

TOM MERRY & CO. CELEBRATE THE "FIFTH"! EXPLOSIVE MIRTH—INSIDE!

The GEM

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No. 1,238. Vol. XL.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

November 7th, 1931.

Published by Howard Baker Press Ltd, 27a Arterberry Road, Wimbledon, London, S. W. 20.





CHAPTER 1.

D'Arcy's Stratagem!

"STOP a minute, you chaps!" Tom Merry was coming out of the School House at St. Jim's with Manners and Lowther. It was a clear, crisp afternoon at the beginning of November, and the Terrible Three were bound for the football field for a little practice.

But they stopped at once as Jack Blake spoke. The

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serious, not to say solemn, expression upon Blake's face impressed them.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry cheerily. "What's the trouble?"

"Oh, he's in the throes of composition," said Monty Lowther. "I can tell that by the gleam in his eye. He's thinking out a new rhyme to present to Fatty Wynn of the New House. I say, Blake—"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Blake. "Something's up!"

"What's up?" asked the Terrible Three together.

"There's something brewing in the New House," said Blake impressively. "Figgins & Co. are getting up some jape to work off on us, and I can't catch on to it. That's what's up."

The Terrible Three were duly impressed. The warfare between the School House and the New House at St. Jim's had been in abeyance for a week or two, but it never slept for long.

"I say, that will want looking into," said Tom Merry anxiously. "Come to think of it, Figgins & Co. have been acting very mysteriously the last day or two. I might have guessed that there was something in the wind from their manner."

"Well, I did guess," said Blake, with a superior smile; "and I've looked into it. The trouble is, though, I can't discover what's on."

"Of course you can't! You couldn't expect to, you know. You've come to just the right party for help, Blake. We'll look into it," said Monty Lowther.

Blake looked fierce. "If you've come out this afternoon to look for a thick ear, Lowther, you—"

"Peace," said Tom Merry, waving his hand paternally. "Peace, my children. When there's a row on with the New House we stand together. That's agreed."

"That was my idea; but if Lowther—"

"If Lowther says another word we'll boil him in oil. Now, what do you think Figgins & Co. are up to, Blake?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake. "It's something up against the School House, I know that; but whether it's against you three, or against us in Study No. 6, I can't tell. My idea is that we should join and see into it, and give those New House bouders the kybosh, anyway."

"And a jolly good idea, too!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"I've done my best to get on to it," said Blake. "I've tried to pump Figgins, but he wasn't saying a word. Then I tried Kerr, but you know what a canny Scot he is; I might as well have tried to pump a brick wall. Then I tried Fatty Wynn. I filled him up with jam-tarts and cream puffs in the tuckshop to make him talk, but he never said a word!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "After I'd blown fifteenpence in feeding him!"

"Horrid!" said Tom Merry. "Ungrateful! Beastly! But what can you expect of those New House wasters?"

"Exactly! Herries had a try, too. He borrowed Taggles' ladder to get a peep into the window of Figgy's study, and they discovered him and poured a can of water over him. It was rotten for Herries."

"Ha, ha, ha! It must have been!"

"Now D'Arcy is trying," went on Blake. "He says he's going into Figgy's study on some excuse or other, and will spy out the lay of the land. But I fancy Figgy will be a bit too cute for him."

"I fancy so, too! Gussy isn't the kind of chap to come it over Figgins. He—"

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy!"

—TOM MERRY ON GUY FAWKES DAY! BATTLE OF RIVAL CHUMS!

PLOT AT ST. JIM'S!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Tom Merry turned his head and beheld the swell of the School House, who had just come up. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked as nobby as ever in his beautifully creased trousers, well-fitting jacket, and fancy waistcoat.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, with a nod. "I hear you're going to heard the lion in his den—that is to say, Figgins & Co. in their study?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy complacently. "I'm going to discovah the dark secret, deah boys. You wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment for a thing like this, you know. You all know what an awfully deep fellow I am."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry, with a wink at his comrades. "We all know how awfully, fearfully, horribly deep you are, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah. I am goin' ovah to see Figgins, you know, in a friently way, and when he lets me into the study—"

"But supposing he doesn't let you in?"

"Oh, he will!" said Arthur Augustus confidently. "You see, I shall knock at the door, and when he says, 'Come in!' I shall go in. If he says, 'Who's there?' I shall say, 'Pwatt,' and he won't know it's me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus looked at the Terrible Three in surprise. "I fail to see the weason of this mewwiment," he remarked. "I wegard this as a weally cute stwatagem."

"But it will be telling a whopper, won't it?"

"Not at all. You know perfectly well, Tom Mewwy, that a gentleman never tells a whoppah. I shall say 'Pwatt!' That is all. I shall not say it is Pwatt. I shall say 'Pwatt!' and Figgys can draw his own conclusions. That is not a whoppah. That is stwatagem!"

"I see. A fine distinction, Gussy."

"Yaas, you see a stwatagem is permitted in warfare, just as a ship will hoist the enemy's flag sometimes, you see. That's a stwatagem, not a whoppah."

"I see. And Figgys is sure to believe that it is Pwatt at the door?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, go ahead, Gussy, and we'll wait for you and see how it turns out," said Tom Merry laughingly.

"I'm goin', but I weally do not see the weason of this wibald laughter," said Arthur Augustus, looking puzzled. "If you can see anythin' w'ong with my stwatagem, I should be glad to hear it."

"Well, it's just possible that Figgins may recognise your voice, you know."

"Not at all, deah boy! I shall be awfully careful to imitate Pwatt's voice."

"Well, if you're awfully careful, the wheeze ought to work all right. Once you get into the study you'll be able to see what's going on, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah! A New House kid told me that Figgins is always keeping his study door locked when he's not in it, and that shows there's somethin' there to give the wheeze away. Pwatt is in the secret, and so is Fwench, I hear."

"But when you get inside they may slay you for bowling them out," suggested Blake.

"I weally am not afwaid of that," said D'Arcy loftily. "I am prepared to suffah for the good of the cause, and it is impos to get information about the enemy's movements without wunnin' some wisk."

"Well, go ahead, then, and good luck!"

"Thank you, I'm goin'. I shall soon be back, deah boys, with full information."

And the swell of the School House marched off towards the New House. He looked back once and saw four juniors laughing heartily.

D'Arcy held his head very high as he walked on.

"I weally do not see the cause of this mewwiment!" he muttered. "The only thing I can thing of is that Tom Mewwy is jealous of my awful cuteness."

He entered the New House.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

It was Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, who asked the question. D'Arcy surveyed him through his eyeglass.

"I have come to speak to Figgins in a friently way, deah boy," he remarked.

Monteith grinned.

"You'll find him at home, I think," he remarked. "Go up, by all means."

"Thank you," said Arthur Augustus languidly. "I will."

He ascended the stairs and stopped at the door of the study occupied by the famous firm of Figgins & Co., the chiefs of the juniors of the New House.

The door was closed, and from within came a faint murmur of voices and the sound of a laugh. There was certainly something going on in

Figgys' study.

Arthur Augustus tapped at the door.

"Hallo!" came Figgins' voice from within.

"Who's there?"

"Pwatt!"

There was an exclamation inside the room.

Some moments elapsed, and then the door was sud-

denly flung open, and three juniors came out with a rush. D'Arcy was hurled right across the passage to the wall opposite, and then the study door was closed again, shutting out the three juniors. It was evident that there was a fourth occupant of the study.

The three who rushed out were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn—the famous Co. They fastened upon the astonished and breathless D'Arcy, and pinned him against the wall.

"Oh, weally," gasped D'Arcy, "I wish you would not be so extremewly wuff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, the long-limbed New House chief. "You—you duffer! You howling ass! You—you lunatic!"

"I object to bein' chawactwised as a lunatic! I object—"

"Ha, ha, ha! If you want to know, Gussy, Pratt is in that study at the present moment."

"Oh, deah!" gasped Gussy. "I—I nevah thought of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! But if he hadn't been there I think we should have recognised your beautiful accent. What do you think, chaps?"

"Rather!" said the grinning Co.

"And now, Gussy, just explain what you mean by coming here and attempting to deceive three innocent youths in this barefaced way!" said Figgins severely.

"I—I—I will explain, if you will welease me. You are cwumplin' my jacket and soilin' my collah!"

"You're going to get worse than that if you don't explain yourself," said Figgins, shaking the swell of the School House. "Now, what do you mean? Expound! Explicate! Do you hear?"

"It—it was stwatagem!" gasped D'Arcy.

"What did you want to get into our study for?"

"I wanted to discovah what you were up to, you see."

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"I see. Blake must have been off his rocker to send a kipper like you on a voyage of discovery. If you had found out anything we should have suffocated you in the cellar and buried you under the floor."

"Oh, weally, Figgins—"

"As it is, I think a less severe punishment will meet the case. If we pour some paraffin on him and set him alight, chaps—"

"Good wheeze!" cried the Co. heartily.

D'Arcy wriggled.

"Figgins, if you are so extwemely bwutal—"

"Oh, I forgot, paraffin costs money, and we can't afford it!" said Figgins. "Perhaps we'd better jump on him, instead."

"I wefuse to be jumped on! I distinctly—"

"You've got no voice in the matter," said Figgins. "Jumping on is the sentence, and we'll carry it out at once. Bring him along to the steps in the passage, kids. We'll lay him on the bottom step, and all jump on him together from the top."

"Splendid idea!"

"I pwotest! You will hurt me, in all pwobability, and you will certainly damage my clothes. I wefuse to be jumped on! Understand, Figgins, that I uttably wefuse to be jumped on!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bring him along!"

The New House trio dragged the vainly resisting swell of the School House along the passage to the steps. There were three rather steep steps at this point—just the place for the execution of Figgins' idea.

"Down with him!" said Figgins.

Arthur Augustus was plumped on the floor.

"Now you know what you've got to do," said Figgins.

"You're to lie still here while we jump on you. Get up, kids!"

Figgins & Co. jumped up the steps, and stood on the top one. In a twinkling D'Arcy was on his feet and racing down the corridor as if for his life.

"Ready, Gussy?" said Figgins. "Why, he's gone! I say, you bounder, come back! We haven't jumped on you yet!"

But Arthur Augustus did not come back.

He was out of the New House like a flash of lightning, and he did not stop running till he joined the School House chums at the door of the other House.

Figgins & Co., laughing loudly, returned to their study.

CHAPTER 2.

Gussy Tries It On!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stopped running at the door of the School House, and stood gasping for breath, too winded to reply at once to the questions of the chums waiting for him there.

"What have you found out?" demanded Blake.

"What is the dread secret?" asked Tom Merry. "It must be something awfully bloodcurdling, to bring you racing back like this to tell us."

"Rather!" said Herries, who had joined the group. "See how excited he is! He's seen something that's made his blood run cold."

"Was there a dead body in the study?" Monty Lowther wanted to know. "Have Figgins & Co. committed a hideous, horrid, awful crime?"

"Did you see any bloodstains?" asked Manners. "Any crimson-hued knives, or meat axes with tell-tale stains on them?"

"Oh, don't wot!" said D'Arcy, recovering his breath at last. "I have had a most unpleasant expewience. My stwatagem was not successful."

"You surprise us."

"Yaas, I was extwemely surprised myself. I had planned it so beastlay carefully, you know. But Pwatt happened to be in the study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I couldn't foresee that. I am not a beastlay pwophet, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins & Co. knew it was I, and they wan out and behaved most wuffly," said Arthur Augustus. "I escaped by the skin of my beastlay teeth, you know. They were goin' to jump on me, but I wan away in time. Pwewwaps, when I come to think of it, they were only jokin', but they were weally vewy wuff and wude."

"Shocking!" said Tom Merry. "Now, kids, as Gussy's stratagem is a ghastly failure, we've got to think of something else. You didn't get a look into the room, even, Gus?"

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"No. Figgins & Co. wan out and Pwatt closed the door behind them."

"Well, that proves, if we needed proof, that there's something going on in the study," said Tom Merry. "I wonder what it is? We're going to discover."

"That's easier said than done," Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah! If an awfully deep fellow like me can't get on to it, Tom Meww, I don't see how you chaps are goin' to succeed," said D'Arcy, shaking his head.

"Well, we are going to try, as well as our limited intellects will allow," said Tom Merry. "And, as a matter of fact, I've got an idea."

"Well, we'll hear it," said Blake condescendingly.

Tom Merry waved his hand round the wide quadrangle.

"Look round, you kids. What strikes you most in our surroundings?"

Blake looked round him.

"Lathom," he said, nodding towards the master of the Fourth Form, who was crossing the quadrangle with his slow, solemn step. "He strikes us most—sometimes with a cane, sometimes with a pointer."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't mean that. What strikes me most is the autumnal state of the trees in the quad—the fact that most of the leaves have been shed."

Blake looked puzzled, and so did the others.

"You generally find trees in autumnal state in the autumn," said Blake. "I can't see anything remarkable in that."

"It would be more remarkable if the trees were thick and green in the beginnin' of Novembah—"

"And I can't see what the state of the trees has to do with the subject in hand."

"Can you ever see anything till I point it out, you kids?" asked Tom Merry. "I draw attention to the leafless state of the trees because that makes it possible to carry out my idea. You will observe that this rotten old casual ward called the New House is built directly opposite the School House, on the other side of the quadrangle. From my study window we cannot see much of it in the summer, because the leaves are so thick on the trees. But in November the case is different. From our study window, dear kids, we can see the window of Figgins' study."

"I dare say you can, but I don't see how you're to make it out at that distance," said Blake. "And if you could be sure of the window, you couldn't see into it, if that's what you're driving at, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry smiled loftily.

"What's the matter with a telescope?" he asked.

The chums gave a simultaneous jump.

"A telescope?"

"Exactly. A telescope in our window would command Figgins' study, now that the leaves are off the trees. Figgins is hygienic, and believes in fresh air, and always has his window open. All the better for us."

"But you're not going to squander a small fortune on a telescope to—"

"Not at all. I'm going to borrow one."

"Ah, I see. If a fellow in the House has a telescope—"

"I don't know one that has. But I know that Herr Schneider has a telescope, and I know that he is going to lend it to me."

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "I say, Tom! You'll never have the nerve to ask Herr Schneider to lend you his telescope?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; I've a lot of nerve, but not quite enough for that," he said. "I'm going to borrow it without asking, you see. He ought to be willing to lend it to us in the interests of the House, and if he isn't that's his look-out."

"Of course," agreed Blake. "That's right enough. But Herr Schneider happens to be in his study, and as I saw him at the window smoking his pipe, he's not likely to shift before dark."

"Unless he's shifted. We can manage it. I know just where he keeps that telescope, and I only want a chance to nip in and collar it."

"Twust me to do that!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You wequiah a deep fellow to work off a twick like that, deah boys. I weally think I had bettah be entwusted with the task of collawin' that telescope."

"Oh, go and drown yourself!" said Blake. "What's your idea, Tom Merry?"

"I wefuse to go and drown myself!" said D'Arcy, before Tom could speak. "And I wegard the suggestion as a wudiculous one! I think I ought to go to Herr Schneider's study and twy to bowwow the telescope—"

"Oh, travel!" said Blake, taking the swell of the School

House by the collar and twisting him round. "There, run away and play—"

"I regard this conduct as most wuffianly—"

"Off you go! Now get on with the washing, Tom Merry!"

D'Arcy surveyed Blake with withering scorn for a moment, and seemed inclined to commit assault and battery on the spot; but then a new idea came into his mind. He smiled broadly, and went into the School House.

"My idea is for one of us to trick Schneider out of his study," explained Tom, "while I nip in and get the telescope. It can be done."

"Good! But, I say, where's that image gone?" exclaimed Herries anxiously. "It's just like the ass to go and try—"

"He'll spoil everything!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Go and see where he's gone."

Blake and Herries ran into the House.

Arthur Augustus was knocking at the door of the German master's study.

"Come away," said Blake, in a tense whisper, "D'Arcy! Gussy! Come away!"

D'Arcy turned his head and smiled scornfully.

"Gussy, old chap, do come! Oh, the horrid ass—he's done it now!"

The German master's voice was heard from within the study:

"Come in, ain't it!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door of the study and went in.

Blake gave a groan.

"He's done it now! The howler—the idiot—the cuckoo! All the fat will be in the fire!"

"We'll boil him in oil when he comes out!" murmured Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three had followed Blake and Herries into the House. They waited in keen anxiety to hear what was said in the study.

The German master was seated by the open window, with his meerschau in his mouth and a book in his beloved Deutsch in his hand.

He looked inquiringly at the swell of the School House as he came in.

"Vell, and vat did you want pefore?" he said.

"I am extremely sorry to disturb you, sir, but could you go to Mr. Wailton's studay for a few minutes?" said D'Arcy.

The German master grunted.

"Ja, I will go," he said reluctantly.

He thought, of course, that D'Arcy had brought a message from Mr. Railton, the master of the School House. He did not want to leave his cosy seat, but he could not disregard a message from the Housemaster.

He rose slowly, laid down his pipe and his book, and crossed to the door with his ponderous step. Then he glanced at D'Arcy.

"You may leave te study, mein poy."

"Certainly, sir," said D'Arcy briskly.

He followed the German master to the door. Herr Schneider went along the passage, and then glanced suspiciously back. D'Arcy had not left the study. Herr Schneider came back to the door. The fact that there were five juniors in the passage, all looking superlatively innocent, added to his suspiciousness.

He looked into the study, and then gave a grunt.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was calmly opening the drawer in his table where the telescope was kept. He did not see the German master bearing down upon him, and was not aware of that worthy's return till he felt a fat finger and thumb closing on his ear. Then he gave a jump and a sudden yell.

"Mein Gott!" said Herr Schneider. "Of all te cheek as never vas after pefore! Vat you look dere for? Vas it tat you vas vish to steal someting mit yourself, ain't it?"

D'Arcy flushed scarlet.

"You insult me, Herr Schneider!" he exclaimed. "That is not a wemark which should pass fwom one gentleman to anothah."

"Mein himmel! I never did hear a poy talk so after! Vat you vas look in tat drawer for, ain't it?"

"I must weally wefuse to answer that question, Herr Schneider, as you have made such an insultin' wemark. I weally—"

"You vas play some drick, perhaps. It vas nearly te



Lowther and Blake both tried to look through the telescope at the same time, with the result that their heads met with terrific force.

Fifth of November, and perhaps you vas put te firework in mein desk?"

"I assure you, sir, that such was not my intention. I merely—"

"It was some peastly mischief, ain't it? I do not pelieve tat Mr. Railton sent you to me mit tat message."

"You will wemembah, sir, that I made no assertion to that effect. I merely said that—"

"Ten Mr. Railton did not send you pefore?"

"N-n-n—" said D'Arcy. "I merely—"

"Den you send me on te chase of te wild duck!" exclaimed Herr Schneider, probably meaning a wild-goose chase. "You—you haf more vat you Engleesh call te cheek tan any oder poy as I nefer knew pefore. Hold out your hand!"

"But weally, Herr Schneider—"

"Hold you tat hand pefore!" thundered Herr Schneider taking up a cane.

"I assuah you that my intention was not diswespectful!"

"Hold out tat hand, ain't it?"

D'Arcy reluctantly obeyed, and he received four cuts, two on either hand, that made him wriggle. Herr Schneider pointed to the door.

"Now you can go," he said. "I teaches you not to play te Fifth November dricks on me, ain't it? Go at vonce, you pad, cheeky poy!"

And Arthur Augustus went.

Blake, Herries, and the Terrible Three glared at him as he came out of the study. He had no sympathy to expect from them.

