

YOU WANT THE BEST SCHOOL YARNS—HERE THEY ARE!

The GEM 2^D



TOM MERRY HAS A DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO SOLVE IN THIS—

The SNEAK of



CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry Speaks Out.

HERR SCHNEIDER was growing exasperated. There was nothing new or surprising in that. The boys in the Shell at St. Jim's frequently succeeded in exasperating Herr Schneider before the German lessons were over.

Tom Merry gave him trouble sometimes. Tom was one of the brightest boys in the class, but Herr Schneider was usually down on him, and so Tom sometimes indulged himself in the pastime of ragging the German master.

On the present occasion, however, it was not Tom Merry who was at fault. Herr Schneider was trying to drive his beautiful Deutsch into the head of Gibbons, the slowest-witted boy in the Shell, and he was finding it a thankless task.

"Dis class," said Herr Schneider, with exasperated deliberation—"dis class is te most stupid dat I nefer saw before. Mein Gott! Vill you nefer understand after? It is like trying to teach to blocks of wood. Gore, you vas laugh!"

"I, sir? Certainly not, sir!" said Gore, who never had any conscientious scruples about departing from the straight path of veracity.

"Tat vas vus untroot, Gore. You vill take fifty lines of Schiller."

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"But, sir—"
"Silence! Tom Merry, you vill read out te line vich I write on te blackboard."

"Yes, sir."
Herr Schneider took his chalk and wrote. The class grinned at one another when his back was turned. They took a wicked delight in seeing the German master growing more and more exasperated, so long as he stopped short of using his pointer upon their knuckles.

"The old duffer is getting quite wild," Gore remarked in a whisper to Gibbons, who sat next to him. "He'll have to lick somebody soon to let off steam, or he'll explode, I think."

"He, he, he!" said Gibbons.
Herr Schneider's head popped round.
"You vas find te lesson a laughing matter, Gibbons, hein? I tink tat perhaps you not so stupid as you pretend to be. Ve shall sec."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Gibbons. "I'm in for it now! He's been picking on me all through the lesson because I can't get on to his silly Deutsch. I believe the brute's connecting that sentence on the blackboard for my special benefit."

"Very likely," said Gore comfortingly. "And it's a jolly long one, too, and has some beastly long words in it."

"I say, you'll tell me what it means, if he asks me, won't you?" whispered Gibbons.

"H'm, perhaps!"

"That's the worst of old Schneider," murmured Tom Merry to Manners and Lowther, who were on either side of him. "The more you rag him, the harder he makes the lesson. He's putting down some stuff there difficult enough for the Fifth. He seems to forget that we're only tender lambs in the Shell."

Herr Schneider finished his scrawling and laid down his chalk. He turned round with a frowning brow, and his little eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Now, Merry!"

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—GRIPPING LONG COMPLETE YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

the SHELL!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**



Tom Merry stood up and looked at the line written on the board. As it happened, Tom Merry was not only a bright scholar, but he had a taste for German literature, and frequently read Goethe and Schiller for his own pleasure, and so he was seldom found wanting in the German class.

"Es reden und traumen die Menschen viel von bessern kunstigen Tagen," read out Tom Merry from the scrawling characters without a fault.

"Goot! You may sit down, Merry. Gibbons, you vill kindly construe tat line pefore."

Gibbons scratched his head; Gibbons shifted in his seat; Gibbons turned red and then pale. But Gibbons did not speak.

"Did you vas hear dat I say mit meinself, Gibbons?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Der why you not obey after?" thundered Herr Schneider.

Gibbons fixed an imploring look upon Gore. He knew that Gore was clever at German, and could help him if he chose. It was no good talking to Herr Schneider. He was in a mood to be utterly unreasonable, and he was already looking on his desk for his pointer.

"Shall I tell you what it means?" whispered Gore, with a gleam of ill-natured mischief in his eyes.

"Yes, do, please, Gore," murmured Gibbons.

Herr Schneider had found his pointer, and his hand was closing upon it.

"It means, 'I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany,'" whispered Gore.

Gibbons was too simple and too hurried to notice the

absurdity of Gore's information. He thought only of blurring out the translation before Herr Schneider reached him with the pointer.

"Now den, Gibbons, you vill construe, or—"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir!" exclaimed Gibbons.

Herr Schneider stood petrified.

The class was petrified, too, for a moment. Tom Merry, who was at the desk behind Gore, had heard his whisper to Gibbons, but had never dreamed that Gibbons would be stupid enough to take it seriously. Only for a moment were the boys dumb-founded. Then a yell of laughter went up that rang through the Form-room.

"Mein Gott!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Vat—vat did you say, Gibbons?"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir."

"You—you dare to speak so to your master, Gibbons! You—you—"

Words failed Herr Schneider, and he stood trembling with rage, and glaring at the unfortunate dunce of the class.

Gibbons was dismayed and astounded. He had no idea of the trick Gore had played upon him, and he couldn't understand why Herr Schneider had lost his temper.

"You say, Gibbons—you haf said—tat—tat—"

"I wish every old Deutsch jossor would go back to Germany, sir."

"Mein Gott! Stand out here, Gibbons!"

The dunce of the Shell rose reluctantly.

"What—what for, sir?" he stammered.

"Stand out here, ain't it!" roared Herr Schneider.

Gibbons reluctantly left his place and stood out before the class. The boys were almost in convulsions. Those who had heard Gore's whisper to Gibbons knew the joke, while the rest imagined that Gibbons was deliberately "cheeking" the German master, or else that he had taken leave of his senses.

"Now, Gibbons, I vill deal mit you. You speak of your master as 'old shosser,' do you? You vish he go pack mit himself to Sherman after? Mein Gott! If te class not stop laughing, I detain efery poy here for vun hour dis afternoon."

The almost hysterical merriment of the Shell died away. It was a half-holiday that day, and a fine winter day. They didn't want to be detained, but Herr Schneider was quite capable of carrying out his threat in his present mood.

Tom Merry leaned over the desk and whispered to Gore. "You've got Gibbons into a fearful row, Gore."

Gore was looking rather pale. He had acted in a spirit of ill-natured mischief, which was his am'able way. Now that trouble had come of it, he wished he had not taken such an advantage of Gibbons' simplicity. But it was too late to think of that now.

"Shut up!" he whispered.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

He saw that Gore had no intention of owning up, but meant to leave the unfortunate Gibbons to bear the brunt of the incensed master's anger.

"Gibbons, I not deal mit you meinself after. I vill send

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TOM MERRY ACCUSED OF SNEAKING!
Because he saves an innocent boy
from getting a flogging!

you to te Head. You vill take dis note and wait. Such insolence is not for me to deal mit pefore."

"But I—sir, I—I—"

"Silence!"

Gibbons relapsed into worried silence. The German master rapidly scrawled a note for the delinquent to take in to the master of St. Jim's. It was pretty certain that note would get Gibbons a flogging—merely a caning would not meet the case.

