. Thomas, of Scotland Yard, has arrested the Winger. Good-night!"

The policeman gave a gasp and strode into the deserted grounds of the big house.

Snap loitered behind, and stepped behind a pillar-box, watching the Winger and his five men go towards two closed cars standing against the kerb.

Locating the one the Winger entered. Snap crept towards it, and reached the rear just as the vehicle started off.

Clinging to the spare wheel which was at the back, Snap was borne away.

He must think of something quickly, for once at Liverpool Street Station, he might lose the Winger in the crowds catching the late trains.

A grin spread over Snap's face. If he could get hold of the swag, he might manage to lure the Winger to him.

Snap whipped out his clasp-knife, and leaned down. Violently he stabbed into the near-side rear tyre.

Bang! The inner tube burst with a noise like the crack of a revolver. The car swerved violently, and nearly crashed into a lamp-post.

Came a grinding of brakes and it stopped dead, one wheel on the pavement.

Toot, toot, toot! The car in front braked to a standstill also.

Snap dropped to the road and wriggled right under the Winger's car, his nose less than a foot from the patent-leather boots of the crook when he sprang from the car.

"What rotten luck, No. 5!" snapped the Winger, flashing his torch on the burst tyre. "Of all the things to happen!"

"We can all crush into our car, chief," said one of the other men, running back.

Snap crept out, reached around the running-board to the vacant front seat where the Winger had been seated.

His fingers closed around a small attache-case. Swiftly he dragged it towards him, then slid with it under the car again and wriggled to the off-side.

"Wait while I get the swag," said the Winger, running from the rear of the car.

Snap crept over the running-board and crouched under the dash.

The Winger jumped into the car and leaned across, groping for the attache-case, his head within six inches of Snap's.

Snap raised his hand with the heavy attache case in it. The Winger heard the movement and turned his face.

Thud! Bang!

Snap got him full in the face with a forward lunge with the case, and a bang on the head as he brought it heavily down again.

Rolling his handkerchief, he stuffed it into the Winger's gaping mouth, then pushed him right under the dash and helped himself to the Winger's jewelled automatic.

"All right, you chaps, drive on and I'll follow!" he called out, slamming the door. "It doesn't matter if I do drive on the runs."

His ruse worked. The other crooks darted for the first car and got aboard. Two came running for the off-side door of Snap's car, but he started her off with a jerk and a rush.

"Get into the other one!" he ordered, imitating the Winger's voice.

A violent swerve took him past the first car. Down went the accelerator, and Snap drove that powerful car at suicidal speed down Leadenhall Street.

The Winger stirred. Snap poked the jewelled automatic down into his face and grinned.

"Sorry, Winger, the game is up!" he snapped.

CHAPTER 3.

A Clean Haul!

IN the light of the dash, Snap could see the horrified look come into the Winger's face; but only for a second, and then the old careless smile took its place.

The Winger tried to speak, but Snap's gag prevented him.

After them came the second car, speeding as hard as Snap was. Out into Aldgate flew Snap, dashed past a policeman who tried to hold him up, and turned down for Aldgate Police Station.

With a screech of brakes he stopped when the second car was very close behind.

Crash! The car struck him behind, hurling his vehicle forward another couple of yards. Glass splintered in both cars, the noise bringing three policemen running from the station, and two others from side streets.

"Now, then, what's the game, young-feller-me-lad?" demanded a sergeant, flashing a torch into Snap's grinning face.

"Just come from Lady Jargold's party, m'lud!" laughed Snap, flinging open the door. "I've got the Winger and five of his gang in this and the car astern. Grab 'em! Look out, they're off!"

The five crooks jumped from the other car, and made to rush away. Snap hurled himself down in front of the lot, and sent them flying on top of him.

"Which is the Winger?" demanded the sergeant, glaring suspiciously at Snap.

Silently Snap pointed to the crook he had at last cornered. "And who're you? Great Scott! It's Snap Fane!" shouted the officer.

Snap nodded, and walked towards the Winger, who was tugging the gag from his mouth.

"I think I win, Winger," he said slowly. "Jingo, I'm almost sorry!"

He handed the attache-case to the sergeant.

"The swag," he said simply, then raced away into the darkness.

London stared, unbelieving, at the headlines in the papers the next morning. Could it be true?

"The Winger-caught! All the stolen jewels recovered. Snap Fane bowls crook out after the Winger has made a fool of Detective-Inspector Thorne, and kept his promise to show himself at Lady Jargold's party—"

Lying in his boat in Barking Creek, Snap Fane flung the paper down and sighed sorrowfully.

"Gee, I'll miss you, Winger!" he muttered.

"Wonder how long the poor old Winger'll get?"

A few days later he knew. The Winger went down for five years.

London felt lonely. They could no longer look forward to the audacious young crook entertaining them with one of his reckless stunts.

Snap Fane agreed wholeheartedly in that.

(Exit the Winger! But he's been a good sportsman! Next week's GEM will contain the first of a great new series of flying yarns. See special announcement on page 24.)

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