"You ass!" said Blake witheringly. "You nearly spoilt the lot. If you had mentioned the telescope we'd have skinned you by inches, and boiled you in turpentine!"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard those fewocious threats as supremely widiculous," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am suffewin' considewable pain at the pwesent moment, and so I will not stay to argue with you. My stwatagem did not succeed—"

"Your stratagems are a bit too funny!" growled Blake. "Travel along. We don't want any more of your giddy stratagems."

And the swell of the School House "travelled along," leaving the others to obtain the telescope without his assistance.

CHAPTER 3.

A Startling Discovery I

HERR SCHNEIDER settled down again to his book and his pipe at the open window of his study. He had been disturbed; but the caning of Arthur Augustus had afforded him considerable satisfaction. He had hardly resumed his book, however, when it was suddenly smitten by some missile that nearly knocked it out of his hand.

Herr Schneider started up in wrath. A little stone rolled on the carpet, and he knew by that that some audacious marksman had actually dared to make a target of his book with a catapult.

"Mein Gott!" muttered Herr Schneider. "Tat is vorse tan te cheek of te oder poy after."

He glared from the window into the quadrangle.

There was no one in sight, but from behind the tree near at hand he saw the toe of a boot protruding into view, and he had little doubt that it belonged to the marksman in cover. The German master picked up the cane from his table, and went quietly from the study. He meant to take a summary vengeance upon the audacious marksman in the quad, and to teach him that it was not prudent to play such tricks upon an august German master.

As he went from the House, cane in hand, Tom Merry came lightly along the passage and slipped into the study. To open the drawer of the table and take out the telescope was the work of a moment; and with the coveted prize under his arm, Tom Merry darted out of the study. Up the stairs he went at top speed, and burst into Study No. 10, which was the apartment in the School House occupied by the Terrible Three.

Manners and Lowther were there, with Blake at the window. Blake turned his head as Tom ran in and placed the telescope on the table.

"Got it? Good! Come and take a squint at old Schneider. He's just gone out."

Tom Merry ran to the window and looked out over Lowther's shoulder.

Herr Schneider had descended the steps of the School House and was making towards the tree from behind which the boot protruded. As Tom looked out Herr Schneider was seen to stop and stare, and then bestow a kick upon an ancient boot—which was all he found behind the tree!

The German master's face was a study. He realised that the catapultist was far away, and that the ancient specimen of footgear had been deliberately placed where he found it to trick him into coming out in the vain hope of discovering the delinquent.

"Mein Gott!" muttered Herr Schneider. "Tat was such a cheek as never vas after! Mein himmel! If I vas find tat poy, I make him warm mit himself pefore!"

And the wrathful Teuton returned to the House. He re-entered his study, but the drawer of his table was closed, and he observed nothing unusual. He resumed his book in blissful ignorance of the absence of the telescope.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's done! I've got the telescope, and now to discover what Figgins & Co. are up to over in the New House. Come on, Herries, old man! You did that catapult trick jolly well, and it worked like a charm."

Herries came into the study. Arthur Augustus accompanied him. The swell of St. Jim's was still rubbing his hands and making a rather wry face.

"Better lock the door," said Monty Lowther, "in case we're interrupted. We don't want it to get out that we're on to Figgy's little game."

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"That's so. Lock the door, Herries. Now, let's mount the telescope. It's very thoughtless of Herr Schneider not to have a stand for it; but I suppose he didn't foresee that we might want to use it. A chair and a cushion will do the trick."

Tom Merry pulled out the telescope and placed the large end on a cushion on the window-sill and the other end on the back of a chair. Then he applied his eye to the small end, and adjusted it to his satisfaction, till he could make out the pattern of the brickwork on the front of the New House, and knew that the telescope was right for making an observation at that distance.

"Now for Figgy's window!" he said. "It's not so easy to find it with the glass. Hallo, that looks like it! My hat, Figgy's shaving himself!"

"What?"

"He is. He's got a shaving mirror close to the window, and— Scott! It's not Figgy, it's Mr. Ratcliff! I'm looking at the wrong window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry lifted the telescope to a higher row of windows.

"That's better! Here's one— No, that's not Figgy's window. There's a chap there washing himself!"

"Can't be Figgy's room, then!"

"No; it isn't. Ha, here we are! I know that chivvy anywhere! Great Scott!"

Tom Merry lifted his eye from the telescope in sheer amazement.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed his chums, getting excited. "What are they doing? Committing a giddy murder?"

"Pway let me see," said Arthur Augustus. And, as he happened to be nearest Tom Merry, he dropped his eye to the small end of the telescope. "Deah me, there's a spider's web, or something—"

"That's a twiggery on the trees, ass!"

"Oh, yaas; I see! Now I can see Figgy. Gweat goodness gwacious!"

"What are they doing?"

"Stop!" yelled D'Arcy excitedly, forgetting that Figgins & Co. were on the other side of the quadrangle in the opposite House. "Stop, you howwid bwutes! You'll kill him!"

This exclamation raised the excitement in the study to fever-pitch. D'Arcy was jerked away from the telescope, and Manners put his eye there.

He gave a gasp of horror and amazement.

"The—the demons! They must be mad. Who can it be? They're killing him!"

"Let's look!" shouted Blake and Lowther together.

They dragged Manners away, and put their heads down to look. And as they did so at the same moment their heads came together with a terrific crack.

"Oh, you ass!" roared Blake.

"Oh, you howling lunatic!" yelled Lowther.

"You've nearly broken my head!"

"You've almost busted my coconut!"

"You howling idiot!"

"You raving lunatic!"

Herries put his eye to the telescope. He went quite pale.

"What can it mean? They're murdering him!"

"Here, let me see again!" said Tom Merry; while Blake and Lowther were ruefully rubbing their damaged craniums. "It's some giddy mistake!"

He applied his eye to the glass again. The telescope was bearing full upon the open window of Figgins' study, and the interior of the room was fully displayed to view, especially as a bright fire was burning in the grate.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn could be seen, with perfect plainness, bending over an inanimate form stretched upon the floor of the study. Figgins was kneeling beside the figure, and appeared to be holding it down. And Kerr was handing nails to Fatty Wynn, who—horrible sight!—was driving them into one of the shoulders of the helpless form beneath him, with powerful blows from a hammer. It almost seemed to Tom Merry that he could hear the blows, so perfectly clear was the picture to his eye.

Why did not the helpless victim of the cruelty of Figgins & Co. make some struggle? Why did he submit with such quiet resignation?

Tom Merry burst into a laugh at last.

"I see it now!"

"I saw it!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "It's no laughin' mattab, Tom Mewwy. They are killin' that poor chap, I'm goin' ovah to stop them!"

The swell of the School House was already unlocking the door of the study.

"Stop him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. And Blake quickly jerked D'Arcy back into the room. "It's all right. It's only—"

"Blake, I insist upon your weleasin' me instantly. I wufese to be a party to a howwid cwime! Tom Mewwy, I am surprised at you! I weally—"

"It's all right, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Figgins & Co. are making a dummy, that is all!"

"A—a what?"

"A dummy figure. Fatty Wynn is nailing on the arm, that's all. Have you forgotten that Thursday is the Fifth of November?"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that!"

Blake applied his eye to the telescope, and took a survey of Figgins' study. Then he gave a sniff.

"Well, you are a lot of asses!" he exclaimed. "I should have seen that at once!"

"Pity you didn't then, instead of banging your wooden napper against my head!" growled Monty Lowther. "You've made my brain ache!"

"Oh, rot! You can't make an empty space ache—"

"Dry up!" said Tom Merry, settling down to the telescope again. "Figgy is making an effigy for Guy Fawkes' Day, there's no doubt about that. You know we're allowed to have a bonfire in the quadrangle, and I suppose he's going to burn the thing then. But what does he want to keep it such a giddy secret for? That's curious."

"It's something up against the School House," said Blake, with conviction. "Perhaps he's going to burn some of us in effigy."

"Ah, I shouldn't wonder!"

Tom Merry watched the movements of Figgins & Co. Fatty Wynn, having finished with one shoulder, started on the other, and the blows of the hammer went on. When he had done, the figure was lifted up and stood upon its feet without being held.

It was a curious figure, about the height of a boy of fifteen, and the framework was of wood, for it stood upright unsupported. The body and legs had evidently been padded out, however, for they fitted the clothes that were placed upon the figure—a very old Eton suit. The boots were extremely large, as was necessary, to hold the flat pieces of wood to which the uprights were nailed.

The head of the figure seemed to be made of a stuffed linen bag, the front surface being tight and smooth. It was surmounted by a School House cap.

As Tom Merry watched, Figgins took a paintbrush, and began to daub features upon the face. The features were not beautiful. Then Kerr attached a large placard to the chest of the figure, upon which was the following inscription in cold, black letters:

TOM MERRY
THE GUY OF ST. JIM'S!

Tom Merry clicked his teeth. He knew all now—that was the great wheeze of Figgins & Co. The New House juniors were going to burn the School House chief as a guy on the Fifth of November.

"Hallo! What are you getting waxy about?" asked Blake.

"Look and see!"

Blake looked and grinned. The others looked in turn, and the grinning became general.

"Well, that's not far wrong," Blake remarked, "about Tom Merry being the biggest—"

"Order, Blake!" said Monty Lowther. "No personalities."

"Well, you know, truth is truth, and—"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Twuth is twuth, don't you know, deah boys; and weally, this time Figgins & Co. seem to have stwuck the wight nail on the head."

"No rotting," said Tom Merry. "Whoever it is they select to burn in effigy, the joke is up against the School House, and we've got to nip it in the bud."

"Right-ho!" said Blake heartily. "They're not going to work off a wheeze like that on us."

"We'll collar that giddy guy!" exclaimed Monty Lowther excitedly.

"Bravo!" came in a chorus of approval.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "You can twust me to do that. I will—"

"No, you won't, Gussy!"

"My deah boy, you wequiah a vewy deep stwatagem to—"

"We've had enough of your stratagems. We'll put our

heads together over this and think out a plan," said Tom Merry. "No good raiding the guy now; they'd have time to make another before the Fifth. We've got to collar it, say, on Wednesday night, so as to leave them in the lurch on the Fifth."

"Good! And we'll alter it a bit, and burn Figgins in effigy with his own blessed guy."

"And, meanwhile," said Tom Merry, "we'll make the fireworks ready for the Fifth—"

"Make 'em! How can we make 'em?"

"I know how—I've got a recipe," said Tom Merry. "It comes much cheaper to make them yourself—besides, the fun of it! If you chaps like to stand your whack we'll make enough for the whole family."

"Good! We shall have the pull over Figgins & Co. in that line, too. My hat," said Blake, "we shall have some fun on the Fifth, and no mistake!"

And Blake was right—they did!

CHAPTER 4.

A Curious Capture!

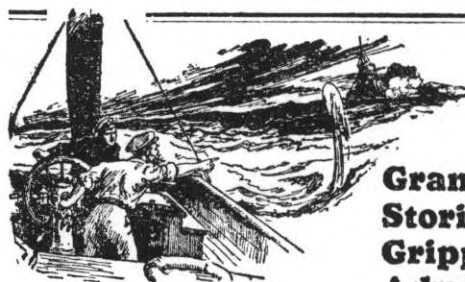
F IGGINS & CO. were in high feather. They had given the finishing touches to their guy, and, though Figgins probably exaggerated when he said it bore a striking resemblance to Tom Merry, there was no doubt that it was really a work of art.

"This is a ripping wheeze!" Figgins remarked on Wednesday, as he and the Co. surveyed their complete handiwork. "Those School House rotters haven't the faintest idea of what is going on, and they won't have any till we burn their giddy chief in effigy in the quadrangle. Then they'll wake up to the fact that we've got ahead of them."

The Co. chuckled gleefully.

"They know that something's on," Kerr remarked. "We know that by their attempts to get into our quarters. And Study No. 6 have left off rowing with the Terrible Three, and they've chummed up with them since Monday, which shows that they're putting their heads together over it. But they won't find out anything."

"Not much!" said Figgins emphatically. "So long as we fasten the window and lock the door whenever we leave the study, nobody can get in and see the dummy. My hat, what a jolly good dummy it is! The face is a bit flat, but



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that can't be helped when it's made of a stuffed bag. But I really think I've got the features like."

"Well, rather like."

"Very much like, I think. If Miss Priscilla Fawcett were here she'd think this was her ward—her darling Tommy. I believe she would really. Anyway, he'll have the placard on his chest big enough, in case he's not recognised."

"But, I say, Figgy," remarked Fatty Wynn, who had been looking thoughtful, "Tom Merry has got ahead of us in one thing."

"What's that, Fatty?"

"He's making his own fireworks; I had it from a kid in the School House. Tom Merry has got a recipe for making fireworks, and he's turning them out by the dozen. Lowther went over to Rylcombe on Monday afternoon and got the stuff."

"Yes, I've heard something about that," Figgins remarked, with a nod. "I was thinking about it. If Tom Merry can make fireworks, so can we."

"We haven't got the recipe."

"We can get it."

"How?"

"My dear kid, Tom Merry is bound to have it about him. We've only got to collar him and go through his pockets and seize the giddy thing," said Figgins coolly.

"Well, that's one way—and all's fair in war," Kerr remarked. "If we can't find the recipe, it would be a good idea to raid their fireworks and collar the lot."

"That wouldn't be easy, but we might do it. We'll try for the recipe first. I rather fancy myself as a manufacturer of dangerous explosives."

And, safely locking up the study to secure that valuable guy, Figgins & Co. left the New House—on the war-path.

Lessons were over for the day, and there was a dim November mist descending upon the quadrangle, though it was not dark yet. Football was impossible, and the juniors were mostly idle.

Figgins sniffed as he went into the open air.

"Beastly rotten this!" he remarked. "Never mind, it's good cover, that's one thing. Come and have a scout round the School House."

They crossed the dim, misty quadrangle.

As luck would have it, Tom Merry was coming out of the gym, and Figgins & Co. caught sight of him as he went towards his own House.

"There's the boulder!" muttered Figgins. "I'll slip ahead in the fog and cut him off from the House, while you kids nail him."

"Right-ho!" said the obedient Co.

Figgins disappeared in the mist. The Co. stalked Tom Merry towards the School House for a minute to give Figgins time, and then made their rush.

Tom Merry turned at the sound of footsteps and caught sight of the Co.

In a moment he was struggling in their grasp.

"Hallo! What's the row?" he exclaimed, as he gave Fatty Wynn a dig in the ribs that fairly doubled up the Falstaff of the New House and laid him, gasping like a porpoise, in the quad. "What's the trouble, you wasters—eh?"

With a neat wrestling trick he dropped Kerr on top of Fatty Wynn. Then he ran on towards the School House before the Co. could rise, suspecting that there were other New House fellows in the vicinity.

He ran right into Figgins, and the long, sinuous arms of the New House chief closed round him and held him fast.

"No, you don't!" said Figgins.

"What's the game?" demanded Tom, as he wrestled with the great Figgins, chest to chest.

"We want that recipe."

"That what? Oh, the firework recipe! You won't get it!"

"We won't?"

They wrestled furiously. Tom Merry would probably have got the better of it, though Figgins was no mean antagonist, but the Co. came panting up, and the School House leader was gripped and plumped upon the ground.

Figgins promptly sat upon his chest.

"Got him!" he said, with a grin. "Now for the giddy recipe. Where is it, Merry?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to. Hold him tight, kids!"

"We've got him. Buck up before any of those School House boulders come up!"

"Rescue!" bawled Tom Merry at the top of his voice.

"Rescue! School House, rescue!"

There was an answering shout from the mist.

"Yaas, wathah! What's the beastly mattah, deah boy?"

"Rescue, School House!"

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"Just a moment—I've dropped my beastly eyeglass."

Figgins chuckled. He was going through Tom Merry's pockets like an expert pickpocket, while the Co. held the struggling School House junior fast.

D'Arcy's slim figure came looming up through the mist.

"Come on, deah boys! It's those New House boulders attackin' our respected friend Mewwy. Come on, and give them the howwid kybosh!"

And D'Arcy, who had heaps of pluck, rushed into the fray.

Fatty Wynn had to let go Tom to defend himself; and then Blake hove in sight and tackled Kerr. But at the same moment Figgins drew his hand from Tom Merry's breast-pocket with a folded paper in it.

It was too misty, and there was no time to read it. But Figgins had no doubt that it was the recipe.

"I've got it!" he shouted. "Come on!"

He jumped up from Tom Merry, while the rest of the Co. tore themselves loose and dashed away into the mist with him.

"After them!" yelled Tom Merry, jumping up excitedly. The School House juniors made instant pursuit, but it was easy for Figgins & Co. to dodge them in the mist.

In a couple of minutes the New House trio were safe inside their own House, chuckling gleefully at their success.

"Done brown," said Figgins, unfolding the paper under the gas in the junior Common-room. "Now for the dark secret."

The next moment he gave a yell.

"What is it?" asked Kerr anxiously. "Isn't it the recipe?"

"Look at it!" howled Figgins.

The Co. looked at the paper, and this is what they read:

"Sir Fatted and His Fayre Ladye.

By Jack Blake.

(Sir Fatted serenades his fayre ladye, and the Baron Bold, her respected pa, hears him a-doing of it.)

"And he heard SSir Fatted sighing: 'LLove, the golden hours are flying,

And your lover true is dying for a clasp, a smile, a kiss. Oh, take pity on my plight, love; fly, oh, fly with me to-night, love!

All is ready for the flight, love; it's a chance you shouldn't miss.

It is true I have no gold, dear, but true love is wealth untold, dear.

Hearts cannot be bought or sold, dear; oh, fly, fly with me, I pray!

And in happiness most utter we will live on bread-and-butter;

So, my darling ducky, flutter to these arms, and we'll away!"

Figgins & Co. exchanged wrathful glances.

"It's another of Blake's poems about you, Wynn!" exclaimed Kerr. "Tom Merry had it in his pocket, and—"

"Figgie has collared it instead of the recipe!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Oh, Figgie!"

"How was I to know that Tom Merry would be carrying this piffle about in his pocket?" growled Figgins. "There wasn't any time to look at it!"

"What a beastly frost!" said Kerr.

"Oh, come along," said Figgins. "We're going to have that recipe, or bust something."

And once more the New House trio sallied forth into the November mist.

CHAPTER 5.

A Mysterious Recipe!

TOM MERRY brushed the dust from his clothes. Half a dozen School House fellows were gathered round him now, indignant and sympathetic.

"What did the boulders want?" asked Blake. "It was Figgie, wasn't it?"

"Yes. They wanted the recipe for making fireworks."

"My hat! You didn't let 'em have it?"

"I couldn't trust it in their hands. They'd be blowing up the New House before they knew what they were doing," said Tom Merry.

"Well, that wouldn't matter much," Monty Lowther remarked. "But they might blow up the School House as well, and that would be serious. But I thought I heard Figgins say he'd got something as I ran up."

"So he had, but he hasn't got the recipe," said Tom Merry.

"I kept that in my waistcoat pocket, and he hadn't felt there. I don't know what he's got, but it's not the recipe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry felt in his pockets. Then he burst into a laugh.

"I know now! It's Blake's poem about Fatty Wynn! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, I say, that's not a laughing matter!" exclaimed Blake. "I wanted to get a few copies printed for the benefit of the New House!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry soothingly, "as long as it wasn't the recipe. I wonder if he'll have another try for it. If I thought so, I'd rig up a little joke on him!"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Monty Lowther at once. "If he wants a recipe, let him have one—it will be a ripping idea."

And the School House chums, discussing it, went into their own House.

Three forms suddenly loomed up in the gloom.

"Hallo! There's Figgins & Co.," whispered Blake.

"They're still on the track. We can work this all right."

They disappeared into the House.

Figgins & Co., unaware that they had been spotted, watched them go.