Tom Merry exchanged glances with Manners and Lowther. Both were looking wrathful. For Gibbons to take the licking was too bad, and any decent fellow would have owned up to the joke at once. But it was evidently Gore's intention not to do so.

Taking advantage of Herr Schneider being busy with the note, Tom Merry reached across and tapped Gore on the shoulder. Gore shook his hand off savagely. Tom bent down and whispered:

"Gore, you can't let Gibbons go to the Head!"

"Shut up!"

"You know he'll get an awful licking."

"Mind your own business!"

"Are you going to own up?"

"No, I'm not!"

"You cad!"

Gore shrugged his shoulders. Hard words break no bones, and he was not going to take a flogging for the sake of Tom Merry's opinion of him.

"The rotten cad!" whispered Monty Lowther. "It would serve him right if one of us gave him away to Schneider."

"Serve him jolly well right, rather! But we can't! It would be sneaking."

"What about him, then, letting Gibbons go to the Head?" said Tom Merry, his eyes flashing. "That's worse than sneaking."

"I know it is, but—"

"I know what I'm going to do," said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "Sneaking or no sneaking, Gore's not going to play that dirty trick on Gibbons!" He leaned forward again.

"Gore, are you going to own up like a decent chap?"

"Confound you, hold your tongue!"

"Are you going to own up?"

"No, I tell you!"

"Very well. If you don't own up before Gibbons leaves the room, I shall do it for you!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth.

Gore started.

"You won't! You daren't speak! The whole Form would cut you!" he muttered savagely.

"I'll risk that! Mind, you'll own up, or I'll stand up and explain to Schneider."

"Sneak!"

Tom Merry's cheek burned red at the taunt, but it did not alter his decision. He had never been called a sneak before, and the bitter word struck deep. But he felt that he was doing right. He had not much time to think. But to see the fool of the class suffer for the fault of one who should never have taken advantage of his simplicity—that was what Tom Merry could not stand.

"Dere is te note," exclaimed Herr Schneider, handing it to Gibbons. "Take tat te headmaster, you insolent poy. No, you need not gry here, you vill haf reason to gry when te Head reads tat note."

Gibbons' eyes were filling. He took the note and started for the door.

Tom Merry gave one more fierce whisper to Gore:

"Are you going to speak?"

Gore did not move.

The hero of the Shell rose to his feet. His face was pale now, but determined. The eyes of the whole class were upon him, but he never faltered.

"Stop, Gibbons!"

Gibbons stopped and turned round in sheer surprise, while Herr Schneider stared at Tom Merry.

"If you please, sir, may I explain—"

"Vat do you vish to explain, Merry?"

Gibbons was not to blame, sir. He thought he was construing that sentence on the board when he said what he did!"

Herr Schneider glared at the speaker through his spectacles.

"Ach! So tat vas anoder of your little jokes, Merry! You tink you make me believe tat Gibbons tink I write such a sentence for te class, hein?"

"He was told so, sir."

"Ach! I tink I see—you tell him so, ain't it, for vun shoke mit yourself?"

"No, sir, I did not tell him so."

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"Den who vas tell him so?" exclaimed Herr Schneider angrily.

Tom Merry was silent.

"If tis is not vun of your little shokes, Merry, tell me who told Gibbons tat tat sentence meant such nonsense."

Tom Merry looked at Gore. The latter kept his eyes fixed on the desk before him.

"Answer me, Merry! I vill not question Gibbons, because tat poy is too stupid as neler vas. If vat you say is true, who vas te rascal?"

"It was Gore, sir!"

It was out now. Tom Merry had had no alternative. Gore started, in spite of all; he had not expected Tom Merry to speak his name.

There was a buzz in the class, and some of Gore's friends ventured upon a faint hiss.

"Gore, stand out pefore te class after."

Gore, scowling like a demon, left his seat. There was little need to inquire now, for his look showed plainly enough that Tom Merry's assertion was correct.

The German master fixed a stern and grim glance upon him.

"So, Gore, you vas put dose vords into Gibbons' mout', vas you, after?"

Gore was sullenly silent.

"Answer me!" thundered Herr Schneider. "Did you tell Gibbons to say tat?"

"I—I—I—"

"Yes or no?"

"It was a joke, sir," stammered Gore. "I didn't really think he would say it to you, sir."

Herr Schneider's brow set grimly.

"Very well, Gore, I tink you must be taught tat it is not correct to allude to your master as a shosser, even for a shoke. Gibbons, you may return me tat note, and go pack to your seat. Gore, do you prefer to be punished by me, or sent to te headmaster?"

"By you, sir, please," said Gore hastily. "But—but I—"

"Tat is enough. You vill hold out your hands—six each."

Gore received six on each hand from the pointer. It was not so much for the joke that Herr Schneider caned him as for nearly causing an innocent boy to be flogged. For that, George Gore certainly deserved a licking—and he had it. He was wriggling with pain when Herr Schneider had finished making play with the pointer.

"Now go pack to your seat, Gore. You vill copy tat line on te blackboard, and write it out two hundred times tis afternoon pefore. You vill stay in te class-room mit yourself after. Go pack to your place! Not a vord!"

Gore resumed his seat with a face like a thundercloud. He gave Tom Merry a glance of hatred, which did not trouble the hero of the Shell much. His hands were paining a great deal, for the pointer was hard, and Herr Schneider had not laid the blows on lightly. But the master's eye was upon him now, and he was not permitted to be sullen or slack during the remainder of the lesson.

In fact, Herr Schneider gave Gore his most particular attention, and he led him on a personally-conducted tour among German conjugations, till the cad of the Shell felt as if his head was turning round.

He was glad enough when the lesson was over. So was Herr Schneider. A half-holiday gave the German master a good opportunity of getting to the experiments in the school laboratory which was the delight of his heart. He dismissed the class with obvious relief to himself and them.

As Tom Merry went out with his chums Gore passed close to him.

"Sneak!" he hissed in Tom Merry's ear.

Tom coloured and his teeth clicked together. But he walked on with Manners and Lowther without replying. He could make allowances for Gore's feelings at that moment. Gore was feeling very sore—in a double sense. But the word was taken up by others, and it rang again in Tom Merry's ear as he went out into the quadrangle:

"Sneak!"

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Loses His Temper.

"I SAY, deah boys!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House at St. Jim's, who spoke. He came up to Blake and Herries in the quadrangle, looking as if he had heard news.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake. "Are you coming to football practice?"

"Yass, wathah! But—"

"Then go and bury that eyeglass, and get into your things."

Arthur Augustus screwed the offending eyeglass into his eye, and took a lofty survey of Jack Blake through it.

"My deah fellow, pway get off that subject. I weally wish you would not make so many wude remarks in wegard to my monocle!"

"Oh, blow your monocle! Go and get ready!"

"But I've somethin' to tell you, deah boys."

"What's the great news? Have you thought out a new design in waistcoats? Have you invented a plan for introducing all the colours of the rainbow into a single garment?"

"Pway do not be personal, Blake!" said D'Arcy, who

"Yaas, wathah! I was inclined to chawactewise the statement as wank wot myself," remarked Arthur Augustus; "but Gore is in the class-woom all on his lonesome, swottin' away at Schillah, and so it looks as if there might be some-thin' in it, you know."

"We'll look into this," said Blake. "If the fellows started talking rot of that kind Tom Merry would let it pass without a word. He'd be too proud to say anything. We'll look into the matter and set it right."

"What about the football?" said Herries.

"The football can wait" said Blake. "I'm going to see Gore. You can come with me if you like."

"Right-ho, I'm coming!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of the Fourth proceeded at once to the class-room where the unlucky cad of the Shell was sitting at his lonely desk.



Tom Merry burst unceremoniously into Gore's study. Gore started to his feet, and a paper slipped from his hand and fluttered to the table.

prided himself very much upon his fancy waistcoats. "This news concerns Tom Mewwy."

"Don't say he's got any new ideas. We're fed-up with them."

"Not at all. It's what they're sayin' about him."

"Eh! What's that?" exclaimed Blake, instantly serious. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6 in the School House, might be at war with the chums of the Shell, and they generally were, but at the bottom there was a real liking and respect on both sides, and at the suggestion of anybody "saying things" about Tom Merry, Blake fired up at once.

"What have they been saying, Gussy?"

"Some of the fellows are callin' him a sneak, deah boy."

"What rot! That's the last name that should be stuck on Tom Merry."

"Yaas, wathah; but that's what they're sayin'—Mellish and Gore, you know. Gore's detained for the afternoon at German, because Tom Mewwy told the German master somethin' about him, you know. So the chap's are sayin'."

"Rot!" said Herries.

"Rank rot!" assented Blake,

Gore looked up with a scowl as they came in. Blake had ascertained in passing that the German master was busy in the laboratory, and so the visit to the detained boy was not likely to be noticed.

"Hallo, Gore! I hear you're kept in!" said Blake.

"What's the row?"

"I'm kept in, that's all!" scowled Gore. "And all through your precious friend Tom Merry. He sneaked on me!"

"Liar!" said Blake cheerfully.

Gore scowled, and dropped his eyes to his work again.

Blake came closer to his desk.

"Now, you may as well tell us the truth, Gore," he said. "It may have been through Tom Merry that you were detained, but he never sneaked on you or anybody else."

"Ask any fellow in the Shell!" snarled Gore. "Get out, and leave me alone!"

"Well, we don't enjoy your company enough to stay," said Herries. "You're an ill-conditioned rotter, Gore. I expect it was all your own fault!"

"Yaas, wathah! There is no doubt that Gore is an ill-conditioned woter," remarked D'Arcy. "He spilt some gway on my waistcoat yestahday on purpose, and a fellow who would do that is capable of anythin'."

The chums of the Fourth, considerably puzzled, quitted the class-room. Gore continued his weary scribbling from Schiller. In the quadrangle the juniors encountered Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House.

Figgins stopped them.

"I say, what's this they're saying about Tom Merry?" he exclaimed. "It can't be possible that he has been sneaking!"

"Of course it isn't!" said Blake promptly. "Have you come this way for a thick ear, Figgins?"

"Pax!" exclaimed Figgins, grinning. "We don't want to row you now—we're just going down to the footer. French told us. He says 'Tom Merry gave Gore away to the German master.'"

"And so he did!" exclaimed French, joining them. "I heard him!"

"We all know about it," said Mellish. "Tom Merry stood up and peached on Gore, and got him detained for the afternoon. In my opinion the fellow should be cut!"

"Hadh't you better tell him so?" suggested Blake, with a grin.

"Yaas, wathah! I should weally like to see the shape of Mellish's nose after he had told 'Tom Mewwy so, deah boys."

"I think he ought to be ragged for it," said Mellish hotly. "He won't explain, either. One of the fellows asked him to explain, and he punched his nose."

"He did, did he?" said Blake. "Well, I dare say it served him right!"

"There the bounder is now!" exclaimed French. "Let's make him explain. Not that there's much to explain. He gave Gore away right enough!"

The group of juniors turned towards Tom Merry, who was coming out of the School House.

Tom's face had lost something of its usual sunny expression. He had acted rightly, as he believed, in the class-room that morning. But there was a great deal of feeling shown on the subject, hostile to him. All who had been his enemies, open or secret, had seen their chance now.

"I say, Merry!" called out French. "Stop a minute, will you?"

Tom Merry stopped, and a steely look came into his eyes. "What do you want?" he asked.

"You sneaked about Gore this morning. We want—"

Biff!

Tom Merry's left came out like lightning, and the astonished French found himself lying on his back in the quadrangle.

"Is that what you want?" asked Tom Merry icily. "If so, you've only got to get up and have some more. There's lots!"

French had plenty of pluck. He jumped up and went for Tom Merry like a bull. But he was no match for the hero of the Shell. Tom let out with right and left, and French went down again with a bump.

Tom Merry looked at him, and as he did not rise in a hurry he turned his glance upon the silent group of juniors.

"That's enough for French," he said. "That's my answer to anybody who speaks to me as he did."

His glance roved over the group challengingly.

Blake and Figgins exchanged glances. This hot and hasty temper was not much like Tom Merry. But the junior had been galled to the quick by the accusation of "sneaking," and his usually pleasant and sunny temper was gone for the time.

"All right, old chap, keep your wool on!" said Blake slowly. "Nobody here has accused you of being a sneak, so far."

"French did!" said Tom Merry.

"You didn't give him much time to accuse you of anything. We wouldn't believe a thing like that of you if we could help it. But there's been a lot said, and I think you might as well explain, so that your friends can stand up for you."

"I don't want anybody to stand up for me," said Tom sharply. "If I have any friends, they know I am not a sneak, and that's enough without talk."

"I know: but they are saying—"

"I don't care what they are saying. You can think what you like. If you think I am a sneak, think so, and be hanged! I don't care a rap for any of you!"

And Tom Merry put his hands into his pockets and walked away.

"My only hat!" murmured Blake. "I've never seen Tom Merry in a tantrum before. But if this isn't a first-class, double-back-action tantrum, I'm a giddy Dutchman!"

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"It's true—plain enough!" said Mellish. "I always said Tom Merry was a—"

"Oh, you shut up!" said Figgins.

And the gleam in Figgins' eyes warned Mellish that he had better do so.

He walked away with French, who was rubbing his nose ruefully.

"Well, this is a rotten business," said Figgins. "I should hate to think badly of Tom Merry, but I think he might explain. No good flying into a tantrum, that I can see, and refusing to say a word on the subject."

"Not at all, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with an air of superior knowledge. "I can perfectly understand the feelin' of a fellow of honah on such a mattah. He feels feahfully insulted at anybody thinking for a moment that he could be guilty of a dishonourable action, and it becomes a question of dig not to explain. Undah the circs I weally think I should act in the same mannah."