"The beasts!" said Figgins. "No chance now. But

"Oh, I'm game if you are! I only said it was cold," said Kerr pacifically.

"I knew that without your telling me," said Figgins.

The fact was, Figgins was feeling cold himself. It was easy to plan to lie in wait for Tom Merry, but to stand there shuffling one's feet in the November damp was not cheering. But the patience of the great Figgins had its reward.

There was a sudden scampering of feet in the School House, and a diminutive figure ran down the steps.

Figgins & Co. darted back into the cover of the mist, but not too far to watch. The fugitive who had suddenly darted out of the School House was Curly Gibson, of the Third Form. Figgins observed, with a thrill, that he had a paper clutched in his hand.

The next moment Tom Merry appeared on the top step.

"Curly! Come here, you young rascal! Give me back that paper."

"Shan't!" said Curly, looking back. "I don't see why I shouldn't make crackers as well as you, Tom Merry."

"You young ass, it's dangerous! You'll blow yourself up! Give me that paper, or I'll come out and lam you!"

"Shan't!"

Tom Merry came down the steps, and Curly ran off. He ran fairly into the arms of Figgins & Co., who had the



"Answer me, boy!" shouted the infuriated Mr. Lathom at the dummy. But answer came there none! With a crack the master brought down his cane across the dummy's shoulders, and it fell forward on to the floor!

we're going to stick to it, kids. If we can only get hold of the recipe, there's plenty of time to get down to Rylcombe and get the stuff, and make the fireworks to-night."

"Supposing we can't read the recipe?" suggested Fatty Wynn, a new thought coming into his head.

"Why can't we read it, fathead?"

"Why, you know you can't always read prescriptions," said Fatty. "I've had one that was only for a simple compound, and I couldn't make head or tail of it. It looked like a cryptogram about a buried treasure, or something of that sort."

"Very likely, but a recipe isn't like a prescription. We shall be able to read it all right. If we can't, we'll take it to the chemist's in Rylcombe and get him to translate it into English."

"Yes, we could do that."

"What's the idea?" asked Kerr. "Are we going to watch the School House like a lot of giddy detectives? Jolly cold weather to start in the shadowing business."

"You can go back to the New House if you like, Kerr. I'm going to stick here and watch. Tom Merry is bound to come out again; he's not the fellow to stick indoors because he's had a scrap with us."

paper out of his hand in a second and vanished towards the New House.

Curly set up a yell.

"Come back! Give me that paper!"

"It's too dangerous for a kid to have, and you have no business to steal it, you young rascal," said Figgins, over his shoulder. "Tell Tom Merry we're much obliged."

And Figgins & Co. disappeared.

Tom Merry joined Curly in the mist. Strange to say, the hero of the Shell did not appear at all angry with the Third-Former, but patted him on the shoulder in the most cordial way, and they re-entered the School House together.

"Did I work it all right?" asked Curly, with a grin.

"You did, my son," grinned Tom Merry—"and there's your tanner."

Meanwhile, Figgins & Co. had gone into their study. The second attempt had been crowned with greater success, and this time there was no doubt that they had captured the valuable document. Figgins lighted the gas in the study. He unfolded the paper on the table, and three pairs of eager eyes scanned it.

"The recipe!" exclaimed Figgins gleefully. "Got it at

last. No doubt about it, kids. This is what I call a real stroke of luck, and no mistake."

There was no doubt about it. The document was evidently a recipe, for written upon it in plain letters were the words "Recipe for making fireworks at home." But the recipe itself was slightly puzzling. As Fatty Wynn had prophetically suggested, it bore a resemblance to a doctor's prescription in its unintelligibility.

"Arm. vi. can.—Tor. l. pr.—ab or.—It. fa. prof.—Lav. ve. lit."

Figgins scratched his head.

"It—it's Latin, I should think," he said.

"It's all abbreviations," said Kerr.

"Well, they always use abbreviations in prescriptions," said Fatty Wynn sagely. "It's to prevent you understanding them, and makes 'em look awfully knowing, you know."

"But this isn't a prescription. It's not for a bottle of medicine or lotion."

"I don't see why a recipe shouldn't be made up the same way."

"This one is, that's clear," said Figgins. "It's written in medical language, and very likely Tom Merry got it from a medical man—some chap who dabbled in chemistry, you know. I can't make head or tail of it, but perhaps the firework man in Rylcombe will know it at a glance."

"There don't seem to be any quantities given," Kerr remarked.

"No, that's so—not in figures, at any rate; but these words may contain it all," said Figgins. "I wish we could make 'em out. The word 'can' may mean that we need a can to get the stuff in."

"Then there's 'or,'" said Kerr. "That's French for gold, you know. I suppose we can't want gold as an ingredient."

"Well, there's 'lit,' and that's French for bed," said Fatty Wynn. "We can't want a bed. I don't think any of it's French."

"We'll take it to the gunpowder merchant," said Figgins decisively. "No good trying to puzzle it out ourselves. If he can't understand it we'll go to the chemist's. He's a well-educated chap, and he's bound to know."

"Right-ho!" said the Co.

It was evidently the only thing to be done.

"We shall have time to get back before locking-up, if we hurry," said Figgins, slipping into his coat. "Get your things on!"

The trio were quickly ready. They locked the study up behind them and went out to the gates. As they walked into the lane, and set their faces towards Rylcombe, the form of Tom Merry loomed up from the gloom near the porter's lodge.

The hero of the Shell was chuckling gleefully.

"Gone!" he ejaculated, as he gazed after Figgins & Co.

"Gone! And now for the raid!"

And Tom Merry darted off at top speed for the School House.

CHAPTER 6.

The Enterprising Burglars I

"**H**A, ha, ha!" Six School House juniors stood laughing like hyenas when Kildare put his head out of his study to see what the row was about. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, stared at the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 in amazement. They seemed to be going to have a succession of alarming fits.

"What's the matter with you kids?" demanded Kildare.

"What are you all cackling about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"We were just wondering, Kildare," said Monty Lowther, calming down a little.

"Wondering what?"

"Whether you would lend us your face for a guy. It's the Fifth to-morrow, you know."

Kildare came out of his study, and the juniors decamped. The captain of St. Jim's, who was always good-tempered, laughed as he went back into his room. The six youngsters went off into a fresh roar as they gathered again in Study No. 6, the famous apartment belonging to Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy.

"My one and only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "If this doesn't beat the giddy record! Fancy Figgins & Co. trying to get that recipe made up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"I'd like to see the firework merchant's face when they show it to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But now to business," said Tom. "Figgy may be back in less than an hour, and we've got work to do. This is where the enterprising burglars come in."

"Well, after that barefaced attempt at highway robbery in the quad, Figgy can't grumble at anything," said Blake.

"But how are we going to do it?"

"Yaas, wathah! That's the question, Tom Mewwy. If you chaps care to entrust the mattah to me, I will twy—"

"But we don't!" said Monty Lowther.

"Exactly—we don't!" assented Tom Merry. "We've been rather fed-up with your stratagems, Gussy. We want a rest for a bit."

"Of course, I am not the kind of fellow to put myself forward at all on this or any othah occasion, Tom Mewwy. But I weally think that in a delicate mattah like this a fellow of judgment and sagacity is wequiahed, and undah the circs—"

"Under the circs," said Blake, "you can dry up, Gussy. Go on, Merry! It's no good thinking of going up to Figgy's study the usual way. We might get the door open, but we could never carry the dummy out without attracting attention."

"That's so," agreed Tom Merry. "I've thought of that."

"And as for a ladder up to the window, they're up to that dodge," Manners remarked. "Herries tried that on them."

"But they were in the study then," said Herries. "They're not in it now. That makes all the difference."

"Not so much," said Tom Merry. "I know that they fasten the window on the inside, and it's a patent catch which can't be opened from the outside, like the ordinary kind, with a penknife. Besides, the ladder is a bit too prominent, and would be bound to attract attention, even if Taggles would lend us the ladder at this time."

"He would if we tipped him."

"I don't know. Railton ragged him for letting us have it after dark once before."

"Well, what's the plan?" asked Blake. "If we're not to go in by the door or the window, what's the game? I suppose you don't recommend going down the chimney from the roof?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"No, but I've got a plan, all the same. My idea is to slip into the New House and go up to Figgy's study. That's easy enough, especially in this misty weather."

"But I know they keep the door locked while they're away."

"Yes, but the locks on the doors of the whole corridor are just the same make, same as in this House. I could easily sneak a key from one of the other doors."

The juniors gazed at Tom Merry in admiration.

"Was Charles Peace a relation of yours?" asked Blake. "I suppose Bill Sikes was a connection. You're about the best burglar for your age that I have ever heard of."

"It's a good idea," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! I am weally surprised at Tom Mewwy's pickin' on such a weally wippin' ideah. I nevah thought of that myself, deah boys."

"But when you're in the study," said Blake, "as I said before, you can't carry out a life-sized dummy without alarming the whole House. You can't expect to."

"I know that. But once I'm in the study there's nothing to prevent me from opening the window on the inside and letting the dummy down to you fellows with a rope."

"Bravo!" shouted the juniors in chorus.

It was a really clever plan. If admittance could once be safely gained to Figgy's study all was plain sailing.

"I admit it's a good plan," said Blake. "I'm surprised at you fellows thinking of it."

"Yaas, wathah! It is weally extwemely surpwise!"

"The sooner the quicker," Monty Lowther remarked. "It may take time, and Figgins & Co. won't be very long. Let's get to business."

"Good! I'll get the rope from our study," said Tom Merry. "and then we'll be off."

It did not take Tom Merry long to fetch the rope. He came back with it wound round his body under his jacket, and quite unnoticeable.

The School House six sallied forth. The mist was thickening, and although it was not yet quite dark, it was as gloomy as night in the quadrangle.

Five juniors remained waiting in the shadow of the New House wall, under the window of Figgy's study, far above. Tom Merry was to make the venture in the New House, in spite of the misgivings of Arthur Augustus.

"I weally wish you would leave this mattah in my hands, Tom Mewwy," the swell of the School House urged. "I am not a fellow to bwag, but I weally considah the mattah would be safah in my hands. I do, weally!"

(Continued on page 12.)

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a splendid long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by popular Martin Clifford. Potts, the Office-boy, is on "parade," too; also, you will find a special "Footer" feature dealing with Tom Merry & Co.'s efforts to win a shield presented by Lord Eastwood. To win this spanking shield Tom and his merry men have got to become the champion side in the League. In this League are doughty warriors from Greyfriars, St. Frank's, Rookwood, Abbottsford, Highcliffe, etc., and each eleven is going all out to win the coveted trophy. How St. Jim's get on in both their home and away matches will be told to you each week by our special reporter. Although

"NO CATCH FOR MANDERS!"

is the title of Owen Conquest's tip-top complete story of Rookwood School for next week, it will be a great catch for you! Don't miss it! Keep an eye open, too, for more news from the notebook.

RAINING FIRE!

"That's an airship—that was!"

People in New York gazing up into the heavens some weeks ago, saw the silvery outline of the Naval airship *Los Angeles*: then of a sudden it disappeared. The vanishing trick was due to the work of an aeroplane, which had thrown a smoke screen round its "big brother." While the New Yorkers were still marvelling at the sudden disappearance, someone exclaimed that it was raining. So it seemed, at first, for burning particles were dropping out of the clouds, stinging the faces of the sightseers and burning small holes in their clothes. Here was a large mystery, and it wanted some solving! Motorists complained that the roofs of their cars had been burnt, whilst some school children watching a football

match were suddenly overcome by fits of coughing, and had to retreat indoors for shelter. Then the chemists got on the track of the phenomena. It appears that the smoke screen set up by the plane was formed of titanium tetrachloride which, coming in contact with the moisture in the atmosphere, produced hydrochloric acid. The explanation satisfied the inquisitive folk, but the crew of the *Los Angeles* must have thanked their lucky stars that the burning acid hadn't touched the envelope of their airship!

THE SAFETY SUIT!

He couldn't swim a stroke, the sea was mighty rough, but still he smiled. He was still smiling when the crew chucked him overboard. For one brief second or so he disappeared from sight, then up he popped again—still smiling! He was wearing the very latest life-saving suit, made of rubber, which allows its wearer to stand upright in the roughest water and float like a piece of cork. The feet of this remarkable suit—the invention of a San Francisco man—are weighted, and it is claimed that there is absolutely no fear of drowning.

THE HELICOSTAT.

It's just like travelling up and down in a lift, is the description applied to a mixture of airship and aeroplane which has just been tested in Paris recently. This serious rival to the autogiro, or helicopter, can rise vertically, just as if it were being hauled up on a cable, and can make a perfect landing in the same area from which it started. On the test flight it rose to a height of 1,000 feet in four minutes. If this latest "conquerer of the air," called a helicostat, emerges from a speed and all-weather test with the same amount of success, the day will soon dawn when motor-cars will be scrapped, and we shall all keep baby planes in our back gardens!

SOME TREE!

Imagine enough wood to build forty houses each containing five rooms. Better still, let your fancy conjure up 30,000,000,000 matches. Then you've got some idea of the huge bulk of one of the giant trees in Sequoia National Park. The circumference of this giant is eighty-eight feet, its height is two hundred and seventy-two feet, and

if it were cut down and carted away, thirty hefty railway trucks would be required for the moving job! Engineers have been paying a great deal of attention to this particular tree just lately, and after various calculations have satisfied themselves that it is the largest tree in the world.

GOLD FEVER!

The lure of gold has tempted many a fellow to pack up his job, stake a claim, and work his fingers to the bone in order to find the precious metal. Success in a speculation of this sort "comes off" now and again, and disillusioned gold-seekers number many thousands. Still, the news went round in Las Vegas, in Nevada, the other day, that someone had struck gold, and immediately the roads leading to the scene of the find—a hidden forest in a desert mountain range, forty-eight miles away—were packed with prospectors, determined to try their luck. Already a town is being planned in the gold field, and it is certain that restaurant keepers will make their fortunes whatever the fate of the miners, for the gold field is a wilderness—miles away from food and water, without which no prospector—no matter how lucky he is—can carry on. One Vegas restaurant-keeper who is preparing to open up business in the gold field reckons that he will get twelve shillings and sixpence approximately for every dish of ham and eggs he serves up to the hungry gold-seekers. To labour in conditions like these will test the pockets as well as the hardness of the most determined prospector to the full. In a manner of speaking, they will be eating gold as well as digging for it!

BOW-WOW!

"Fido! Show the ticket-collector your season!" This command may soon be a commonplace one if the fashion recently set by a dog owner catches on. The dog in this case travels with its master up and down the line every day, and is the proud owner of a season ticket. The railway officials have not yet made it known how they would treat a canine traveller whose season ticket was out of date, or what they would do if the dog swallowed his ticket or licked the date off it, or bit the ticket inspector, or . . . ? ! !

YOUR EDITOR.

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THE GUNPOWDER PLOT AT ST. JIM'S!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Tom Merry ungratefully. And the hero of the Shell disappeared in the gloom. The five juniors remained waiting under the window. Would he succeed?

Three minutes elapsed—four, five.

"I am afraid he has made a feahful muck of it, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "You would have done bettah to entwist the mattah to me."

"Hark!" said Manners.

He had caught a sound from above. They strained their eyes upwards. They could barely make out Figgins' window-sill in the mist. A dim object came into view over the edge of the sill, and they knew it was the head of Tom Merry.

"Below there!"

It was a shrill whisper from the hero of the Shell.

"Right-ho!" said Blake cautiously. "Have you managed it all right?"

"Yes. There was no one about. I got the key of the next study, and I've locked myself in. Look out for the dummy."

"We're looking out, but it's jolly cold. Buck up!"

There was a long wait. The juniors shivered below in the mist, while faint sounds could be heard proceeding from the study above. Presently a dim form appeared above the window-sill, and what looked remarkably like a boy swung out.

"Look out!" muttered Lowther. "It's coming!"

The figure swung down the wall, past the lower windows, and swiftly reached the juniors waiting at the bottom. Lowther and Manners seized it, and Blake untied the rope. Tom Merry looked down from the study window.

"Got it all right?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here's the rope, Merry. Get out as quick as you can."

"Right-ho! You cut off with the dummy."

Tom Merry hauled in the rope and closed the window. He fastened it again as he had found it, and let himself out of the study and locked the door behind him. Then he returned the key to the door and hastily descended the stairs.

He met Pratt face to face. The New House junior was coming up, and he stopped and stared at Tom Merry in amazement.

"Hallo, you School House boulder! What are you doing over here?"

"Oh, just having a look round, Pratty!" said Tom Merry. "Let me pass, please."

"Wait a bit. I'm going to see if—"

"Sorry I can't wait!"

Tom Merry seized Pratt and twisted him aside and left him sitting and gasping on the stairs. Before Pratt had finished gasping Tom Merry was gone.

"The—the rotter!" gasped Pratt. "I wonder what he's been up to? No good, I'll be bound. I'll go and have a squint at Figgy's study."

He went up to Figgy's study and tried the door. It was

safely locked, and Pratt was reassured. But whether he discovered the truth or not, Tom Merry cared little as he sprinted across the quadrangle in the mist. The prize was safe.

CHAPTER 7.

Mr. Lathom is Ignored!

MEANWHILE, the School House juniors had lost no time. Blake and Lowther lifted the dummy, taking one end each, and hurried off with it, Herries, Manners, and D'Arcy following. To get the prize across the quadrangle in the mist was not difficult, but to carry it to a study in the School House for concealment was not so easy.

Manners scouted in the Hall, and announced that the coast was clear, and then Blake and Lowther rushed the dummy into the House and up the stairs.

"Come on to our study!" said Lowther, as Blake halted.

"Better put it in Study No. 6," said Blake.

"Rot! Tom Merry will expect to find it in our room."

"Come on!"

"Tom Merry can expect what he likes. I'm going to—"

"No, you're not!"

"Yes, I am!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here! I—"

The dispute waxed warm. It was really only when in warfare with Figgins & Co. that the peace could only be kept between Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three. Each party claimed to be the head of the School House, and the question was never satisfactorily settled.

The wrangle was growing hot when a figure in mortar-board and gown came up the passage. It was Mr. Lathom, the short-sighted, spectacled master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

In a moment the dispute ceased. Blake and Lowther had set the figure upon its wooden feet in the dusky passage while they argued. At the sight of the master, who had evidently been attracted to the spot by the dispute, for he had a cane in his hand, the juniors ceased to wrangle, and fled precipitately.

They scampered along the passage, and Mr. Lathom quickened his steps as he heard them go.

The Form master stopped at the sight of the figure.

It has already been said that the dummy was life-sized, and padded to fill out an old Eton suit. The dusk of the misty passage it was not surprising that the short-sighted Form master imagined that he had one of the School House boys before him. The figure was standing erect, and seemed to be staring straight at the Form master.

"What is all this noise about?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom angrily. "How dare you make such a disturbance in the passage!"

There was no reply. The Form master peered at the silent form.

"Answer me!" he exclaimed. "Are you deaf? How dare you remain silent when I am speaking to you!"

Still no reply.

Mr. Lathom's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He was one of the best-tempered of the masters at St. Jim's, but this insolence on the part of a boy was enough to ruffle

Potts, the Office Boy!



the serene temper. The fellow was staring straight at him, and refused to reply.

"Boy, will you answer me? What is your name? What Form do you belong to?"

Still the same chilling silence.

The Form master was amazed. He had never been treated with such disrespect before, and he could not understand it.

"For the last time!" he thundered, switching the cane in the air. "Answer me!"

The figure refused to answer.

At the corner of the passage five juniors were hugging themselves with silent glee.

"He thinks it's a giddy kid," chuckled Blake. "Let's see the fun. My hat! This beats cock-fighting! Who's that coming?"