"There's something in what Gussy says," remarked Kerr, the Scottish partner in Figgins & Co. "But the matter ought to be thrashed out, all the same."

"Yaas, wathah! Let us thwash it out, deah boys!"

"I say, you kids!" exclaimed Jimson of the Shell, coming up. "You're wanted in the Form-room after tea. We're going to look into this matter of Tom Merry and Gore, and see the rights of it. All the Shell and the Fourth are going to be there."

"Good wheeze!" said Blake heartily. "We'll be there!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 3.

Herr Schneider's Loss.

"MEIN GOTT! I tink tat I have te thing after!"

Herr Schneider's eyes were blazing with excitement behind his spectacles. For two solid hours he had been busy in the laboratory, and fellows who had looked in had seen him immersed in the midst of mysterious smells, oblivious to everything but the experiment he was engaged upon.

Now he was jotting down something in pencil upon a fragment of paper, the first that came to hand, and his looks showed that he considered that he had made a discovery.

"Tat is all right pefore," he murmured. "How many times haf I made tat experiment, ain't it, and haf nefer hit upon it exactly. Now I haf write down the proportions, I nefer make vun mistake again. It is vun great nuisance tat I haf te pad memory, but now tat I haf it written down, everything in te yard is peautiful, so te English say."

And, with a look of the most supreme satisfaction, the German master thrust the paper into his pocket, and then pulled out his handkerchief to mop his brow.

The experiment, whatever it was, was completed to his satisfaction. He proceeded to wash his hands, and they required some washing, too, for his fingers were deeply stained by the chemicals he had been using.

"Mein Gott! I haf succeeded at last, and te peautiful dye which I haf invented vill soon be known all over te world!" he murmured. "It is a great triumph of science, and Otto Friedrich Schneider alone knows te great secret."

He left the laboratory. As he went away he remembered the detained boy in the Shell class-room, and he was in such a good humour that he resolved to take pity on Gore. He went into the class-room, and found the cad of the Shell scriawling wearily away.

"Gore," began Herr Schneider.

Gore looked up sullenly.

"Gore, you haf been a pad poy, but I vill let you off te remainder of your imposition."

George Gore's face brightened considerably. He rose with alacrity from his desk.

"Thank you, Herr Schneider!"

"I haf succeeded," said Herr Schneider, beaming upon Gore, "in ascertaining the gorrect formula, and soon te name of Otto Friedrich Schneider vill be— But, of course, you do not understand. But on such an occasion as te present I cannot bunish even a pad poy. You vas forgiven, Gore, but don't do it again."

"Yes, sir," said Gore, wondering what the German master was driving at, and what had put him into such an unusually good temper.

Herr Schneider drew out his handkerchief as he went to the door, and a fragment of paper fluttered to the floor.

Gore noticed it, but he was too bitter against the German master, in spite of his pardon, to draw his attention to it.

Herr Schneider did not notice his loss. He went out of the class-room, his fat face beaming with the satisfaction he was feeling.

Gore picked up the paper and looked at it curiously. It was scribbled on in pencil in German calligraphy, and the words—most of them abbreviations—were like Sanskrit to

Gore; but a flash came into his eyes as he looked at the incomprehensible document.

"That's what he was speaking about. It's a giddy recipe!"

Gore thrust the paper hastily into his pocket. Like all the boys of the School House, he knew that the German master carried on experiments in the school laboratory and in his study, the secret of which he did not confide to anybody at the school.

His unusual good humour and satisfaction that afternoon, and his reference to having discovered the "correct formula," showed Gore what a value this fragment of paper had in the German master's eyes. The fruits of his experiments were written down here, and the paper was in Gore's hands.

"My hat!" murmured Gore. "Here's the chance I want. I'll make him sit up, the old brute! I'll teach him to detain me on a half-holiday! I shouldn't wonder if he forgets the thing, whatever it is, now he's lost the recipe. He's got a memory like a sieve for everything but impositions. My hat! I'll lead him a dance for this!"

And Gore put his books under his arm and quitted the class-room. He met Herr Schneider coming back along the passage.

The German master's look and manner showed that he had already discovered his loss. He stopped as he saw Gore.

"Gore, mein poy, haf you seen a baper lying about?"

"Yes, sir," said Gore.

The Herr made a gesture of relief and joy.

"Where, Gore? Tell me where instantly!"

"In Mr. Railton's study, sir."

"What! You mistake! It could not possibly be in Mr. Railton's study!" said Herr Schneider, shaking his head.

"Yes, sir, it was. Mr. Railton was reading it, sir."

The German master gave a jump.

"Reading it—reading it! Are you sure, Gore?"

"Certainly, sir! I saw him."

The German master turned to stride off to the House-master's study, and Gore grinned. Glad enough he would have been to see Herr Schneider rush off to Mr. Railton in quest of his missing paper, and demand it at the House-master's hands; but Herr Schneider was suspicious of Gore. He turned back.

"Ven did you see dis?" he demanded. "It is not many minutes since I lost mein baper. Ven did you see Mr. Railton reading tat baper, Gore?"

"This morning, sir."

"Ten it could not have been mein paper!" exclaimed the German angrily.

"You haven't told me what paper you mean, sir," said Gore. "You said a paper. The paper Mr. Railton was reading was the 'Daily Telegraph,' sir."

The German master's brows contracted darkly.

"Gore, I believe tat tat is a deliberate misunderstanding. Te baper vich I haf lost is a small piece of baper written on in pencil before."

"Oh, is it, sir? You didn't say so. If you had asked me if I had seen that, I should have said no at once."

"Den you haf not seen such a piece of paper? It is fery annoying, because I hao it in my pocket a few minutes ago, and I must haf dropped it in dis passage or in te room. Look for it, for me, Gore. Your eyes are petter tan mine."

"Certainly, sir!" said Gore, with a silent chuckle.

He accompanied the German master along the passage, and then back again into the class-room. They searched and peered in every corner, but in vain, which was not surprising, considering that the missing paper was buttoned up inside Gore's jacket all the time.

Herr Schneider was deeply troubled, that was evident. Gore saw it, and was pleased. The paper was more valuable than he thought. While the document containing the great secret was lost, Gore held the German's peace of mind at his mercy.

"Perhaps you left it in the laboratory, sir," suggested Gore, the examination of the class-room having failed to produce the missing paper.

"It is possible. I will see."

Herr Schneider hurried away.

Gore chuckled, and went his own way. It was close on tea-time, and such of the boys as were not having tea in their own studies were crowding into the Hall.

"Hallo, Gore!" exclaimed Wayne. "So you've finished?"

"Old Schneider let me off."

"Did he? Unusually nice of him, I must say."

"He was in a specially good temper about something, I think," said Gore carelessly.

"I say, we want you in the Form-room after tea. There's a meeting of the juniors of the School House to see into this affair between you and Tom Merry."

"All right!" said Gore viciously. "Tom Merry sneaked

about me, and got me into that row, and I'll tell him so to his face before the whole Form."

They went in to tea. Meanwhile, Herr Schneider had searched the laboratory in vain. He made a trip along the passage again, and had another look in the class-room.

Then he looked in his study, and then he gave it up. He was in a state bordering on distraction now. The formula he had written upon the paper was the result of a long and difficult experiment, which he might not be able to repeat with success.

Besides, the valuable secret—valuable in the eyes of the German, at least—was at the mercy of whomsoever found the paper.

The German master finally rushed off to Mr. Railton's study.

The master of the School House was there, and he looked in surprise at Herr Schneider's flushed, excited face.

In a few words the German master explained the facts. Mr. Railton listened sympathetically. He knew that Herr Schneider believed himself to be on the track of a great chemical discovery, and whether his belief was well-founded or not, the loss of the paper was equally serious to an enthusiastic experimenter.

"Dear me," said Mr. Railton, "this is very unfortunate! But the paper will surely be found, Herr Schneider. I will send for the House prefects, and instruct them to inform the whole House of your loss, and the paper will certainly be found and brought to you."

It was all that could be done. The House prefects received their instructions, and ere long the whole School House knew that the German master had lost a paper written upon in German, which was a sufficient description for its identification.

But no one came forward with it, and though some of the juniors were stimulated to a search by the offer of a reward of five shillings to the finder, the paper remained missing.

Gore chuckled when he saw the youngsters hunting through the rooms and passages. The paper was in his inside pocket, and safe enough till he chose that it should see the light again.

CHAPTER 4.

The Form Meeting.

"MERRY!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Come into mein study, mein poy!"

Tom Merry obediently entered the German master's study. He wondered what was wanted. He had been passing to go up to his own quarters when Herr Schneider called him in. He could not think of any recent delinquency which might have come to the German master's ears.

Herr Schneider was looking awfully serious. He stood aside for Tom Merry to pass in, and then closed the door. The next step would have been to take down a cane, but he did not do so. He stood looking at Tom Merry with the gravity of an owl.

Tom Merry was surprised at first, and then a little alarmed. He wondered whether Herr Schneider had a screw loose somewhere.

"You wanted to speak to me, sir," he ventured at last.

"Ja, mein poy," said the German master. "I wish to speak mit you meinself after. You vas a pad poy sometimes, Merry, ain't it?"

"I hope not, sir!" said Tom demurely.

"Not as pad as some of tem," said Herr Schneider. "Not like Gore or Mellish. But you are as full of mischief as te

(Continued on the next page.)

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The Sneak of the Shell!

(Continued from page 7.)

monkey in te trees. You play tricks on your master sometimes. Merry, I haf bunished you many times."

"I know you have, sir," said Tom, his wonder growing.

"But I not tink you are te kind of poy to injure your master because of tat, hein?"

"Certainly not!"

"Den," said Herr Schneider persuasively, "if you haf taken mein baper you vill return him to me before, and nothing shall be said about te matter. You play a drick, but I forgive him if you return me te baper."

"What paper, sir?"

"Te baper vich I haf lost mit meinsel, vich contain te formula—vat you call te recipe, Merry."

"Oh, I know what you mean, sir! Some of the fellows are looking for it in the corridors."

"Ja, ja! Merry, if you haf taken tat baper—"

"But I haven't, sir," said Tom Merry, turning red. "Why should you think I have taken it? I had never heard of its existence till the prefects told us it was lost."

"And you haf not seen it, Merry?" asked Herr Schneider, looking at him intently.

"No, sir. If I had found it, I should have brought it to you at once."

"I pelieve you, Merry. Mein poy, tat is a most important baper, more important tan you can understand. It is ein great trouble to me to lose him. I tink to meinsel, tat Merry is te great shoker of te House, and perhaps he steal him as a shoke on his master, not tinkng tat te matter so serious."

"I understand, sir. I might have picked up the paper for a joke if I had seen it," said Tom Merry frankly; "but I should have returned it to you undamaged, sir. But, as it happens, I never saw it or heard of it till an hour ago."

"I pelieve you, Merry. You vas a mischievous poy, but you nefe tell vun lie. But I trust to you, Merry, if you find te baper to bring it to me."

"If I find it I shall certainly return it to you, sir."

"Tank you, mein poy! Tat is all. You may go. But vunce more, remember tat tat baper is of te greatest importance, and I shall haf no peace of mind till it is restored to me."

"I will remember, sir."

And Tom Merry quitted the study, rather relieved that the incident had ended so amicably. His little talks with the German master were not usually in so friendly a strain.

Tom Merry had had many little rubs with Herr Schneider, but he had a generous heart, and he was really concerned for the loss that sorely troubled the German. He would have taken a great deal of trouble to find the missing paper, had it been possible, and restore it to its owner; but he had not the faintest idea where to look for it.

As he left the German master's study, French of the Shell came along the passage.

Tom was rather surprised to see him there, as French belonged to the New House.

French stopped and stared at him.

"You're wanted in the Form-room, Merry," he said.

"Am I?" said Tom. "Who wants me, French?"

"We all do. Most of the Form are there, and a good many of the Fourth, too."

"What's going on? Is it a Form meeting?"

"Yes. Are you coming?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Tom wonderingly.

He didn't know any reason why a Form meeting should have been called, and he wondered why he had not been consulted about it, as he was head of the Shell. Still, he walked along with French to the Shell class-room.

The room was crowded. There was a buzz as Tom Merry entered with French.

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry looked round in amazement.

It was evident that the meeting had been expecting him, and in no friendly spirit, either. Boys of both Houses were there, and among the Shell members he saw his chums, Monty Lowther and Manners, who had entered a minute or two previously. They at once came towards him. Among the Fourth-Formers were Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, of Study No. 6 in the School House, and Figgins & Co. of the New House.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Gore. "Here's the sneak!"

Tom Merry turned crimson. He walked straight up to Gore.

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"Did you call me a sneak, Gore?"

"Yes, I did!" said Gore defiantly. "And so you are!"

Tom Merry's right hand went up, Jimson caught his wrist and dragged it back. Tom Merry turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Nuff of that, Merry!" said Jimson decisively. "No good hitting out at Gore. You've got to answer the charge."

"What charge?"

"The charge of having sneaked to a master. The whole Form are going to look into it. That is what we're here for."

Tom Merry's lips curled disdainfully.

"And that's why French brought me here, is it?"

"Yes, it is. I don't see why you should be above answering for yourself, any more than anybody else!" said French tartly. "And I tell you, Merry, you're a little too previous with that punching business. If a fellow can't give any answer but a slog on the nose, it shows that he can't have much to say for himself."

"That's so!" buzzed a dozen voices.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, I advise you as a fwied to keep your tempah. There is nothin' whatever to be gained by flyin' into a tantrum; and, besides, it is so beastlay ungentlemanly, don't you know, deah boy!"