"It's Tom Merry!" murmured Lowther, looking behind him to the stairs.

"Stop him; he'll spoil the fun!"

Tom Merry was stopped as he was about to pass the group. A few words acquainted him with the state of affairs, and he joyfully entered into the joke.

The voice of Mr. Lathom could be heard in raised tones of anger. It was seldom that the master of the Fourth lost his temper, but he had certainly lost it now.

"Very well," he thundered, "since you choose to display this unparalleled insolence. I have no alternative but to inflict a proper punishment. Hold out your hand, sir!"

"My word!" murmured Blake. "I can see the dummy doing it!"

Mr. Lathom gasped with wrath. The figure did not hold out its hand, nor did it vouchsafe one word in reply to the excited Form master. It simply maintained that steady stare, apparently of contempt, which had already exasperated the Form master.

"Hold out your hand!" roared Mr. Lathom.

Not a movement did the figure make. That was not very surprising to the juniors, who knew the facts, but it astonished Mr. Lathom. He was amazed, scandalised, by this direct disobedience. The cane swished up into the air.

"You compel me," said Mr. Lathom, in concentrated tones of anger—"you compel me to administer a more severe punishment than I should otherwise inflict. If you do not immediately hold out your hand, I shall thrash you soundly!"

Still the hand was not held out.

Mr. Lathom waited a moment, and then his sorely tried patience was exhausted. He brought the cane down with a terrific thwack across the shoulders of the silent form.

The figure gave a lurch, and fell upon its face.

Thwack, thwack! went the cane across the most exposed part of it.

"Now, sir!" said Mr. Lathom. "Now that I have punished you for your astounding insolence, you can rise! Get up at once, sir!"

To his exasperation, no notice was taken of his command. The fallen form lay quite still, and Mr. Lathom stared at it with amazement, mingled now with alarm.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Do you hear? Get up!"

No reply—no movement!

"My boy! Is it possible he is in a fit—that he is ill? That must be the explanation—or else the fall has stunned him! Dear me, if I have been too severe, I shall never forgive myself! My dear lad, get up immediately, and I will pardon you."

The "dear lad" did not take advantage of that generous offer. He remained prone and silent, and fear deepened in Mr. Lathom's heart.

There was something awful in the stillness of that prone form in the dusky passage. Was it a fit, or a faint, or—or—Mr. Lathom's heart beat as the dread word formed in his mind—was the wretched boy dead? It really seemed like it.

He trembled, and stooped to feel the heart of the fallen one; but it could not be done without turning him over, and as soon as he touched the body Mr. Lathom withdrew his hand quickly. Even that momentary touch showed him that there was none of the warmth in the body that there should have been in a living form.

"Good-goodness gracious! I—I dare not touch him! I—I had better get help."

The little Form master scuttled off towards Mr. Railton's study, his gown trailing behind him. Six juniors threw themselves upon the linoleum and wept with mirth.

"Oh, my only beloved Aunt Jane!" gasped Tom Merry. "This is too funny for anything! I say, we must get the dead body hidden before he comes back!"

He ran swiftly along the passage, Monty Lowther at his heels. They picked up the figure and raced it along into the study.

"Here, I say, it's to go in Study No. 6!" called out Blake, hot in pursuit.

"Rats!" was Tom Merry's cheerful reply. And the dummy was in Study No. 10 before the Fourth Form chums could get near it.

The followed the Terrible Three in.

"Look here, Tom Merry. I tell you—"

"Dry up! There's Lathom coming back. We must get the thing out of sight."

The dummy was hastily shoved under the table. His feet stuck out, but Tom Merry set a chair over them. The door was left ajar, and the juniors crowded round it to listen. It was quite possible that Mr. Railton would look into the study, knowing of old whence most of the mischief in the School House proceeded.

The Housemaster was looking both concerned and sceptical as he followed Mr. Lathom along the passage. He held a lamp in his hand.

"This is the spot, I think!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Believe me, Mr. Railton, I did not strike with the cane with sufficient force to really injure the most delicate boy. He must have been in a fit before I— But where is he?"

"I do not see him," said the Housemaster, flashing the light of the lamp to and fro. "Are you sure this is the right spot, Mr. Lathom?"

"I—I think so. He fell to the ground, with a hollow thud, like a—a— Dear me, he seems to be gone! Let us look farther along!"

"By all means," said Mr. Railton, having no further doubt in his mind that the master of the Fourth had been the victim of some kind of practical joke. "I do not think you need alarm yourself, Mr. Lathom."

"But—but the unfortunate boy neither moved nor spoke," said Mr. Lathom, in great agitation. "I mistook his silence for insolence, or I should not have caned him. Now I know he must have been ill—in some kind of a trance, perhaps. Dear me, where can he be gone to? I am sure we have come too far, yet we have not seen him."

He peered into every corner of the passage through his

The Sentry!



big spectacles. The Housemaster, with his keener sight, took the whole place in at a glance.

"Perhaps someone else has come along and removed the body," murmured Mr. Lathom. "Shall we inquire? It is terrible, but we had better inquire."

"Yes, we will inquire," said Mr. Railton dryly. "I see by the light that Tom Merry's study door is slightly open. We will inquire there."

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry, as the words reached the ears of the juniors. "What asses to give ourselves away!"

"Yaas, wathah!" D'Arcy hastily closed the door. "Now—"

"You ass! You lunatic! Now you've shown him that we were watching there, and—"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Image! Ass! They're coming, kids! Get hold of some pens, books, papers—anything! We must be frightfully hard at work!"

The six juniors were round the table in no time, slaving away at prep in a really industrious and meritorious manner.

CHAPTER 8.

Spoofed!

TO return to Figgins & Co. Puzzled as they were by the mysterious recipe, they were in high good humour as they strode along the lane to Rylcombe.

"We've made a giddy scoop this time!" Figgins remarked complacently. "Dame Taggles has the school shop filled with fireworks for to-morrow, but they're at high prices, and I calculate we shall save a lot by making them ourselves. Of course, if the recipe doesn't work out all right, we can fall back on the school shop."

They arrived at the shop in Rylcombe, where a grand display of combustibles was made for the approaching Fifth, and where Figgins had discovered that Tom Merry obtained his supplies for the manufacture of fireworks.

They marched in, and Mr. Smithers, the proprietor, nodded pleasantly, anticipating a good sale of fireworks.

Figgins handed him the recipe.

"I want some of those things," he remarked casually, as if he understood it all perfectly. "Just let me have them, will you? About the same quantities you supplied Tom Merry with."

Mr. Smithers looked at the recipe, and then looked at Figgins, and then at the recipe again. He puckered his brows in a puzzled way.

"I suppose you gentlemen are having a little joke with me?" he remarked.

"Certainly not," said Figgins. "I really don't see why you should think so. We want some of that stuff for making fireworks."

Mr. Smithers smiled.

"Is—is this a recipe for making fireworks?" he asked.

"Of course it is!"

"And do you young gentlemen understand it?"

"My dear chap, I suppose you understand it, as you deal in the things," said Figgins loftily. "I suppose you don't want us to teach you your business, do you?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Smithers, scratching his head. "But I'm blessed if I understand this recipe. If any fellow gave you this and said it was a recipe for making fireworks, I'd say he must have been 'aving a little joke with you!"

"Look here, didn't Tom Merry have some stuff here for making fireworks?"

"That he did."

"Well, this is the recipe," said Figgins.

"I never saw any recipe," said Mr. Smithers. "I sold him the stuff he asked for; but he told me he was getting some of the things down straight from London, so as to keep the secret."

"Yes, I heard that from Lowther, too," said Fatty Wynn.

"Then you can't help us make the beastly thing out?" said Figgins, somewhat disappointed.

"No, I'm sorry I can't!" grinned Mr. Smithers. "I say, are you certain you haven't got hold of a doctor's prescription by mistake?"

"Of course I am!" growled Figgins.

"Well, that's what it looks like. If Master Merry gave you this as a recipe he must have been 'aving you on, that's all I can say."

"But he didn't give it to us; we collared it."

Mr. Smithers scratched his head again, looking extremely puzzled.

"Well, I can't understand it, that's all I can say, young gentlemen. If you take it to the chemist's he may be able to tell you whether it's a prescription or not."

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"Thanks! I think I will," said Figgins.

The New House trio walked rather disconsolately out of the shop. They left Mr. Smithers laughing, convinced that they were the victims of a joke of Tom Merry's, as Figgins wrathfully remarked.

"The chemist may be able to make it out," Kerr suggested hopefully. "After all, these may be the scientific names of some chemicals we've never heard of, you know, and the chemist may know them at a glance."

"We'll try, anyway," said Figgins, but less hopefully. They soon arrived at the chemist's.

Mr. Pilling knew them well, and he was very polite. He saw the paper in Figgins' hand.

"You want that prescription made up?" he asked at once.

"Not exactly, Mr. Pilling," stammered Figgins. "It—it isn't a prescription, it's a recipe. I want some of the chemicals down there."

He handed the paper to the chemist.

Mr. Pilling looked as surprised and puzzled as Mr. Smithers had looked, and evidently could make neither head nor tail of the mysterious document.

"Recipe for making fireworks at home," he murmured. "May I ask, Master Figgins, where you got this peculiar recipe?"

"We got it from Tom Merry, sir. No, it isn't a joke of his. We collared it against his will, and he was wild. He was keeping it a secret."

"He needn't have minded," said Mr. Pilling, "for I'll guarantee that no one could possibly discover the secret from this."



Figgins & Co. looked at one another.

"But can't you read it, sir?" said Figgins. "You know Latin."

"Yes, I know Latin, but—"

"And you know the abbreviations used in chemistry—"

"Yes, of course I do; but they're nothing like this. This has nothing to do with chemistry."

Figgins' face fell.

"But can't you make anything out of it at all, Mr. Pilling?"

"I'm afraid not. Wait a minute, though. There seems to be something familiar in it," said Mr. Pilling, puckering his brow over the paper. "I have seen something like it before, somehow, but it seems broken and disconnected here."

He gazed and gazed at the mysterious recipe.

Figgins & Co. exchanged more hopeful glances. It was evident that the chemist was making something of it at last. They watched his face with keen anxiety. Were they on the brink of a sudden and startling discovery?

Sudden and startling, indeed, the next development was.

Mr. Pilling lifted his head from the paper, and burst into

a roar of laughter that shook the coloured bottles on the shelf.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

Figgins & Co. stared at him.

"If you wouldn't mind telling us what you're laughing at, Mr. Pilling," said Figgins stiffly, "we should be very much obliged."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you read the recipe, sir?"

"Yes—ha, ha, ha! I have read it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then tell us what it means, please."

"Certainly!"

Mr. Pilling laid the paper flat on the counter, so that the juniors could follow it with him,



The New House Trio had entered the lions' den and they had to pay for it—they were hustled and jostled out of the School House in a most undignified manner!

"Look here: Arm. vi. can.—Tro. q. pr.—ab or.—It. fa. prof.—Lav. ve. lit. I thought there was something familiar-looking about the beginning of it. So you don't recognise it?"

"I—us—no, we don't!" said Figgins & Co. in unison.

"Then you've forgotten your first book of Virgil," said Mr. Pilling, laughing. "I suppose you are a long way beyond it, eh?"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Figgins. "But what on earth has the first book of Virgil got to do with this recipe for making fireworks?"

"A great deal, as it happens. If you add a syllable to each of the syllables here, you will find that this wonderful recipe is composed of the first two lines of the *Aeneid*," said Mr. Pilling, laughing till the tears ran down his cheek.

"What?" yelled Figgins & Co.

"Arma virumque cano, Trojae qui primus ab oris Italiam fato profungus, Lavinaeque venit Littora."

Mr. Pilling could hardly quote the lines for laughing. Figgins & Co. scanned the mysterious recipe as he recited them, and, of course, the whole thing was clear in a flash. The scene with Curly Gibson, as Figgins ruefully realised

now, must have been got up for their especial benefit, and the recipe was a "spoof" one, deliberately concocted in the School House to send them off on a wild-goose chase.

By taking the first letters or syllables of the words in the old familiar lines that begin Virgil's famous poem, 'Tom Merry had succeeded in producing a mysterious looking document which was perfectly simple as soon as the clue was supplied.

The whole thing was a hoax.

"Spoofed!" groaned Figgins & Co. in chorus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the jovial Mr. Pilling. "I can translate that for you now, if you please, young gentlemen. 'Arms and the man I sing, who first from the walls of Troy, a fated fugitive, came to Italy, and the Lavinian shores.' But I'm afraid I can't—ha, ha, ha!—supply you with any chemicals to fit a recipe like that."

The feelings of Figgins & Co. were too deep for words.

Figg put the famous recipe in his pocket, and the New House trio marched out of the shop. They left Mr. Pilling almost in hysterics.

"Done!" said Figgins gloomily.

"Dished!" said Kerr.

"Diddled!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Let's get back to St. Jim's," said Figgins desperately.

"I say, it's just occurred to me that Tom Merry may have had a double motive for playing off this jape on us. Those School House kids may be up to some game while we're away. Of course, they can't get into our study, but still—"

The suggestion was enough to strike dismay to the hearts of the Co.

There was no telling what Tom Merry might be up to, and the discovery that they had been "spoofed" into leaving St. Jim's caused them a deep uneasiness as to what might be going on in their absence.

"Let's get back," said Kerr briefly.

"Come on, then!"

And the three juniors started for the school again, sprinting along the misty lane as if they were on the cinder path.

CHAPTER 9.

The Manufacturers.

MR. RAILTON looked into Tom Merry's study.

He smiled grimly as he noted six juniors crowded round the table, working away like boys possessed.

"Ahem!" said the Housemaster. "I'm sorry to interrupt you if you are so busy."

Tom Merry looked round, apparently becoming aware of the Housemaster's presence for the first time.

He rose to his feet respectfully, and the other juniors followed his example.

"Don't mention it, sir," said Tom Merry. "Always at your service, sir."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Have any of you seen anything of—ahem!—is there something under your table, Merry?"

"Under my table, sir? No, certainly not."

"Yet I am convinced that I can see a pair of feet protruding," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I really think you must be mistaken, Merry."

Mr. Lathom peered through his spectacles, and discerned the feet of the figure.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "You are quite right, Mr. Railton. There is someone concealed under the table. I begin to think that I have been the victim of a trick."

The Housemaster smiled.

"Merry, who is that?"

"Oh, that, sir!" said Tom Merry, appearing to comprehend at last. "That's nothing, sir, only our effigy, sir—a guy, sir."

"Oh, a guy! Let me see it."

"Certainly, sir! Lend a hand, Monty!"

Tom Merry and Lowther pulled the effigy out from under the table, since there was no help for it. It was brought out into full view.

Mr. Railton surveyed it with a grim smile, and then looked at the master of the Fourth. The juniors preserved perfectly solemn faces.

"Does that resemble the boy you saw in the passage, Mr. Lathom?"

The Form master's face was a study.

"Ye-es, to some extent I must say it does," he stammered. "I could not make out the face, as the light was so bad. I really think—"

"Now, Merry, did you place that effigy in the passage to deceive Mr. Lathom?"

"No, sir!" said Tom promptly.

"Mind what you say, Merry. I do not think you would tell a lie."

"I never would, sir," said Tom proudly. "It was a mistake. I could tell you how it arose, sir, if you like."

"Pray do so, Merry!" said the Housemaster, smiling.

"Some of the chaps were bringing the guy through to the study, sir," said Tom frankly, but without specifying the "chaps." "They heard Mr. Lathom coming, and bolted. They left it standing there. I think Mr. Lathom must have mistaken it for a boy."

"Ahem—er—undoubtedly! I think that must be the case, Mr. Lathom."

"I came up the passage," said the Form master, who had turned very red, "because I heard a great noise of disputing, and I am not surprised that the disputants—er—fled. It is possible that I—er—made this mistake, but I cannot acquit the juniors of deliberately allowing me to do so, and, of course, allowing me to remain in my error."

The Housemaster tried not to laugh. He realised very keenly how utterly absurd the scene must have been, and understood quite well that the juniors naturally had no desire to spoil the fun.

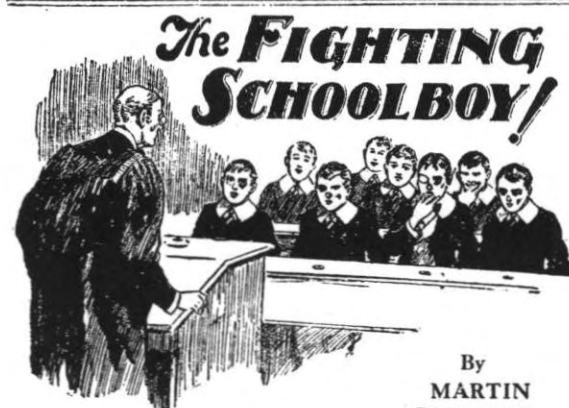
"We are very sorry, sir," said Tom Merry penitently. "We hurried the thing into the study so as to get it out of the way. We thought that the best we could do under the circumstances, sir."

"I have no doubt you did," said Mr. Railton severely. "As the matter appears to have been one of inadvertence, Mr. Lathom, I think we might overlook it."

"Certainly!" said the master of the Fourth, recovering his good-humour. "Boys will be boys, and young rascals will be young rascals. Don't do it again, my lads, that's all!"

"Certainly not!" chorused the six, in great relief.

The masters retired the room. The juniors set the guy upon its feet, and executed an impromptu war dance round it.



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"Well rid of that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he stopped breathless. "Some masters would have given us fifty lines each and confiscated the guy."

"That's not Railton's sort," said Blake. "He's good stuff, a bit different from old Ratty, of the New House, kids."

"Rather! And Lathom's a good little ass, too!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wonder, deah boys, if Figgins & Co. have discovered their gweat loss yet," D'Arcy remarked. "We shall have to see they don't wecaptuah the dummynay."

"We're going to keep solemn watch and ward over it," said Tom Merry. "One or two of us, at least, must always keep in the study. The guy mustn't be left alone for a single moment. It's a jolly good one, and will burn well to-morrow at the bonfire, with some paraffin chucked over it. But we must make a new placard."

"What did you do with the one Figgy had on it?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, I left that in Figgy's study, with a message of thanks written across it. Give me that sheet of cardboard, Monty, and I'll draw up a new one. Then we'll get on with making the fireworks."

Tom Merry dipped a brush in the ink, and soon made a new placard for the effigy:

FIGGINS!

THE NEW HOUSE GUY!

"I've brought a New House cap to stick on him," said Tom Merry, "and we must make his legs a bit skinnier to look more like Figgy's."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's so!"

The improvement of the dummy was soon finished. Then the firework making went on. Tom Merry's recipe, of which he refused to disclose the secret, seemed to be a good one. He doled out the necessary ingredients to his assistants, and they had to be content with helping, without knowing the secret.

"Couldn't trust it into your hands, kids," the hero of the Shell replied to all inquiries. "You'd be blowing up the House. We're making crackers and squibs cheaper than you can buy them, so be satisfied with that."

"That's all vewy well, Tom Mewwy, as far as Mannahs and Lowthah are concerned. But there's no weal reason why a fellow of my discretion shouldn't be entwisted with the secwet. As a mattah of fact, I think it would be weally safah in my keepin' than in yours, don't you know, deah boy."

"Rats, Gussy!" replied Tom Merry. "Get on with the washing, and don't bother!"

"I wefuse to get on with the washin'. That is a widiculous expression, as we are not washin' anythin', but are weally manufactuwin' fireworks. I wepeat, Tom Mewwy, that I considah you ought, as a gentleman, to give me that wecipe."

"I won't, and that's the end of that!" said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy carefully wiped his hands.

"You are mistaken, Tom Mewwy. That does not end it at all. Unless you give me the recipe, I shall take it as a personal insult."

"My dear chap, you may take it as a personal insult, or a personal pronoun, or anything you like," said Tom Merry, in the most obliging way. "I am not particular."

"I wegard that as a diswespectful weemark. Tom Mewwy, I am welycutantly compelled to leave off work for a few minutes to administrah a feahful thwashin' to you!"

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to be killed. I am goin' to—"

"What's that you are wipin' your paws on?" yelled Monty Lowther suddenly.

"Weally, I hardly know. I did not observe—"

"You—you ass! That's my silk handkerchief!"

"I am sowwy! You should not leave your silk handkerchief lyin' about in such an extremely weckless way. It does not weally mattah—"

"Doesn't it, you howling dummy? I'll—I'll—"

"My deah fellow, the silk is of a vewy poor quality. I am a judge of these things. I would not give you more than a shilling for that handkerchief," said Arthur Augustus. "You weally ought to be obliged to me for gettin' wid of it for you."

Lowther did not appear to be at all obliged. On the contrary, he rushed at Arthur Augustus, and interrupted him by putting his head into chancery.

"Welease me!" howled the swell of St. Jim's, struggling violently. "Welease me immediately, Lowthah! You are wumplin' my collah, you howwible barbwian!"

"I'll rumple your beastly features!" said Lowther. "I'll—"

Crash!

It was a terrific attack on the door. The row in the study ceased instantly. The enemy were at the gates.

CHAPTER 10.

The Order of the Boot!

FIGGINS & CO. reached St. Jim's warm with running, and came bolting in just as Taggles went out to lock the gates. They passed the school porter like a flash, and ran on to the New House and hurried up to their study.

"It's all right!" said Figgins, heaving a sigh of relief as he found the door still secured as he had left it. "Hallo, Pratt!" he added, as he saw the junior looking out of his study. "Seen anything of the School House rotters?"

"Yes, I met Tom Merry in the House here," said Pratt. "He had the cheek to come in, but I spotted him." Figgins looked greatly alarmed.

"I say, he hadn't been in my study, had he, Pratt?"

"Oh, no! I looked immediately, and the door was still locked. You can see that for yourself. Isn't it just as you left it?"

"Yes; but—but one never knows, and he's such a beastly artful dodger!"

Figgins jerked the key from his pocket and hastily unlocked the door. The study was dark, but he quickly struck a match and lighted the gas.

At the first glance the study presented the same aspect as usual; but Figgins went at once to the cupboard, where the effigy had been placed. He threw open the door, and uttered a yell of rage and dismay.

"Gone!"

"Gone!" echoed the Co. and Pratt, in varying notes of dismay and fury.

"Look! Tom Merry's had it!"

The Co. stared into the cupboard. Like Mother Hubbard, they found it bare. The effigy of Tom Merry was gone, and it was pretty clear Tom Merry had taken it.

"How did he get it away?" roared Figgins. "Was he carrying it when you saw him, Pratt?"

It was a ridiculous question, and Pratt snorted.

"Was he carrying it?" he repeated witheringly. "Was he carrying a life-size dummy, and did I notice it, or did he slip it into his waistcoat pocket when he saw me coming, I wonder?"

"He couldn't have been carrying it," said Kerr sensibly. "He wouldn't risk it. He would let it out of the window to the other beasts in the quad."

"But the window's fastened, and the door was locked!" said Wynn. "How on earth—"

Figgins smote his breast.

"He must have had a duplicate key. Anyway, it doesn't matter how he did it. He's done it, and he's done us! Diddled, dished, and done!"

"And you three," repeated Pratt, in a reflective sort of way, "call yourselves leaders of the New House juniors, don't you, and you allow—"

Pratt had no time to finish. The Co. fell upon him and smote him hip and thigh, and his untimely criticisms were nipped in the bud. He went out of the study with a rush, and spun along the passage like a humming-top.

The violent ejection of Pratt somewhat relieved Figgins & Co., and they were able to think more calmly. The blow was a heavy one, but Figgins was not the fellow to give in.

"Tom Merry's collared our dummy!" he exclaimed. "There's no doubt about that, and there's no doubt that we've got no time to make another. We're done, unless we can get it back."

"No doubt about Merry having it," said Kerr. "Look at this!"

He held up the placard which had once been attached to the dummy, and which bore Tom Merry's name in large letters. Across it was scrawled: "Much obliged.—T. M."

"Much obliged.—T. M.!" said Figgins, breathing fury. "We'll much oblige him! Are we going to take this lying down?"

"Rather not!"

"Come on, then! They won't expect us in the School House, anyway, and we may take them by surprise and rush them out of the dummy."

It was rather a desperate enterprise, but Figgins & Co. were in a desperate humour. They quitted the study, and hurried over to the School House. They reached the door of Tom Merry's study, and Figgins cautiously and silently tried the handle.

But the door was locked. It was always locked when Tom Merry was handling his mysterious compounds in the manufacture of fireworks. By chance, the School House six were saved from a surprise attack; but Figgins & Co. were not to be done.

"All together!" said Figgins, setting his teeth.

With one accord the three juniors drew back and hurled themselves against the door. It shook and groaned, and the lock strained and creaked, but the solid oak did not give way, and Figgins & Co. staggered back from the door, feeling considerably shaken up.

There was an instant sound of alarm within the study.

"Hallo, that's Figgins!"

It was Tom Merry's voice. Figgins kicked at the door.

"Yes, it's us!" he bellowed. "Give us our dummy, you beasts!"

"Rot!" said Tom Merry, through the keyhole. "What do you want it for? There are lots of dummies in the New House, and Figgins & Co. are the biggest dummies there!"

"Yah! Open the door! You're a lot of funks!" yelled Kerr.

The challenge was instantly accepted. The door of the study swung open, but Figgins & Co. had no time to rush in. It was Tom Merry who rushed out.

The School House allies came out in a body, and the New House trio, attacked by double their numbers, were simply overwhelmed. They were reeling and lurching along the passage, shoved and hustled by the six, who were roaring with laughter.

"Buck up, School House!" yelled Tom Merry. "Here's some New House bounders come on a burgling expedition! Turn 'em out!"

"Turn 'em out!" came an answering yell as a dozen study doors were opened, and School House juniors thronged from all sides to punish the daring intruders upon their domain.

"We want our dummy!" howled Fatty Wynn. "We want—"

"Alas, his poor brother!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Sorry, old kids, but New House persons are barred in this respectable establishment. Off you go!"

"Turn 'em out!"

"Kick 'em out!"

The School House crowd fairly swamped Figgins & Co. They had come into the lion's den, rashly and recklessly, and they had to pay for their temerity.

The three made a desperate rush at Tom Merry and his comrades; but they could not reach them again. Tom Merry kissed his hand in farewell as Figgins went rolling down the stairs in the midst of a crowd of juniors.

"Good-bye, bluebell!" he trilled.

Dusty, dishevelled, dilapidated, Figgins & Co. were hurled from the School House, sprawling into the quad, and a crowd of juniors on the steps hurled jeers and ribald laughter after them.

Figgins & Co. staggered to their feet.

Against such odds it was evidently useless to renew the attack, and they disappeared through the November mist towards their own House.

Tom Merry, laughing heartily, returned to his study with the rest, and the manufacture of fireworks was resumed.

"Figgins & Co. are fairly done this journey," Tom remarked. "We've given them the utter kybosh, and they can't get out of that. They're completely done."

But Figgins & Co. did not think so.

They gathered in their study, weary and worn and worried.

But the eye of Figgins was still gleaming with the gleam of battle.

"They've done us," he said, "done us now. But it ain't the Fifth yet. We'll have another try to-morrow."

The Co. for once looked dubious when their great leader spoke.

"We were going to have a bonfire and burn Tom Merry. (Continued on next page.)

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in effigy," said Figgins. "Well, we won't. We'll collar the School House bonfire and collar that dummy and burn Tom Merry in effigy at his own giddy fire. That will show the rotters that we're the Cock House at St. Jim's, I rather think."

"Yes, if we can manage it," Fatty Wynn remarked.

"We've got to manage it," said Figgins.

"But how, Figgy?" asked Kerr. "It's all very well to talk, but—"

"Have you ever known me to fail?" demanded their leader.

As a matter of fact they had, many a time and oft, but they did not like to say so. They contented themselves with asking how he was going to "work the oracle."

"I'll explain," said Figgins. "The idea has been working in my brain for some time in connection with their bonfire, but I thought we should be busy with our own on the Fifth at the same time, so I didn't think it out."

"But what's the wheeze?" demanded the Co. together.

And the great Figgins proceeded to explain, and the Co., convinced at last, listened, with many a chuckle of joyous anticipation. But what the great "wheeze" was must be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11.

On the Famous Fifth I

THE Fifth of November!
It had come at last!

The Fifth of November, a date not likely to be forgotten so long as British boyhood flourishes, dawned upon St. Jim's, dry and dim and wintry.

There was no sign of rain, but a mist hung in the air, and the weather was very cold, which was welcome enough to the juniors intending to celebrate the anniversary with a bonfire in the quadrangle.

The Head of St. Jim's had a kindly heart, and he did not forget that he had been a boy once himself.

On the Fifth of November unusual freedom was allowed to the boys, and many little things were judiciously overlooked which would have brought down the wrath of master or prefects on the doers on any other date.

So long as they did not go too far, the juniors knew that they would not be bothered by prefect or master, for the doctor, like a sensible man, believed that hearty, wholesome fun is good for boys, and for men, too, for that matter.

Permission had been given to the youngsters of both Houses to light bonfires, a permission of which the School House fellows had taken full advantage.

The School House bonfire was in the course of erection during the day, and Taggles had turned a more or less honest penny by the sale of faggots to the juniors.

To the surprise of the School House, there were no preparations for the New House bonfire. It was known that Figgins had commenced preparations for one, yet now that the date had come it was evident that he had abandoned his intention.

Some of the School House boys, prompted by curiosity, questioned Figgins, but he preserved a non-committal attitude. He gave no reasons, nor did anyone else belonging to the New House. There was undoubtedly a reason, and the whole junior portion of the New House was in the secret. But they kept their own counsel.

"I fancy I can tumble to the little game," Tom Merry remarked after morning school. "Figgy means to bother us over burning the effigy instead of having a bonfire on his own. He's going to make trouble."

"Very likely," Blake assented. "Well, we'll be on the watch, and we'll give him as good as he sends."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All the fellows had better be warned to be on their guard," went on Tom, "and they'd better take stuffed stockings, or something of the sort, ready for a row. There's nothing like being ready. When the New House rotters see we're on our guard they may think better of it."

"If they look for trouble," said Monty Lowther, "they'll find it, and wish they hadn't. We could wipe up the ground with them."

When the famous Fifth did not fall on a half-holiday a special one was granted by the considerate Head of St. Jim's, so that after morning lessons the juniors were their own masters, except for the preparation of the morrow's work.

The building of the School House pyre went on apace. It was to be a gigantic bonfire, and a great deal had been spent on it. But it promised to be a great success and worth the time and money.

The fireworks, too, were a great success.

The manufacturers had turned out huge quantities, and of the more ornamental sorts a large supply had been purchased of Dame Taggles at the school shop.

Glad were all the juniors of St. Jim's when the early

darkness of the November evening descended upon the old quadrangle.

Dark and dim, but dry, was the old quad, with the ancient, leafless trees raising their gaunt branches in the thickening shadows.

Although the Guy Fawkes celebrations were in the hands of the juniors, a great many seniors had condescended to signify a generous intention of witnessing it, and there were a number of Upper Form fellows in the quad when Tom Merry & Co. came out on business.

Kildare took a friendly interest in the matter, and he had assisted Tom Merry with advice, which the junior captain had found useful.

Tom Merry looked round him in the dimness. Lowther held a bicycle lamp up and flashed it round. The rays glimmered upon crowded faces, eagerly waiting.

"Gentlemen of the School House," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" roared the gentlemen of the School House. From the gentlemen of the New House, who were pretty numerous represented, came a loud and prolonged hiss.

"Silence!" roared Blake.

"Gentlemen of the School House," resumed Tom Merry, as soon as he could make his voice heard, "you will be pleased to hear that we have prepared a great celebration for this famous anniversary."

"Annie whom?" inquired the voice of Figgins.

"This anniversary," went on Tom Merry, unheeding, "famous in the annals of English history. For hundreds of years the youth of Britain have celebrated the date upon which Guy Fawkes plotted to blow up the Houses of Parliament, by burning the bounder in effigy."

"Hear, hear!"

"We are going to celebrate the date in the good old way, but with a slight variation. Our ancestors celebrated a victory over a lot of bounders by burning Guy Fawkes in effigy. We, gentlemen of the School House, have lately achieved a victory over another set of bounders dwelling in the New House at St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!" from the School House, and groans from the New House.

"A set of bounders," went on Tom Merry imperturbably, "led by a fearful ruffian known as Figgins, or Stiggins, or some such name."

Laughter and cheers, and a hoot from Figgins or Stiggins.

"We are going to celebrate this victory," said Tom Merry, "by burning the ruffian Figgins in effigy. Fortunately, he strongly resembles a guy in ordinary appearance—"

"So that his effigy might really be mistaken for an ordinary guy. Gentlemen, we shall now light the funeral pyre and proceed to burn the ruffianly Figgins in effigy."

"Hurrah!"

Somewhat to Tom Merry's surprise, the New House boys made no demonstration beyond groans and hisses. The School House forces were ready for the fray, and perhaps that was the reason.

"Watch the pile, kids, while we get out the effigy," said Tom Merry.

He looked round for Figgins, but Figgins had vanished. Neither was the Co. to be seen.

Leaving Blake and Lowther in command of the pile, Tom Merry returned to the School House with Manners and Herries, and they soon reappeared carrying the effigy between them.

It was dusky in the quadrangle, but the pyre was not to be lighted until the effigy was mounted upon the pole in the centre of the bonfire, there to perish in the flames.

A shout from the School House boys greeted the appearance of the effigy.

No striking resemblance to Figgins could be detected in it, but even in the dusk the huge placard could be made out.

FIGGINS,

THE NEW HOUSE GUY!

Solemnly the School House chums marched the effigy towards the pyre, guarded by a double row of armed and watchful juniors.

"Hurrah!" shouted the School House juniors. "Here's another guy! Good old Figgins!"

And then they began to chant some new words which Tom Merry had applied to an old tune:

"Please to remember

The Fifth of November,

When Figgins & Co. caught it hot!"

The words rose in a roar, audible in every corner of St. Jim's. New House juniors shouted back derisively from afar. They were withdrawing themselves from the vicinity of the bonfire.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry. "Shove that pair of steps across. We've got to hook the guy on the pole in

the middle. There's a hook on top all ready to stick into his back. Figgins will look very nice up there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Figgins! Good old guy!"

Tom Merry glanced round him.

The School House fellows had the scene to themselves; the New House had withdrawn. Were they gone in the consciousness of defeat? Or were they plotting mischief?

"Help me up with the— Great Christopher Columbus!"

"Rain! Oh hang! Rain!"

A spattering of water had fallen upon the heads of the juniors.

"Rain!" howled Blake. "Oh blow, blow, blow! Rain!"

"How extremely annoyin', deah boys!"

"It's not rain!" yelled Tom Merry. "It's water!"

"Well, ain't rain water, fathead—"

"It's not rain! I— Yah! Gerooooooogh!"

Swish! Slish! Splash!

No, it was not rain! It was water from the garden hose—which Figgins & Co. had fixed up unseen in the darkness, and were now playing upon the School House crowd!

A jet of water smote Tom Merry as he stood upon the steps and bowled him over. The effigy fell with a thud to the ground.

Swish, swish, swish!

"They're trying to damp the bonfire!"

"Yah! Cads! Beasts!"

Swish, swish, swish!

Water was pouring and streaming upon the School House juniors. It came in jets and showers, according to how Figgins held the nozzle. It foamed and swept over them.

Seniors as well as juniors came in for a share, and they hurriedly retreated from the scene. They didn't want to be mixed up in a junior row.

But the juniors were too furious to retreat. It was impossible to see Figgins in the darkness, but Tom knew that water must come from the direction of the fountain. He picked himself up and shouted to his followers.

"Come on! 'Tain't the bonfire they're washing—it's us!"

They want to capture the bonfire! Come on and slay them!"

The School House chums needed no second bidding.

But the School House juniors were not sufficiently backed up. The sweeping stream of water had swept their followers away, save some who were gasping on the ground and did not seem to know whether they were on their heads or their heels. Gallantly the six attacked; but they were helpless against such odds, and they were borne to the ground by weight of numbers.

"We've got 'em!" yelled Kerr.

Figgins chuckled gleefully. This was a success even he had not counted on. Some of the towels were requisitioned to bind the prisoners. A voice was heard in protest.

"Pway be more careful of my cuffs, deah boys! If I am a wispah of war you may bind my hands, but don't be too wuff with my shirt-cuffs!"

"Oh, do not be wuff with Augustus' cuffs!" sang Figgins, in the lightness of his heart.

Speedily the School House leaders were secured. By the time they were safe the hose had swept their dismayed followers from the ground, and the coast was clear.

"Buck up before they rally!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

Figgins was not the fellow to allow the grass to grow under his feet. His plans were already laid. Kerr and half the New House forces were left in charge of the prisoners and the hose. With the rest Figgins rushed on to take possession of the bonfire.

Drenched and dispirited and deprived of their leaders, the School House juniors were in no condition to rally and resist. Figgins and his followers took almost undisputed possession of the bonfire, and Figgins dragged the dummy up from the ground. To tear off the placard and substitute for it one that Fatty Wynn produced from under his ample jacket was the work of a moment.

Then the grinning Figgins ascended the step-ladder, and, with Fatty and Pratt's assistance, fastened the back of the dummy to the hook at the top of the post in the centre of the huge pyre. All was ready for lighting the bonfire now.

"Light up!" called out Figgins, as he jumped down from the steps and pushed them away.

A dozen New House juniors struck matches and set fire to the pile. As the materials had been well drenched with inflammable oil they caught immediately, and a rush of flames went up in the darkness.

In a few moments the bonfire was burning brilliantly. Over the dark quadrangle of St. Jim's spread a ruddy glow from the flames, and the New House juniors stood round, whooping and waving their caps.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

In the midst of the flames the effigy rose, bold and black, to view. The hideous figure, with its daubed face and shapeless limbs, showing up plainly amid the leaping blaze, and

the placard pinned on its breast was visible and legible to all.

TOM MERRY! THE GUY OF ST. JIM'S!

Shouts of laughter came from the seniors standing at a distance. It would not have been fair play for them to interfere, and none of them cared to do so. It was an affair of the juniors, to be settled between the youngsters themselves.

"Here's another guy!" roared the New House crowd. "Good old Tom Merry! Who's Cock House at St. Jim's?"

"We are! We are!"

Tom Merry and his comrades, helpless prisoners in the hands of Kerr's party, looked on with furious eyes. The victory was with the redoubtable Figgins, after all. At the very last moment he had turned the tables on the School House, and not only recaptured his own effigy, but captured the School House bonfire as well. It was too bad!

Fireworks were exploding everywhere. The din of the explosion, and the shouts of the New House boys were deafening. Amid it all roared the huge bonfire, with the effigy high in the midst of the flames, and now crumbling to pieces under their burning touch.

Once or twice the scattered and defeated School House juniors made an attempt to rally. But Figgins and his band and the hose-pipe were always ready, and they were driven back with ignominy. Victory was with the New House.

Crash!

The blazing effigy dropped into the heart of the flames at last, and a shower of sparks flew in all directions, and a pyramid soared skywards against the November blackness.