"If you've got anything to say to me," said Tom Merry, looking round, "say it and have done with it. I haven't much time to waste over this fooling."

It was not a politic speech. The juniors did not care to have their proceedings characterised as fooling. But Tom Merry was not in a conciliatory mood just then.

"I say, Merry, don't be hasty," said Blake, aside. "The fellows have a right to know the rights of the matter, you know."

"That's it," said Figgins. "It's no earthly good riding the high horse, Merry."

Tom Merry made no reply.

"Rot!" broke out Monty Lowther. "Most of us heard the affair ourselves, and know why Tom Merry spoke out to old Schneider. I'd have done the same myself!"

"So would I!" said Manners, with equal warmth.

"Birds of a feather!" sneered George Gore.

"You shut up!" said Blake. "I feel awfully tempted to give you one in the eye myself. You have been asking for it for a long time!"

"Oh, don't start rowing!" exclaimed Jimson. "Let's get the matter settled! Stand back, there, you fellows! Now, Gore, just say out plainly what you've got to say against Tom Merry!"

Gore stepped forward before the expectant crowd, with his hands in his pockets and a sneer on his sallow face.

"I say Tom Merry sneaked on me in the class this morning," he said. "He gave me away to old Schneider, and got me licked and detained for the afternoon!"

"Now, Merry, what have you got to say?" asked French.

"Nothing," said Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Nothing."

"You admit—"

"I admit nothing. There are a good many fellows here who heard all that passed. They know whether I sneaked or not."

"I was there," said Monty Lowther, glaring at Gore. "I can tell you all about it, if you want to know. Gore played a dirty trick on Gibbons. He got him into a row with Schneider, and Gibbons was just going to the Head to take a flogging. Gore ought to have owned up."

"Of course he ought!" exclaimed Figgins. "A New House fellow would have owned up like a shot!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Jimson. "Go on, Lowther!"

"Merry asked Gore to own up, and told him he'd speak if Gore didn't. Gore wouldn't, so Merry spoke out. It wasn't sneaking. Could we sit there and let Gibbons go to the Head?"

"Gibbons! Come out, fathead!" said Jimson.

The dunce of the Shell came forward. He was looking very nervous. He didn't want to quarrel with Gore, neither did he wish to appear ungrateful to Tom Merry.

"Now, fathead, tell us exactly what happened!" commanded Jimson.

"But you were there, Jimson," said Gibbons; "you heard it all."

"What I heard isn't evidence, duffer!"

"But if you heard it all—"

"I didn't hear it all. Besides, there are many gentlemen present who were not there. You are to give your evidence in a straightforward manner, or else we shall rag you till you don't know whether you're on your head or your heels."

Gibbons told his story with irritating slowness and hesitation, but it all came out at last.

"Now," said Jimson, with a judicial air, "it was a funny wheeze that Gore worked off on Gibbons, there's no denying that."

"It nearly got me a flogging," said Gibbons.

"Exactly. When Gibbons got into a row, Gore ought to have stood up like a man and made a clean breast of it!"

"Oh, rot!" said Gore uneasily.

"Any decent fellow would have done so," went on Jimson.

"But, of course, Gore's not of that calibre. He never has acted like a decent fellow."

"Look here, Jimson—"

"Shut up, and don't interrupt! Gore ought to have owned up. Who agrees with me?"

"All of us!" was the general shout.

There was not a dissentient voice in the whole crowd of juniors.

"But, as he didn't own up," went on Jimson, "there arises

"Don't interrupt!" shouted back the Shell.

"Tom Merry's certainly created a precedent," said Jimson. "The rule is, that a fellow shall never be given away to a master, whatever the provocation. That's a jolly good rule, and Merry himself will admit it!"

"Of course I do!" said Tom Merry.

"But it was a peculiar case. To give away a fellow under ordinary circumstances is inexcusable, but under extraordinary circumstances it may or may not be justifiable."

"My hat! He talks like a gramophone!" said Figgins.

"But the question is," went on Jimson serenely, "is a fellow to be allowed to be his own judge in a case like that, and to decide for himself whether the circumstances justify him in giving a chap away? If we admit such a thing, the door is opened—"

"Tain't," said Herries; "the door's shut! Look!"



Tom Merry's fist came up like a flash, and Gore went crashing into the unlatched door of Mr. Ralton's study. The door flew open and Gore went hurtling into the room!

a difficult problem. Ought Tom Merry to have given him away?"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Certainly!"

"Rats!"

"You don't agree, gentlemen," said Jimson. "Let us sum up, and don't interrupt an honourable judge in the discharge of his duty. Gore ought to have owned up, and didn't, therefore Gore acted like a sneak. Is that agreed?"

"Yes!"

"Certainly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! But ought Tom Merry to have given him away? Gibbons was going to take a licking that properly belonged to Gore. Gore wouldn't do the honest thing. Now, I don't approve of giving a chap away to a master. But then, again, I don't approve of setting a dangerous precedent which might mislead youngsters belonging to the Fourth Form—"

"What's that?" roared twenty voices.

"I'm not alluding to the Form-room door, fathead!"

"What door do you mean, then?"

"A metaphorical door!"

"I've never heard of such a thing, and I'm jolly certain that there isn't one in this room!"

"I was speaking metaphorically!" shouted the exasperated Jimson. "Can't you shut up and not interrupt? I say that if we admit such a principle the door is opened to wholesale sneaking, as a sneak can always find some reason for sneaking. Therefore, I say that, though Tom Merry undoubtedly acted for the best motives, his action was not wrong, but injudicious."

"Well, that's a good word, anyway," said Blake.

"But it doesn't come under the head of sneaking," went on Jimson. "Sneaking is when a fellow tells a thing for his own advantage. Merry told this thing to save an innocent fellow from getting a licking belonging to a guilty one. He acted from the best motives, and, in my opinion, cannot be called a sneak."

"Hear, hear!"

"But, as I said, the precedent is a dangerous one, and so we hereby affirm the validity of the good old rule, that a fellow must not give anybody away to a master, for good reasons or bad ones, or any reasons at all."

"Hear, hear!"

"The finding of this court," went on Jimson, who was growing more and more magisterial every moment—"the finding of this court, therefore, is, that Tom Merry is not a sneak, but that he acted injudiciously, owing to Gore having acted like a cad."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To sum up," concluded Jimson, "Gore acted like a cad, Tom Merry like a duffer, and Gibbons like a howling jackass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The court is dissolved, without a stain upon its character," said Jimson, putting his hands in his pockets. "Who's coming to the gym?"

And the meeting broke up.

Blake slapped Tom Merry on the back.

"You see, the Form has done you justice, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "It seems to me that Jimson's summing-up was first-rate. That fellow ought to be a judge."

"Good!" said Figgins. "Gore comes out worst of the lot, and that's quite right. He was a rotten cad not to own up! Any New House fellow—"

"Oh, rats to you!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally think—"

"No yon don't, Gussy! You can't! Come along, Kerr and Wynn!"

And Figgins & Co. marched off.