The New House juniors shouted again.

"Tom Merry's gone!"

"Good-bye, Tommy!"

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, imitating Tom Merry's voice and manner, "the ruffianly Merry has now been burnt in the effigy."

"Hear, hear!"

"We have now celebrated our victory over the School House—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And it is universally acknowledged that the New House is Cock House at St. Jim's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Figgins!"

Figgins walked over to the unhappy group of prisoners. His face was beaming.

"I say, you School House kids, shall we make it pax?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Blake.

"We've licked you up hill and down dale!"

"You—you rotter!" said Lowther.

"You're licked hollow, inside and out, and you can't deny it."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Right-ho, we can't!" he exclaimed. "You've dished us this time, and we own up, Figg!"

"Yaas, wathah! I own up with gweat pleasuah. I shall be pleased to make it pax, for the wude wottah who is holdin' me is wuffin' my hair and wumplin' my collah; and I am weally most uncomfortably wet, don't you know, deah boys."

"I suppose we may as well make it pax," grunted Blake. "We'll make you sit up for this, though, some other time, Figgins!"

"That's understood," remarked Tom Merry.

Figgins laughed.

"All in good time," he said. "We burnt your giddy chief in effigy, and wiped up the ground with you, and we're satisfied. We're willing to make it pax. The fire will last a long time yet if we feed it. We've captured your fireworks, but we've got a lot of our own. We'll pool the lot, and we can all have a high old time. What do you say? Pax?"

"Pax," said the School House six together.

And "pax" it was.

The School House leaders having made peace, the rest came into the fold, and rows ceased for the night, while the juniors of both Houses celebrated the famous Fifth.

There was no doubt that the New House had carried off the palm of victory; but, after all, as Tom Merry said, the School House had been often enough victorious to be able to afford a reverse every now and then.

The next day the School House were plotting and planning to get "their own" back. But there was no doubt that Figgins & Co. had scored on the famous Fifth.

THE END.

(What a score! Tom Merry & Co. will soon trot out some new wheeze for getting their own back! But next week more serious matters arise in "THE FOOTBALL FAKES!")

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CHAPTER 1.

The Innocent Suffer!

"HALLO! Sounds like trouble!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Old Gubbins on the warpath again!" agreed Jimmy Silver, grinning.

The Fistical Four smiled, and glanced over the farmyard gate.

From the farm buildings, some little distance from the gate, had come a sudden uproar; and it certainly sounded like trouble.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were interested at once. Farmer Gubbins, the tenant of Riverside Farm, was anything but a friend of the Rookwood fellows. Gubbins claimed that the Rookwood men trespassed on his land and raided his apples. His many complaints to the Head had caused endless trouble. So Jimmy Silver & Co. paused now in their country walk and took notice.

The uproar of shouts and yells increased. Then round the corner of the barn, which stood by the gateway, three youthful forms burst into view, going great guns. The Fistical Four recognised Algernon Silver, Jimmy's young cousin, Lovell's minor, and Smithson, three young scapegraces of the Third at Rookwood.

Behind them, also going great guns, was Farmer Gubbins, waving a riding-crop, and three farmhands, waving hayforks and other farm implements.

It certainly did look like trouble.

"What the dickens have the young idiots been up to?" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Open the gate—quick!"

Jimmy himself dashed forward and swung the gate wide, leaving the way clear for the youngsters. But he also left it clear for their pursuers.

There was a swift patter of feet, and the Third-Formers rushed through the gateway. Jimmy had intended to slam the gate shut then. But he got no chance.

Bareheaded and panting, the fags rushed up—in a far bigger hurry than the Fistical Four had bargained for. At the same moment, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome jumped forward to help Jimmy slam the gate.

That was how the collision happened. The desperate fags hadn't even seen the juniors until too late. Before they knew what had taken place, the Fistical Four found themselves strewn over the lane amidst yells of wrath and pain.

"You silly owls!" yelled Algy Silver.

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That was all the thanks Jimmy Silver & Co. got. Algy scrambled up and bolted. His two pals followed him with remarkable alacrity. They vanished into the distance.

"Ow, ow!" panted Jimmy Silver, staggering to his feet. "The mad young— Yarroooop!"

Jimmy ended with a wild howl as something swished round his legs. It was the thong of a riding-crop—and it hurt. Then the heavy hand of Farmer Gubbins clawed at his collar.

Jimmy blinked dizzily about him. Lovell and Raby were struggling in the grasp of stalwart farmhands. Newcome, making a desperate break for liberty, crashed down just then as another farmhand slipped a hayfork between his legs.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy. "I say, leggo! We've done nothing! Leggo!"

"Oh, no, you ain't done nothin', have you?" bawled Farmer Gubbins furiously.

"Not arter my apples, were you? You young rips! But I got you this time!"

Evidently there was some mistake. Though the Fistical Four might have anticipated such a happening.

"You silly owls!" hooted Lovell, still struggling angrily. "Take your rotten paws off me! We haven't touched any blessed apples, blow you!"

"No you ain't!" gritted Farmer Gubbins. "Cause

why—'cause you didn't get the chance this time, my lads! Hold 'em, you men! I'll larn 'em!"

Swish!

Jimmy Silver howled again as the riding whip curled round his legs. The next moment Farmer Gubbins howled as the incensed Jimmy punched him hard on his rather ruddy nose. Jimmy Silver was not the fellow to take an unjust licking lying down.

"Go for 'em!" he yelled. "We're not being licked for nothing!"

Jimmy was always an optimist, but he was much too much of an optimist on this occasion. Against Farmer Gubbins & Co. the Fistical Four stood no chance whatever.

The farmhands grinned at their futile struggles and punches. And that one punch Jimmy got in was evidently the finishing touch for the irate farmer.

"Hit me, would you—add hinsult to hinjury!" he bellowed. "Well, I means to lick you myself this time. I ain't doing no more complainin' to your blamed headmaster what takes no notice. Take that!"

APPLE SAUCE!

Lovell had the sauce to invite everyone to sample some of Farmer Gubbins' apples! And then——!

Jimmy took it on his legs, and howled fiendishly. Then he took more and more as the farmer began to lay on the whip with a will. Jimmy wriggled and writhed and kicked, but it was all in vain. Farmer Gubbins was worked up and proceeded to work it off—on Jimmy & Co.

"Innocent, are you?" he roared. "Weren't waitin' here in the road while them others raided them apples in the loft, was you? I'll larn you!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Jimmy Silver & Co. tried in vain to explain the facts. But the mere fact of their opening the gate condemned them in the eyes of the farmer. In any case, he hated Rookwood fellows, and he showed it now.

Jimmy crawled away at last, panting and groaning. Then came Raby's turn, and after that the turns of Lovell and Newcome. Lovell put up a tremendous resistance, but it only served to bring increased punishment down upon his innocent shoulders—or, rather, legs.

It ended at last, and four hapless Rookwood juniors crawled to the end of the lane and stopped to nurse their aches and pains, and discuss the unfortunate matter.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

For some moments that was the combined chorus. Then they went on to speech.

"The—the brutes!" gasped Jimmy Silver, groaning.

"Ow, ow! Yow! M-my legs! Yow! And we did nothing—only opened the gate for those rotten kids! Yow!"

"We might have guessed they'd collar us!" groaned Raby.

"Ow! Yow! Oh crikey!"

"What's the good of yapping that now?" hooted Lovell.

"We ought to have let those young monkeys rip, blow 'em! My hat! I—I'll make that beast of a farmer sit up for this!"

"No good blaming him, I suppose," sighed Jimmy Silver.

"Keep smiling! After all, we know some of our chaps have been up in his loft after apples—I heard that cad Peele bragging about it only this morning."

"But we haven't!" yelled Lovell furiously. "We wouldn't touch his rotten apples! We know what's thieving and what isn't, I suppose. As for those young rotters—"

"May not have been after the silly old apples," said Jimmy mildly. "Your minor and my cousin are young scapegraces, but I don't think—"

"Of course they were!" howled Lovell. "Wasn't it—My hat, here they are now!"

Turning a corner in the lane the juniors came upon Lovell minor, Algy Silver, and Smithson. They were seated on a gate, laughing, and they eyed the Fistical Four gleefully.

"Hallo, here are those old fogies!" announced Algy Silver cheerfully. "I say, did the old hunks catch you?"

"Looks as if the old bean did," giggled Smithson. "Look at 'em wriggling!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three fags.

Evidently they were certain now that Jimmy Silver & Co. had been caught—and smacked. The Fistical Four glared.

"Yes, we were caught and horse-whipped!" snapped Lovell.

"So—so you think it a cackling matter—eh? You think—"

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

The Fistical Four said nothing more. But they proceeded to action—drastic action. That heartless hilarity was the last straw. As one man they rushed at the laughing fags. There was a surprised howl as the three fags went backwards over the gate.

The Fistical Four swarmed over the gate after them. Then they grabbed the yelling fags, and proceeded to bump them hard and often, following this up by rubbing their individual faces into the ditch and stuffing their caps down the backs of their necks.

"Leggo! Stoppit!" shrieked Algy, as Lovell and Jimmy rammed his face into the ditch. "It wasn't—ugh!—our—grooogh!—faults! And we didn't go after that old idiot's apples at all! Yarrooogh!"

"You young fibbers—"

"I tell you we didn't!" shrieked Smithson. "Carthew was after us, and we had to cut through the farmyard from the Church Walk. Ooooooh! Stop—Grooogh!"

"We're punishing you for laughing, kids!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Blow you and blow the apples! Give 'em socks!"

The juniors continued the punishment. When they had finished the hapless fags were wondering if they wouldn't have fared better at the farmer's hands, after all!

Leaving them grovelling in the ditch, howling and spluttering, the Fistical Four limped on home, feeling a trifle better, though not much.

CHAPTER 2.

Lovell's Wheeze!

"I've got it!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that announcement just as tea was ending in the end study.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome groaned.

They knew very well what Arthur Edward meant when he said that he had "got it." But it seemed to bring no joy to their youthful hearts. Only Lovell himself appeared to be joyful at having "got it!"

The Fistical Four all had aches and pains still, as reminders of the affairs at Riverside Farm. But while Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were resolved to make the best of it, Lovell was equally resolved to make the worst of it.

Over tea, while his chums concentrated on hot sausages and toasted muffins, Arthur Edward concentrated his powerful intellect upon devising schemes of vengeance.

Now it appeared he had got the scheme he wanted at last. "You've got it, have you?" grunted Jimmy. "Then go and bury it, old man!"

"And bury it deep!" sighed Raby. "For goodness' sake cheese it, Lovell, old chap! You know your schemes always come unstuck somehow!"

"Yes, do cheese it, Lovell!" pleaded Jimmy. "It was those kids who landed us in it, and we've taken it out of them. If old Gubbins hadn't some justification I'd have been first to want to make him sit up."

"Why, you—you worms!" gasped Lovell, glaring scornfully. "You'd take a horse-whipping lying down like that? Worms! Well, if you won't keep our end up, Jimmy Silver, then I'll have to! Leave it to me. I tell you I've got it—the very scheme I wanted. I'll give him apples!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Rats! Apples! Ha, ha, ha!" Lovell laughed darkly.

"I'll show the old brute! If you silly owls won't help—"

"Not if it's one of your wild wheezes, old man. We've had some!"

"Right!" Lovell got to his feet. "That settles it. You can leave it to me. And if you want to see some fun," ended Lovell, with a grin, "come along to Riverside Farm in about half an hour. You'll see!"

"My dear fathead— Here, hold on, Lovell—"

But Arthur Edward was gone.

"The—the born idiot!" said Jimmy Silver, frowning.

"He'll make a fearful muck of it, as sure as fate!"

"Trust Lovell!" grinned Raby. "Anyway, let him rip!"

Lovell's chums decided to let Lovell "rip." They finished tea and cleared away. But Jimmy Silver's frown was deepening. Raby and Newcome's uneasiness was plain. After all, Lovell was their chum, and they hated to see him coming a mucker.

"It's no good, you men," said Jimmy, at the end of twenty minutes. "It isn't safe to let Lovell rip. We ought to have stopped his game, whatever it is. Anyway, let's get along to the farm and see what the ass is up to!"

"Better had!" agreed Raby seriously. "You never quite know with Lovell."

"Excepting that we know he makes a muck of everything!" grunted Newcome. "Let's get off."

They got their caps and hurried out. In the hallway they encountered Morington.

"Seen Lovell?" asked Jimmy.

"Saw him twenty minutes ago," said Morny. "The ass was writing in Common-room, or drawing, or something. Got some game on, I fancy. He was cackling fit to bust. Gone out now, I believe."

Jimmy Silver groaned and led his chums out of the gates.

They ran nearly all the way to the farm. As they neared it they heard a sudden uproar break out at the farm. Next minute they sighted several figures burst out of the gateway into the lane and go pelting towards the village. An instant after they saw the burly figure of Farmer Gubbins as he shook his whip after the running forms, then vanished back through the gateway.

"Well, my only Sunday bonnet!" gasped Raby, as they pulled up abruptly. "Those were villagers—chaps from the village, Jimmy!"

"I know. But where's Lovell?" mumbled Jimmy.

It was rather puzzling, and the juniors approached the farm gate cautiously to investigate. There was no sign of Lovell about, however. And then Newcome suddenly spotted a rough notice stuck on the wall of the barn fronting the lane. It was printed in ink, and ran as follows:

APPLES!

FREE! FREE! FREE! FREE!

ROLL UP AND HELP YOURSELVES!!!

BRING YOUR BASKETS, BOXES OR SACKS AND
HELP YOURSELVES!

Owing to a glut in the market, Farmer Gubbins offers

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his store of prime English apples free to villagers, residents and others. First come, first served! APPLES FOR THE TAKING! All free and for nothing! Ask at Riverside Farm for the key of the Apple Loft! Don't be shy!

BUT BE SURE TO ASK AT THE FARM FIRST!

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly blinked at that unusual notice. "Well, if that doesn't beat it!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What's it mean? 'Tain't like Farmer Gubbins to give apples away! He'd rather see 'em rot first!"

"Absolutely! No doubt about that, Jimmy! Well, my hat!"

The startling announcement caused the chums to forget Arthur Edward Lovell completely.

"Well, if the old hunk is opening his heart—and apple loft—like this, then we're on!" grinned Raby, his mouth watering. "Phew! Come on! First come, first served!"

"Fathead!" Jimmy frowned thoughtfully. "Something queer about this. Hold on! What about those villagers we saw chased away? That doesn't look promising, does it?"

"H'm, yes! But, dash it all, read the notice! It's plain enough!"

"A jolly sight too plain!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "If there is a glut and old Gubbins can't sell his apples, he'd feed his pigs on 'em before givin' 'em away."

"Phew! That's so, Jimmy. But—"

"We're keeping off the giddy grass—especially after what happened this afternoon," grinned Jimmy. "It's rather queer! Now, I wonder if that ass Lovell—Hullo, here's those Modern House worms!"

Tommy Dodd, with his chums Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle, came sauntering along. Behind them were Towle, Wadsley, and McCarthy, also of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood. They saw the Classical juniors staring at the notice, and stopped.

"Hullo! What's biting you Classical bounders?" demanded Tommy Dodd cheerfully. "Is it—Ye gods, free apples! I say, what's this?"

As Tommy Dodd read the notice out, his eyes gleamed and he licked his lips. There was an amazed buzz from his fellows.

"Free apples! And from that old hunk, Gubbins!" stuttered Tommy Doyle, fairly devouring the notice. "Come on, you men! Great pip! First come, first served."

"But Gubbins! Great pip!" said Tommy Dodd. "That old bounder! Yet it's plain enough. We're on this! You Classical bounders been after any?"

"Eh? Oh, no, not yet!" said Jimmy. "We're just wondering—"

"Well, we're not stopping to do any giddy wondering," grinned Tommy Dodd delightedly. "We've got no baskets, boxes, or sacks, but we've got pockets and appetites. First come, first served. Come on, my merry men!"

"What-ho!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. pushed the gate wide and rushed up towards the farm. Raby and Newcome's eyes followed them longingly, and then they looked at Jimmy.

"I say, Jimmy, come on!" urged Raby. "We're not letting those Moderns leave us standing like this!"

"In this case we are, my infants," grinned Jimmy, his

eyes glimmering. "I believe Gubbins' loft is fairly stacked with apples. Peele said so. There'll be plenty left for little us. We'll wait and see how those merchants get on first."

"Yes, but—"

"Your Uncle Jimmy's never let you down yet," smiled Jimmy, watching the farmyard gate closely. "Take my tip and hang on here. Much safer, I fancy. You saw those villagers streaking for the skyline. Well, I fancy Duddy and his pals will soon—Oh crikey! Here they come already! Look out!"

There was a sudden yell from the farmyard. It was followed by a chorus of startled howls, the cracking of a whip, and an angry bellowing in the familiar tones of Farmer Gubbins.

Next moment six Modern House juniors came in sight. They came abruptly, with a rush and clatter of feet. In a desperate, frantic bunch the Modern juniors came pelting towards the outer gate, and hard on their track came Farmer Gubbins, with a couple of hands behind him. The farmer's face was red with fury, and he struck out with his whip at the fleeing juniors as he chased them.



In a moment a free fight was taking place in the middle of the road. Classicals and Moderns pounded each other with the greatest enjoyment!

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Raby. "Looks as if—Oh crumbs! Run for it!"

Remembering their earlier experience, Jimmy Silver & Co. lost no time in running for it. A few yards down the lane they waited until Tommy Dodd & Co. came up, some of them limping dismally, all of them amazed and furious.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "What happened, Duddy?"

"Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Tommy Dodd, rubbing his legs dismally. "It was all a beastly sell, a rotten swindle! Yow, yow! Wow!"

"A beastly twist!" panted Tommy Cook furiously. "The beast didn't even wait for us to ask! The moment he—yow!—sighted us he flew at us and lashed out with his rotten whip! Ow, ow! The old beast!"

"Ha ha, ha!" roared Jimmy, while Raby and Newcome stared. "I thought as much! You've been had! I guessed—"

"Oh, you did, did you?" hissed Duddy, turning a suddenly suspicious glare on the Classicals. "So it was just a rotten jape of yours! Then we'll jolly well smash you!"

"Eh? Not at all!" said Jimmy hurriedly. "No fear! We had no hand in it, but I've a suspicion—"

Jimmy broke off abruptly. Just then a junior came

squeezing through a gap in the hedge scarcely a yard from them. It was none other than Arthur Edward Lovell, and Lovell was panting breathlessly, and had evidently been running. He seemed to be in high feather, and he grinned as he sighted the juniors.

"Hallo, here you are at last, Jimmy!" he grinned breathlessly. "I say, I've fixed it up a treat, and it's working like charm. Did you see my notice on the barn wall?"

"What?" said Jimmy Silver. "That—that notice on the barn wall about the free apples?"

"Yes, old chap. A scream, what?" grinned Lovell cheerily. "I did that to pay old Gubbins back. Rather neat, eh? I've just been and shoved one on the village green—on the notice board there. I've also shoved one on the boards just going into the village. See the scheme? A crowd of villagers will go pestering old Gubbins, and they'll about drive him potty before they've finished. See the idea? Crowds of people going to the farm for—Why, what—Here! Yorroooooop!"

Arthur Edward Lovell went crashing down to earth with six incensed and infuriated Modern House juniors on top of him. His gleeful remarks ended in a wild, startled howl.

"Whoooooo!"

CHAPTER 3.

Nice for Lovell!

"HA, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver had suspected the truth before. Now he knew it. And Raby and Newcome joined in his laughter now. They couldn't help it. Lovell vanished beneath the crowd of angry Moderns, and his yells of astonishment and yells for aid only made Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome laugh the more.

"Ha, ha! The—the awful ass!" laughed Jimmy Silver. Then he became serious. "But it was a silly, potty scheme, and scarcely playing the game—for the villagers, anyway. Serves the born idiot right!"

"Help! Whooooop! Rescue! Rescue, Jimmy Silver! Yarroooooop! Gerroff me head!"

Lovell's voice rang far and wide.

The Classics decided to chip in at last. They managed to drag the Moderns off their victim. For a few moments there was a free fight, but Jimmy saved the day.

"Chuck it, Duddy!" he gasped. "I can explain it all. That ass Lovell didn't mean it for you chaps. Hold on! Make it pax, and we'll explain."

The Moderns drew off, panting, and still furious. The hapless Arthur Edward Lovell was left in the lane like a stranded fish, panting and gasping frantically, and looking a wreck.

His chums helped him to his feet and dusted him down a bit.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, ow!" groaned Lovell. "Yow-ow!"

"You fearful idiot, Lovell!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Of all the potty games—"

"Ow, ow, ow! It was a jolly good—yow!—game!" spluttered Lovell furiously. "But why have those rotters gone for me?"

"They went after the apples, you ass!" grinned Jimmy. "It was a rotten scheme, Lovell—I mean, causing the villagers to go and get chased off and disappointed like that. Scarcely playing the game."

"Ow, ow! Oh dear! I—yow!—never thought of that!" groaned Lovell. "I was only thinking of—yow!—paying that beast off. I say, keep those Modern cads off!"

The Moderns looked like starting on Lovell again. But Jimmy quickly explained the position. Even then the Moderns were far from mollified, and would probably have tried to finish ragging the luckless Lovell had not an interruption occurred just then.

Two stately, familiar figures suddenly appeared in sight over a stile leading from the field pathway a few yards from where the juniors were standing. One was the august figure of Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood. The other was the local vicar, an equally stately, but a trifle more portly, figure.

The two old gentlemen were very great friends, and often went walks together to discuss the ancient Classics and other weighty matters. On this occasion the two appeared to be discussing a more homely matter—and it was apples!

"Yes, the notice has rather surprised me, I must—ah! hum—say, my dear doctor," the vicar was remarking in his throaty voice. "However, I shall certainly take advantage of Farmer Gubbins' remarkable—ahem!—generosity. And it is exceedingly good of you, Dr. Chisholm, to offer me the services of your—ahem!—boys in order to collect the—ahem!—apples. Ah-hum! Very good, doctor!"

"Not at all, my dear sir. I will return to school immediately and detail a few boys to call at Riverside Farm

to—to— Dear me! Here are several of my boys now, vicar. How exceedingly fortunate!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. didn't think it at all fortunate for them, nor did Tommy Dodd & Co. They blinked in sudden and growing horror at Dr. Chisholm and the worthy and portly vicar. They almost forgot to touch their caps in their apprehensive alarm.

And their apprehension was certainly justified up to the hilt.

"Ah! Good-afternoon, boys!" said the vicar, beaming.

"Good-afternoon, my boys!" said the Head, smiling. "I have a little task for you. I wish you to go up to Riverside Farm and request Farmer Gubbins to allow you to collect a supply of apples from his loft."

"Oh! Oh crikey!"

"What, what? What did you say, Silver?"

"Oh—oh, yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy faintly. "To—to Riverside Farm?"

"Exactly! I understand that Farmer Gubbins is offering his store of apples free to anyone who will take them away," smiled the Head.

"Quite, quite, my dear doctor! One moment! I will write a brief note to Farmer Gubbins."

And the worthy vicar fished out a notebook and pencil. He wrote on a sheet, tore it out, and handed it to the nearest boy—Jimmy Silver.

"Bring the—ah! hum!—apples to the vicarage, my dear boys," he said.

He patted Jimmy Silver on the head. Jimmy jumped almost convulsively.

"I—I say, sir—" he gasped.

"Well, Silver?" boomed the Head.

"I—I— We'd rather not go, if you—you don't mind, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"What?"

The Head's frown deepened. He had told the vicar how "delighted" his boys would be to be entrusted with such a task. And now— The Head felt quite humiliated. His eyes fairly glistened at the juniors.

"Silver—boys—how dare you!" he boomed angrily. "You may look upon this as an order, then, and not a request. I—I am ashamed of you!"

"But—but— Oh dear! But, sir—" stammered Jimmy.

"Silver, am I to understand that you refuse to obey me—your headmaster?"

"Oh crumbs! I mean, nunnno, sir! But—"

"Then obey me this instant! Go to Riverside Farm at once and hand Farmer Gubbins the vicar's note!" thundered the scandalised Head. "Go—all of you!"

"But you—you see, sir—"

"Go!"

Nothing else for it after that. Jimmy Silver & Co. and Tommy Dodd & Co. went. Jimmy led the way, and the rest trailed after him as he opened the gate and passed through. The Head strode to the gate.

Jimmy Silver & Co.'s advance towards Riverside Farm did not resemble, in any way whatever, the famous Charge of the Light Brigade. They advanced towards the enemy with slow-motion movements, and legs that faltered by the way.

"Oh crikey! Now we're for it!" groaned Jimmy. "This is going to be a hospital case for some of us!"

He suddenly stopped when a yard from the farmyard gateway. Evidently the Head saw them stop. They heard him cough—ominously.

They went on and passed through the gate.

Farmer Gubbins was in sight. He stood by his kitchen door, talking to one of his men, and he was obviously in a fine wax.

He turned suddenly and sighted the trailing juniors.

"Well, by gum!" he bawled furiously. "Here's some more of 'em! Garge—Jim—Luke—William! This way! I'll—I'll—I'll—"

He rushed at the junior, spluttering with rage and amazement.

"Oh crikey! Hold on, Mr. Gubbins—just a minute!" yelled Jimmy frantically, holding out the note like a white flag. "Hold on! We've come from— Oh crumbs!"

Swish!

The farmer's whip curled round Jimmy's legs, and he ended with a yelp of anguish. It was too much—even for the Rookwood heroes!

The rest of the juniors were already fleeing, and Jimmy turned and went after them. And he went quickly! It was an inglorious retreat, but there was nothing to be gained by staying—excepting a licking.

The whole crowd of Moderns and Classics stampeded down to the outer gate, pursued by the raving farmer and his men.

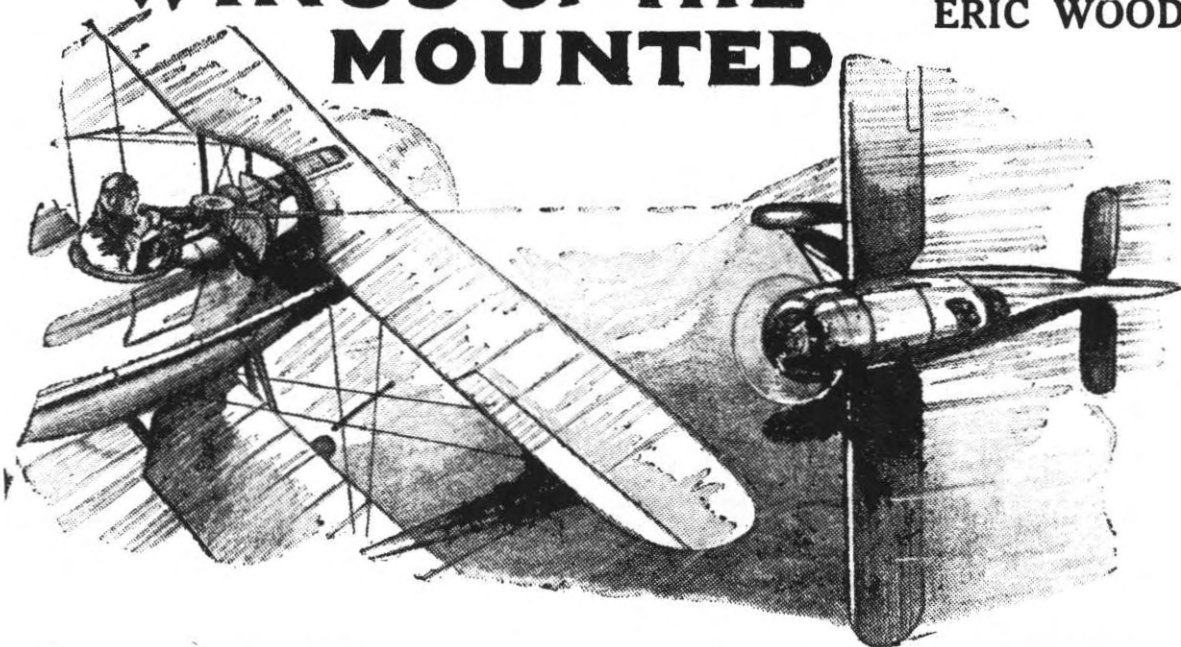
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A GRIPPING NEW SERIES OF COMPLETE AIR YARNS!

"WINGS" OF THE MOUNTED

By
ERIC WOOD



CHAPTER 1.

Wings Receives a Commission.

WITHOUT warning, a blizzard of lead broke and tore through the wings of the two-seater plane, the wings of which bore, in addition to general marks, the symbol of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Corporal Jimmy Welford promptly threw his machine into a roll, and twisted into the clear. Then his machine rolled into a dizzying bank and dived. Bullets slashed a long rent in the up-tilted wings, and then for a brief moment or so the machine was out of the blizzard.

Trooper Hal Rawlings, Welford's observer, had not been idle. Like his pilot chum, he had been taken unawares by the great plane which had swooped out of the grey pall of clouds above them as they sped over the frozen wastes of the Barren Lands. The roar of their

own engine had drowned the sound of the other's, and the first intimation the winged Mounties had of danger was an outburst of slashing bullets from above and behind. At the chatter of the Lewis gun Rawlings had flung himself round and seized the spade grip of his own machine-gun, ammunition-drum already set. He clawed at the trigger, and as Welford came out of the roll spewed bullets into the black plane above.

Like water from a hose the bullets streamed, raking the body of the enemy plane. Then, as Jimmy Welford snapped into a wing-over, Rawlings was temporarily helpless in the blind arc of the gun.

"If Wings hadn't gone over," grunted Rawlings, using the nickname given to Corporal Jimmy Welford, first of the Mounted's air-pilots, "I'd maybe just had time to get 'em. Ugh!"

Next moment his growl gave place to a howl of exultation. Wings Welford was in action. His manoeuvre had brought the machine about so that he also could take part in the lead-slinging duel. Rawlings heard the chatter of his synchronised machine-gun in front. The advantage which the enemy had gained by coming out of the grey unseen, unheard, was gone, and Wings Welford was spraying him with lead, his gun barking, roaring like a mad thing.

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It was immediately obvious that the stranger-plane had banked on snatching a quick victory by virtue of surprise attack, for, as Wings turned into action, his machine obviously not fatally damaged, the enemy nosed into a diving spiral and went roaring out of range.

No need for Hal Rawlings to bawl: "After him, Wings!" Welford turned, set the nose of his machine down, and charged in wake of the fleeing craft. Welford knew, and Rawlings knew, at least one of the men in that plane—Hawk o' the North! It was the only name he was known by, this bandit of the air, who had reaped a rich harvest by a series of raids. Once it was at a construction-camp, where the pay-roll had been taken, as it had been, from a timber-camp less than a month later. Then there had been the holding up of a mail train, carrying bullion. So the work had gone on, and all the information the authorities could get was that a black plane was involved, and that on the scene of each crime was left a card, with

an outline of a plane on it, and underneath the words "Hawk o' the North."

It was as if this air bandit defied the world—including the Mounties—a challenge which bristled the hair of the redjackets.

"Defy us!"

Loraine, the big noise at Edmonton, had shaken a fist—and sent for Jimmy Welford.

"Listen, corporal!" Loraine gasped. "You joined the Force because you thought there'd be more fun—you called it fun—here than in the Canadian Flying Corps, and that after you'd learnt to fly and taken your pilot's ticket. Didn't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy, with a slow smile.

Men called him taciturn, but no one had ever called him cold. He was warm-hearted, but he was also a hard-hitter in the cause of duty. When a scrap was a-doing, Jimmy Welford played up to it, although no law-breaker had ever said that Welford did not give him a fighting chance or drove him to destruction if there was a chance of getting him alive—which, after all, was a Mountie's job!

"Well," Loraine told him now, "you're going a-flying. I've sent for a biplane fitted with machine-guns. When she comes you'll go looking for this Hawk o' the North—looking for him and finding him!"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy again, thrilling at the idea. "I'll need an observer. And do I have a free hand?"

**The Flying Burglar flies so fast
That none can catch him, till at last
Wings of the Mounted tries his hand,
And brings the Burglar back to land!**

"You'll have both!" snapped Loraine. "Trooper Rawlings—he's older than you—did a bit of flying in the Air Force before he joined up. You'll have him. The free hand? Go where you like, do as you like—but bring in the fellow who calls himself Hawk o' the North!"

"Yes, sir," Jimmy seemed stumped for other words, and really he wasn't much of a talker. "Rawlings is a good man, sir—we're friends already. Yes, sir, we'll bring in this Hawk—or else—"

"I know what you mean," Loraine smiled, and reached out a hand, which Jimmy took. "I don't expect immediate success—I'd be a fool to do so, but I do expect ultimate success, or the other thing you were going to say."

"The Mounted get their man, sir," said Jimmy, "and I don't see any reason to alter that just because I'll be mounted in a flying ship instead of on a horse. Very good, sir. And thank you for the chance!"

So it was that Welford—they had dubbed him "Wings" immediately the news leaked out, Wings of the Mounted—and Hal Rawlings had begun their commission. For weeks they had been on patrol, handicapped by having nothing to go upon. It was just a case of cruising around in the hope of picking up a clue, on the chance of running foul of the Hawk o' the North.

And this was the first time they had done so! Truly like a bolt from the heavens the Hawk had appeared—and attacked. He must have heard of the plane that had been commissioned against him, and, coming out of the grey pall, had seen the mark of the Mounted on this one and had known the truth! Known the truth and charged in to the attack, hoping to snatch a quick triumph, drive the winged Mounties down to destruction, and then carry on to whatever nefarious project he had in hand just then.

The surprise attack having failed, he was forced to try for a getaway.

"Not if we can help it!" Wings Welford gritted to himself as he went down in a long roaring dive, aiming for the bandit's tail.

From that tail came the spitting patter of bullets as the Hawk's observer worked his machine-gun. The missiles tore through fuselage, and Wings was not unaware that some of them might find a vital spot. Even as he let the plane slither down he himself was firing his synchronised gun through the propeller blades. Then the bandit was out of range again, and Wings flattened out in pursuit. He was still a little higher than the Hawk, which meant an advantage in position. But the bandit knew that, and Wings saw him streaking for height—height at the rate of a thousand feet per minute!

Up past the Mounties' plane the bandit went—and the begoggled observer in the rear cockpit wagged fingers at nose as they passed!

"Standin' for that, Wings?" Rawlings bawled into the telephone.

But the taciturn Welford did not answer. He was countering the bandit's move, trying to out-height him.

Up and up and up—and Hal Rawlings thrilled as he watched. Level-keeled they were now, and too far away for any gunning. Up and up and up—and Hal Rawlings flicked something from his nose-tip.

"Snow, by hooky!" he shouted into the phone. "Get him, Wings, get him while there's time!"

He knew, and Welford also knew, that those first feathering snowflakes might be but heralds of a howling blizzard. A blizzard which would blind them and make further fighting impossible! Yet Wings dare not stay from climbing, dare not ride the sky directly for the enemy, who would be gone far above in a twinkling.

More feathers now—millions of them. The black plane was but a blur through the white smother—a rising blur, a retreating blur which Wings Welford realised was a ship of greater speed than his own!

Wings had been proud of the Sky Queen, as he had dubbed his machine, proud of her turn of speed, the sweet thrum of her engine; and now here she was—letting him down!

He spoke for the first time into the telephone. "We're whacked, Hal!" he said. "We can't catch him! We've met someone better than ourselves!" Welford was plucky enough to admit such a thing.

Hal Rawlings barked back.

"I know it, Wings—I know it!" he yelled. "He's got miles an hour on us! But let's go to the limit, Wings!"

As if Welford needed to be told that! He was driving the plane to the utmost she held; but the bandit blur was fainter now, and the smothering snow growing denser at every second. Then, suddenly, what had been a blur was—nothing at all!

"Done!" came to Rawlings through the phone. "He's going south, turned back, for he was headed north when he fell down on us. I'm going to ride over this storm, and I think we'll still hold on for the north, eh?"

"Right-ho, Wings!" said Hal, who appreciated that Welford had made a long speech. "Reindeer Lake, eh?"

"I think yes," Wings replied, and closed down, to devote attention to the big climb up and above the blizzard. He had only the instruments on his dashboard to guide him now—even to tell him whether the machine were right side up or down, for he was flying in a white, intangible world, with nothing—neither sky nor earth—in view.

"I'll keep a look-see, Wings," said Rawlings, "in case the Hawk comes up, too. He's almost bound to."

"All right. But what's the use?" Wings asked bitterly, remembering the bandit's speech. "He can play monkey tricks with the Queen! I'm fed-up!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Safe Robbers!

WINGS got his machine above the storm, and looked down upon a heavy sea that was cloud. Above was the clear, sunless sky of the northern winter.

There was no sign of the Hawk, nor did he show up when Wings made a circling cruise in hope of finding him, or surprising him on his emergence from the snow-clouds.

"Reindeer for us!" he snapped, and set the plane's nose northwards again.

It had been the plan of the chums to make for Reindeer Lake, solely because news had come through of a new gold strike there a few months before. It was a rich strike, and Wings had decided that it was just the kind of lure to attract the Hawk at some time or the other. With nothing to help in checking the movements of the bandit, and with a roving commission in his pocket, he had resolved to make a chancey trip to Reindeer.

The sudden attack by the Hawk at two hundred and fifty miles from the lake certainly suggested that Welford's hunch was perhaps a lucky one. That the bandit, following the fight, had turned south, did not matter—it might be only bluff. What worried Wings was why the Hawk, having the better turn of speed, had run away instead of fighting it out to a finish. That superior speed would have enabled him to out-manceuvre the Service plane.

Wings gave it up for a mystery.

He was not to know that the Hawk was working to a schedule. The bandit had an appointment—at Reindeer Lake. He was on the way there when he had seen the Service plane, and guessed it to be the one he heard had been commissioned to find him. He had risked an attack, failed, and now was off to keep his appointment. Turning south had been a ruse, and after a while, dare-devil that he was, he swung north again and forged his way through the snow. He knew that the Mounties would rise above it in the hope of finding him.

The Hawk chuckled to himself as he drove his craft on—chuckled because in that first trial of strength he had learned he was faster than his enemies.

"If they are bound for there," he muttered, "I've only to get there ahead of 'em, do what I go for, and be off, and they'll never catch me! Wings Welford, they call that corporal, do they? Haw, haw! Wings! He hasn't got feathers yet!"

Wings Welford was streaking above the clouds for Reindeer, unaware that the Hawk was ahead of him below.

In addition to the fur-trading settlement, with its timber-built shacks, one of which housed a couple of Mounties sent since the gold-rush, there were scores of tents set up on the snow-waste, while men worked thawing out of the frozen ground, questing for the gold of their dreams!

The Hawk arrived at midday, and miners, furmen, and the Mounties stared up at the roaring craft. They had been here so long that they had not heard of the Hawk o' the North. Therefore, they did not feel any alarm. They had no fears for the safety of the bags of gold which reposed in the steel safe, transferred from the fur-factor's office to the shack where the Mounties lived.