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Monty Lowther and Manners took an arm each of Tom Merry and marched him off, too.

The Form meeting was over, and though Jimson's decision was not exactly gratifying to any of the three persons concerned, the general opinion was that Jimson was about right.

CHAPTER 5.

Merry Makes a Discovery.

"HALLO! What's that?"

It was Monty Lowther who uttered the exclamation as he came into the study with Tom Merry and Manners. It was the day after the affair in the Shell class-room, and the three chums had just come in after a slogging practice on the football field. They had cleaned up, and felt in a good humour and a glow of health after the hard and fast exercise.

"What's what?" asked Manners.

"That!"

Monty Lowther pointed to the table. A sheet of paper was pinned to it, and on the sheet was written in bold black letters, with a brush:

"SNEAK!"

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of anger.

"This is meant for me!" he exclaimed. "And it is Gore's work, I suppose."

His brow grew darker as he spoke. After the Form meeting, the fellows had generally agreed that Tom Merry's action in the class-room could not be considered as sneaking, and that he was, to repeat an old joke, "Not guilty, but not to do it again."

But Gore and his friends were not inclined to let the matter drop so easily.

"I'm not going to stand this," said Tom Merry, his teeth coming together hard. "I'll take it to Gore and ask him if he wrote it."

"And if he did," said Manners, "clean up his study with him!"

"We'll come and lend a hand," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, don't; I can manage it alone!"

And he picked up the insulting paper, and with it in his hand, walked quickly off to Gore's study. He was too angry to stand upon ceremony, and he gave the door a kick that sent it flying open, and walked in.

Gore jumped up. A paper fluttered from his hand to the table—a paper that he had evidently been studying carefully.

"What the—what the dickens do you mean by bursting on a fellow like this, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed, in a shaking voice.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

Gore had turned quite pale, and his hands were trembling.

There was no reason, that Tom Merry could see, why he should be so startled.

"What's the matter with you— Hallo, what's that?" broke off Tom Merry, as his eyes fell upon the paper Gore had dropped.

Gore had made a quick catch at it, but it had fallen out of his reach, and as he leaned over to get it, Tom Merry saw it plainly.

It was a fragment of paper, discoloured in places with some chemical dye, and written upon closely in German!

"Herr Schneider's paper!"

Tom Merry rapped the words out sharply as Gore snatched up the paper and thrust it into his pocket.

The cad of the Shell turned red and white.

"What do you want here, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry did not reply to the question. He came to the table, resting his hand upon the edge, looked at Gore across it.

"Is that the paper Herr Schneider lost, Gore?"

"Mind your own business."

"Then it is Herr Schneider's paper. You found it—and you are keeping it!"

"Suppose I am? It's no business of yours."

"You know how anxious he is about the loss of it!" said Tom Merry.

"I know he gave me a licking yesterday, and that my hands are smarting from it now," said Gore viciously.

Tom Merry's brow contracted.

"That's not the way to get even, by stealing his paper."

"Who says I'm stealing it?"

"You are keeping it, at all events."

"Suppose I am? Suppose I'm keeping it to lead him a dance, and make the old brute sit up?" sneered Gore. "Suppose I lead him a dance? Why shouldn't I?"

(Continued on page 12.)

LOOK INTO—



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

Hallo, chums! I've got a real peach of a St. Jim's yarn in store for you next Wednesday, so you will be well advised to step along to your newsagent at once and order your copy of the GEM. It would be a rare pity to miss such a treat. The title:

"THE MYSTERY OF THE HUT!"

gives you some idea of the type of yarn Martin Clifford has written for your entertainment. Thrills, mystery, and adventure with a spicing of humour are all to be found in this story of Tom Merry & Co., so be sure and read it. The next "item on the programme," as certain announcers say, is a fine long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood. There's some spirited football in it, as you will gather from Owen Conquest's title of—

"TUBBY'S WINNING GOAL!"

You'll enjoy this story, chums, take it from me. As a "sandwich" with a different flavour, so to speak,

"THE PUNCHER PALS!"

will fill the bill. There's plenty of whirlwind excitement and thrilling adventure in it, to satisfy the most exacting. Potts, the Office-Boy, appears again in another rib-tickling "strip," so your programme is well up to standard. Now, let's see what else is worth passing on to you from the Notebook.

THE NOBLE ART!

"Ladies and Gentlemen," roared the announcer at a boxing tournament recently, "on my left, Bombardier Austin; on my right, 'Nipper Brown.'" The crowd cheered and then settled down to enjoy a spirited exhibition of the noble art. And spirited it certainly was. Eight times the "Bombardier" hit the floor of the ring, and eight times he got up and rushed back for more punishment. It mustn't be assumed that he didn't hand out any in return, for he actually gave as good as he got. The crowd applauded—this indeed was "some" scrap. How long could it last? Surely not for the scheduled eight rounds! It didn't! At the beginning of the sixth round, "Nipper" Brown swung a beauty. Down went the "Bombardier." The referee thought it time to butt in then. He raised his hand to stop the fight and to award the decision to "Nipper" Brown. Then the ref. jumped. For immediately after "Nipper" had swung the last blow of the fight, he, himself, had sunk to the canvas unconscious.

How the crowd cheered. But the biggest bit-bit of this hard-fought scrap was not known to the vast crowd. I'll give it to you here! The "Bombardier" and "Nipper" were assumed names which hid the identity of two brothers named Brown!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST CONSTRUCTIONAL TOY.

Every boy has the engineering instinct—the desire to build things. Meccano, the world's greatest constructional toy, offers unlimited scope for indulging this instinct and year by year is improved and extended by the addition of new parts. The Meccano Outfits for 1932 are far ahead of those of previous years and include longer-running clockwork motors and more powerful electric motors. In particular, there are the new Aeroplane Constructor Outfits, by means of which a whole range of aircraft models—monoplanes, biplanes, and seaplanes—may be built up. Meccano is all-British in origin and development. To-day, the great Meccano factory at Liverpool, gives employment to hundreds of British workpeople, and is a model of organisation and efficiency.

THE BIG HUSTLE!

Not so very long ago Britain held the "record" for making a suit from the time the sheep was sheared of its wool to the time the suit was measured and fitted perfectly to a human back. That little job took our craftsmen three hours twenty minutes and a half exactly. It was done to show America, who had previously made a suit, on the same conditions, in the space of six hours four minutes. The British record seemed to be unbeatable until some Australians tried their hand. The same conditions applied again—the sheep had to be sheared of its wool, the wool had to be spun and turned into cloth, the cloth had to be cut to the tailor's measure, made up, lined, and finished ready for wear. The job was done in the almost incredible time of one hour, fifty-two minutes. Bravo, Aussie!

THE MOST VALUABLE STAMP IN THE WORLD!