"What is it—and who is it?" someone asked, but folk shook their heads. The Mounties were as ignorant as the rest. The plane did not bear any marks. It was just—black.

"Ought to be marked, Chapman," said one of them.

"Sure did, Rhodes," the other agreed. "Look! The blighter's coming down! Gosh! He'll skim the roofs of the shacks!"

Miners and fur-men rushed hither and thither for safety, for it seemed as if the plane must crash amongst them. But it didn't. It had lost speed, and the pilot was leaning overside, as if looking for something. It was the Hawk o'

the North—looking for a sign as he skimmed just above the roofs of the shacks. The tents he did not take any notice of. He waved a hand at the startled company below, and then was away from the huddle of shacks, only to bank over and come round and back.

"You saw it, Munch?" he asked the man in the rear cockpit.

"I saw it, chief," the man said through the phone. He was down on his knees in the cockpit, peering through a yawning hole in the floor, and held something in his hand. "Take it as steady as you can, and if I miss we'll come back again. All set!"

The machine roared back over the shacks. The Mounties waved protestingly, shouted to the fliers to come down and explain; but neither of the men in the plane took any heed.

Then something dropped from the bottom of the machine and streamed beneath and behind it. There was a thud as it struck the roof of the Mounties' shack and then scraped through the snow covering. Munch, watching for his moment, gave the steel cable he had let fall a jerk, and the great steel three-pronged hook at the end of it caught the big ring which projected through the opening out of which came the iron chimney.

"Got it!" shouted Munch. "Let her go, chief!"

The Hawk opened out a bit, the engine roared, the craft nosed upwards. Munch allowed more of the cable to slide from the windlass in his cockpit, and then—there was a noise, not heard by the airmen, but by those people below, as the roof of the shack was ripped off. It smashed into a score of pieces, but two timbers hung like an inverted "V" over—a safe!

It was the safe containing hard-won gold from the earth, and the fur factor's money. Somehow a steel grapnel had been fastened to the top of it, and the rigid stem thrust through the hole in the roof. Now the safe was whirling through the air, and the Mounties and miners were dashing wildly after it, firing helplessly at the black plane.

"Crank her up some, Munch!" the Hawk ordered, and the bandit lieutenant obeyed, until the safe was no longer whirling round and round, but was closely hugged to the bottom of the machine, which baffled the Mounties by turning about and retraversing the settlement. This left the Mounties and the startled miners and fur-men who had rushed out, well away from the settlement.

"They're going to raid the settlement—or is the plane fallin'?" Rhodes shouted, as the black machine went into a glide a few hundred yards beyond the settlement.

"Dunno!" groaned Chapman. "Whole thing beats me! Gee! Look! They're lowerin' that safe! And—and there's a man waitin' for 'em! Come on!"

Both of Chapman's statements were true. Munch was letting out the cable so that the safe was dropping earthwards. There was a reason for that. They were intending to go well down for a brief second or so to pick up the man whom Chapman had spotted. It was necessary to allow the safe to drag along the ground for the safety of the machine.

At full pelt the Mounties went back across the snow towards the settlement, with the miners hard at their heels. The distance was too far for effective shooting with revolvers, the only weapons Chapman and Rhodes had with them. And although they dashed as hard as they could they realised what little chance they stood of impeding the bandits.

Came the moment when the bandit on the ground made a grab at the cable as it trailed past him. He seemed to wind his arms around it, and so was jerked off the ground. Promptly Munch began to wind up the cable, and the Hawk to set the machine's nose upward.

Fascinated, the men below could do nothing but watch—the man cling to the cable as it was wound in, and then, a few seconds later, he had disappeared, and the safe was once more close up to the bottom of the machine.

"Well, of all the—the blame stunts, that's the limit!" breathed Trooper Rhodes. "I'm beat! I'm sendin' in my papers after that!"

"Don't be a fool!" growled Chapman. "Who was the guy they took up, I wonder?"

"Can soon find out—by a roll-call," said Rhodes. "Let's have it, as we sure can't do anythin' else. Say, Chappy, there'll be the whole hog to pay over this!"

"Sure, we'll be for it," Chapman agreed. "But who'd have dreamed of such a thing? Come on, let's tally off."

The tallying off resulted in the discovery that one man was missing—a man named Phillips. He had come in a month before—the last man to come on the gold rush. He had staked out a claim, and had worked it assiduously, was a good fellow, and had banked his own gold-findings with the Mounties. He had said he came on snowshoes from as

far away as Port Nelson on the Hudson Bay, and had obviously come a good way.

Now, however, the Mounties saw another explanation. He had doubtless been "planted" by that plane, left to do his work of finding out where the gold was being cached, and probably had sneaked out one night, according to plan, to give information and to collect the grapnel.

"All of twenty thousand dollars—maybe thirty thousand!" Chapman growled. "There'll sure be a row. Say, here's another plane comin'!"

Both Mounties gripped their Service rifles as they watched the zooming plane coming out of the south.

But they didn't use them. If they had been surprised by the exploit not long since carried out before their eyes, they were still more surprised when they made out the Service marks on this newcomer.

"It belongs to the Force!" yelled Rhodes. "What's it mean?"

"Why ask me?" grunted Chapman, and dashed off to where Wings Welford had brought the Sky Queen down to earth.

Wings Wins!

BEFORE Wings or Rawlings could ask any questions, Rhodes had blurted out the astonishing story.

"The Hawk—he beat us to it!" snapped Welford.

"How long since he cleared off, and which way?"

"Not more than six minutes, and they went north," Chapman told him.

"Pile in again, Hal!" Wings told Rawlings. "Here's where we stand a chance! That safe and an extra man are in our favour. Give me a sight of 'em, and I'll hang on until we down 'em. Sure's fate!"

Rawlings piled in, and the plane skimmed along the ground, took off beautifully, and climbed with her engine all out. Wings was working for height now, so that Rawlings should have as wide a range of vision as possible through his powerful glasses. Incidentally, he reckoned it unlikely that the Hawk would go far with the safe dangling beneath his machine. He would come down and either cache it, to pick up or break open later, or else get it into the plane.

"Wouldn't be surprised," Wings told Rawlings through the phone, "if his original intention was to bust it open up here to save being weighted with the safe. But running into us maybe altered things for him. We'll see."

"Guess I hope we shall," said Rawlings.

They did see. After a while Rawlings, sweeping the distance ahead and below through his glasses, bawled into the phone:

"They're down—five miles north-west. They're working on the safe, by glory they are!"

"So much the better for us!" grated Wings, and swung the Sky Queen a point to the west. The machine roared on with her nose aslant. It helped her on speed, and Welford wanted to be as near as possible when the Hawk discovered him, as he must do in a few moments.

"Got us, Wings!" shouted Rawlings then. "Climbin' in, and—leaving the safe!"

"They would!" said Wings. "It's going to be a fight, and they're better without the load. If they win, they can go back for it. If they lose, what's the safe matter?"

"Sure thing," Rawlings admitted, and thrilled to the anticipated encounter.

Wings could now see the black plane, a moving speck on the waste of snow. Then she was up, but Wings was laughing to himself. He had the height this time; the air was his.

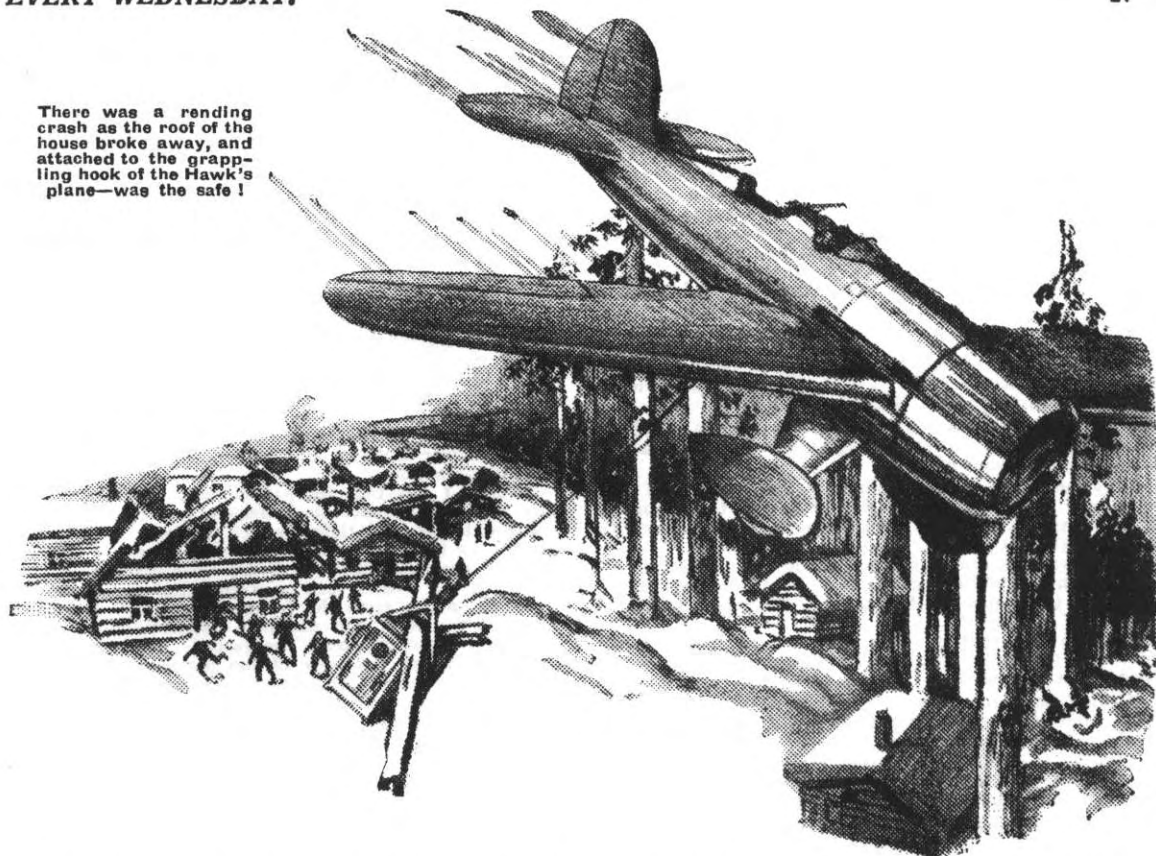
He brought the Sky Queen right over the Hawk, and as he swung over he spread a dose of lead poison down through his propeller. He saw, and exulted at the sight, the holes that were pepper-boxed into the wingspread of the bandit; then Rawlings was pouring bullets from his swivelled gun. He sprayed a raking fire into the Hawk, the final spurt before he was caught in the blind arc, smashing into the bandit's nose.

But the Hawk was not idle, neither had Munch been. The latter had pumped up lead as quickly as his heating gun would fire, and added further rents into the wings of the Sky Queen. The Hawk himself triggered as the Service plane came into his circle, and a sweeping hail of lead broke upon the Queen.

And the Hawk was rising—rising after a splendid sidetumble that took him out of range for a brief moment. Then he righted, and was coming up again—with Wings striving to retain the height advantage.

That's what both were fighting for—height. Even so, once Wings faked a panic. He dropped into a short glide, then spun—hoping that the Hawk would fall to the bait

There was a rending crash as the roof of the house broke away, and attached to the grappling hook of the Hawk's plane—was the safe!



and stop rising. But the Hawk was a wily bird; he seemed to know a fake flop from a real one.

So a split second later, Wings stood his machine on her tail, and scudded for the "roof." He gave her the gas, and she popped up like a shot from one of her own guns, regaining the height Wings had sacrificed for his futile bluff. From below, Munch sent in bursts of cackling bullets which raked the Sky Queen from tail to nose; but the Mounties were crouched in their cockpits, against just that. Then Wings played the second part of his plan. He did not even-keel. He looped over, rocking Rawlings in his straps.

Rawlings recovered immediately. He knew what was in the mind of Wings Welford, and he acted as if he were but a machine actuated by that mind. For a few brief seconds the Sky Queen was flat upside down, and Rawlings commanded a view of the whole spread of the bandit. Wings also had her—and two machine-guns spewed out flame and steel-jacketed bullets as the Queen flew right over the Hawk.

Then Wings had begun the next turn. As he did so, he saw the Hawk's machine wobble, saw the gun in the rear cockpit spurt its flames, and heard the "plink, plink, plink!" of snapping wires about him. But those sounds did not interest him nearly as much as did that wobble on the part of the bandit.

"B'lieve we've—got—her!" he choked into the phone, and then Rawlings was out of his blind arc again and firing. He fired at the enemy plane; but his bullets went slicing through space above her, for she suddenly rolled on to her side and dropped away. No man-maneuvre that! As she went, Wings had a vision of the rear gunpit, with a man slumped over the butt of the machine-gun, and another trying to ease him away.

Also, Wings saw the Hawk. He saw him struggling with his controls.

"No more, Hal!" Wings shouted through the phone, and zoomed away. "They're done—and, maybe, the Hawk can get down alive. I want him alive if possible! Besides, old chap, they've put up a good fight, crooked as they are!"

Suddenly the bandit craft threw up her tail, and as it came by Wings saw the working face of the Hawk as he leaned over into the rear cockpit as far as his belt would allow him. He had clutched the trigger of the dead Munch's gun, and sent a spatter of staccatoing bullets at the hull of the Sky Queen.

"Going down gamely," choked Wings, as he twisted from range, and the Hawk's machine went into a spin. "We're

going down, Hal, in case we can do anything for 'em. Looks like a burn up to me—the Hawk hasn't shut off!"

"Maybe he can't," said Rawlings, as the Sky Queen took the dive.

"But he could," snapped Wings. "He revved the engine just before she spun. He could have cut off instead of going for that gun. He's choosing to—die!"

It might be death in any case; but there is always the hope in the flier's breast that the end of the great fall may mean escape; always the chance, however slender. And here was the Hawk, mystery man of the north, deliberately going down with his engine running when he could easily have cut it off and so eliminated the risk of fire.

"Brave if crooked," said Wings. "Why do such men go crooked?"

The bandit plane struck—struck with her nose, and her tail seemed to waggle defiance as she did so. The nose had buried itself deep in the ground, for the wings were flush with the snow.

"She's gone into a snowdrift!" bellowed Rawlings.

"She was smoking as she struck," said Wings, as the Sky Queen's wheels took the snow-surface. The machine bounced up, and then dropped again, and presently Wings and Hal Rawlings were clambering out.

And as Welford stepped on to the snow there whistled past his head a bullet—there was the crack of a high-powered rifle, and a spurt of flame from near the wrecked bandit-plane.

Wings jumped for cover, and Rawlings followed his example. Both knew that by some miracle the Hawk, and perhaps one of his companions, had escaped death, and that they were making a desperate throw to secure the Service vessel. If they did so, they could yet collect the loot.

"We're going up, and we'll comb him out!" snapped Wings, as he fingered the dash, and started the motor. The Sky Queen taxied along in response—and that high-powered rifle, unheard now, popped again and again.

"Look out for the rear gun when we're over her, Hal," Wings said, as the plane rose. "That other chap may be alive and waiting to work it. I want you to drop one of your bombs. Not on the machine, but just to show him that we mean business."

"Right-ho!" said Rawlings, and the Sky Queen was riding two hundred yards up. Wings put her on to a

roaring straight keel, and as she sped over to one side of the crashed plane, Rawlings loosed the bomb. A bullet tore through the bottom of the machine and literally put the breeze up Wings, since it ceased along his jacket-back.

The Sky Queen rocked as the explosion came, but Wings had the machine under control.

He circled, and landed the Sky Queen fifty yards from where a man showed, his legs draped down ludicrously.

Welford and Rawlings sprinted across the snow. There was no shooting this time. To Welford's relief the man lived when they hauled him out, but he was unconscious. In the rear cockpit of the plane was another living man;

"The chief—is the chief dead?" he gasped.

"Meaning this fellow?" Wings Welford asked, looking up from where he was trying to revive the airman. "One's dead—over there!" And he pointed to the prone figure of Munch.

"Poor old Munch—he was a game 'un!" the bandit said. "Yeah, that's the chief—Hawk o' the North—you're workin' over. An' this is the end. Ugh!"

Wings Welford's heart bounded. So he had got the Hawk, after all! Got him alive! Fought him with an inferior machine and beaten him!

They got away. They located the safe, took land bearings, and then sped for Reindeer Lake. Chapman and Rhodes and the whole of the settlement crowded about the machine when it landed.

"You—you got 'em?" gasped Rhodes.

"Sure thing!" Wings grinned. "Isn't that our motto—eh—Get your man? What's the difference between a horse and a plane?"

"You've won, so why rub it in?" said the Hawk boldly. "I played to win—or lose, and I'm not grousing because the cards went against me."

"Didn't mean to rub it in," said Wings, flushing. "I'm sorry, and I'll say you're a fighter, Clemmens. Pity you went in for crime. You—"

"Cut that out!" snapped the Hawk. "I've played and lost; that's all there is to it. Except a stretch in the penitentiary, which won't last for ever, anyway!"

But the sentence that was meted out to him and to Philips was sufficient to keep them both out of trouble for quite a long time to come!

While Big Noise Loraine, down at Edmonton, shaking hands with Welford and Rawlings, said:

"I congratulate you both! You did well. Like to carry on as a flying detachment?"

"Sure thing, sir!" they duetted.

"Then carry on!" said Loraine. "By all means carry on!"

(Wings has got his first man, but will he be able to keep it up? He's up against an even tougher proposition in next week's thrilling yarn!)

LOVELL'S PAINFUL PRANK!

(Continued from page 23.)

The Head and the vicar, still standing at the gate, stared in petrified amazement.

"Boys! What—what— Good heavens! Boys! Stop—stop, I command you!" shouted the scandalised Head.

The juniors stopped—the moment they realised that Farmer Gubbins had stopped.

"Why," demanded the Head, with some heat, "were you chasing my boys with a horsewhip, Farmer Gubbins? I demand an explanation of this—this amazing outrage at once, sir!"

"And I'll danged soon tell you, mister!" hooted Farmer Gubbins, who was a very independent man. "Them boys of yours is worriting the life out of a man! After my apples—after my apples again—"

"Your apples!" stuttered the Head angrily. "Of course, the boys came after your apples, sir! At your own request, and with your permission, sir!"

"What? Dang me, if—"

"Look at that, sir!" boomed the Head, and he pointed to the notice on the barn wall.

The farmer looked. And then he snatched it down with a snort of wrath.

"Think I put that there!" he hooted. "Can't you see it's a practical joke. Dr. Chisholm? So that's why that danged tramp and them danged villagers came pestering me for the key of the apple loft! This is one of your young villam's practical jokes! I didn't write that there!"

It was the Head's turn to stare. And then suddenly he took the notice from the farmer's hand and looked at it. Then he turned it over and gave a sudden start.

"Good—good gracious!" he gasped.

He examined the back of the notice closely. It was written on several sheets of exercise paper gummed together.

"It is certainly a practical joke, Farmer Gubbins," he said, in a trembling, grinding voice. "This—this outrageous notice was written at Rookwood. It is written on Rookwood exercise papers, the backs of which have been used by a Rookwood junior. His name even appears upon it, though I should have discovered the culprit, without doubt, by the handwriting. Lovell!"

"Y-y-y-yeeccees, sir!" groaned Lovell.

"Your scandalous conduct is now clear! You will return immediately to Rookwood and will await me in my study. The rest of you will also return and hold yourselves in readiness to be sent for if required. Go!"

Everybody at Rookwood agreed that it was just like Lovell. Just like Lovell to print the notice on sheets of impot paper, with his handwriting and even name on!

THE END.

(That ass Lovell's in trouble again next week, until Morny comes to the rescue! Don't miss "NO CATCH FOR MANDERS!")

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