To those not familiar with precious stamps, it looks just like a useless scrap of red paper. Originally, it cost one cent, but that was in the days of 1856. The story goes that in British Guiana the issue of stamps from England ran dry, so a few to get on with were roughly printed in a Georgetown newspaper office. In the course of time these "make-shifts" disappeared, with the exception of one. This solitary fellow, strangely

enough, was found by a schoolboy, seventeen years later, in a garret, where it was mixed up with a lot of other odds and ends. Now that "bit of red paper" is worth £7,343, and it is reckoned to be the most valuable stamp in the world.

THE VOLUNTEERS!

"Atishooooooo! I dot an awdful doid!" So said the medical student between violent sneezes. But he hadn't caught it like you or I, through sitting in a draught or forgetting to put his hat on when he went out into the biting cold. No, sir! He had actually asked for his cold, and it had been given to him by an expert who doled out "cold microbes." And umpteen other medical students had done the same. What for? And why? You might well ask. And the answer is: "In the interests of medical science." Common colds wreak a lot of havoc in the course of a year. Experts reckon that they cost the country millions of pounds. So, when some "bigwig" at St. Bartholomew's Hospital asked a number of students to have colds transmitted to them, there was an immediate response. The idea is to try out several "groups" of germs to find out which particular group makes our winters so unhappy. The students are inoculated and are then carefully watched and their symptoms recorded. It is hoped by this method to find out the real germ identity of the common cold. Once that is known to the doctors a cure should not be a matter of great difficulty to pass on to thousands of sufferers. Anyway, these medical students are doing their "bit," and if the colds they have asked for and got are anything like the one I had last week, they really each deserve a medal!

HEARD THIS ONE?

"Hi, mister!" yelled Tommy, running after an elderly Scotsman. "You're dropped your purse!" The Scotsman made a lightning-like turn and grabbed his purse. "That's very honest of you, sonny," he gasped. And for reward he gave the youngster a penny. Tommy waved it aside. "That's all right, sir," he said. "I kept a shilling out of it!" The Scotsman fainted!

THE STUNT MERCHANTS!

Our American cousins certainly like stunts, whether they be dancing marathons, sitting in tree-tops for umpteen hours, or risking their necks in aeroplanes. The latest craze "over there" is a Bridge Marathon. Not just an ordinary game of cards, for there is a referee in full military uniform, and he is armed with a revolver. The players are not allowed to be disturbed, except by an attendant whose job it is to pop up at the right moment and empty the ash-trays of the four players. And when he pops up he times it to a nicety, so as not to distract the players. All this business is to decide which system of play is the more profitable between the two contesting parties. We wonder whether a card craze will catch on with the youngsters of America, and whether there will ever be a "Snakes and Ladders" Marathon. You never know, for the youngsters have got as far as having a "Marbles" Championship Contest, which gave the onlookers almost as much excitement as we get from watching a Schneider Trophy event.

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The Sneak of the Shell!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Because it's a cad's trick, when he's so anxious about it!"

"Have you come here to preach to me?"

"No," said Tom Merry, controlling his temper with difficulty. "I haven't. No good preaching to such a hopeless cad as you are, Gore. But you're not only keeping back the paper. You were trying to decipher it when I came in."

"That's my business."

"Herr Schneider asked me to look for the paper," said Tom Merry. "I promised to take it to him if I found it."

"Well, you haven't found it."

Tom Merry was silent. Gore was certainly right there. Tom Merry hadn't found the paper. Gore had found it, and if he kept it, was it Tom Merry's business to interfere?

Tom Merry felt a real concern for the worried state of mind Herr Schneider had fallen into. But he shrank from the merest suspicion of priggish conduct. After all, was it his business? Gore certainly ought to restore the paper, but if he chose not to do so—

Gore watched him with a sneering smile.

"Then you aren't going to give the paper back to Herr Schneider?" asked Tom Merry at last.

"Not until I choose."

"You intend to give it back some time, then?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps I shall burn it."

"You cad!"

George Gore shrugged his shoulders.

"You had better go and speak to Herr Schneider," he said. "That's quite in your line. Go and tell him I have the paper, and get me called up before the Head. It would be like you."

Tom Merry bit his lip hard.

"I don't know whether I ought to tell him," he said slowly.

"Go and tell him, then." The fellows are making out that you didn't sneak in telling of me yesterday. But if you give me away now, I fancy there won't be any doubt about it. Go and tell Herr Schneider! I guarantee no fellow in the Form will ever speak to you again if you do."

Tom Merry was silent.

"Go and tell him!" jeered Gore. "You've found it out by coming here, spying!"

"I came here," said Tom Merry, "to show you this paper, and to ask you if you placed it in my study."

He laid the sheet of notepaper on the table.

Gore grinned as he read the word, "SNEAK!"

"Did you put that in my study, Gore?"

"No, I didn't. It was put there, I suppose, by somebody who knows you."

"Did you write it?"

"No, I didn't," said Gore.

"Very well. If you had, I intended to wipe up your study with you. I've a good mind to do so in any case; but you're not worth it. I think you're a cad for not returning that

paper to Herr Schneider. I don't know what I shall do about it yet."

And Tom Merry left the room.

As he came back towards his own study, he observed Mellish of the Fourth at the door. The door was closed, and Mellish appeared to be gumming something to the upper panel.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed, and he trod lightly, and came down upon Mellish without warning. The junior had just finished gumming the paper. It stood out white on the dark oak panel, with a couple of words on it in black lettering:

"THE SNEAKERIES!"

Tom Merry's right hand fell upon Mellish's collar, as the junior stepped back to admire his handiwork.

Mellish gave a jump. He turned quite white as he twisted his head round and saw Tom Merry.

Tom smiled grimly.

"So it's your little game, is it, Mellish? I suspected Gore at first. Come into the study."

"I—I don't want to."

"I know you don't, but that doesn't make any difference, Mellish."

"It—it was only a joke, Tom Merry—"

"Of course! It's only a joke I'm going to work off on you, now!"

"Look here, Merry, I—I—"

"Come in, please!"

Tom Merry threw open the door. Manners and Lowther stared at him as he marched Mellish in, with an iron grip on the back of his collar.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Lowther.

"Look at that!" said Tom Merry, pointing to the gummed paper on the door. "That is a kind attention bestowed upon us by our friend Mellish. I caught him in the act."

"It—it was only a j-joke!"

Manners and Lowther looked grim. It was plain that they did not take the joke in a humorous way at all.

"Will you take that paper off the door, Mellish?" asked Tom Merry sweetly.

"Certainly, Merry, with pleasure!" said Mellish nervously.

The gum was not yet dry, and he easily stripped the paper off the panel.

Tom Merry shut the door. He released Mellish, and laid on the table the paper he had taken to Gore's study.

"Did you write that, Mellish, and put it here?"

"No, I didn't."

"Who did, then?"

"It was Gore."

"I've just asked Gore, and he denies it. I won't take the trouble to sort out which of you is telling lies," said Tom Merry contemptuously.

He tossed the paper into the fire.

"But about this little notice you were putting up on our door, Mellish, there's no doubt at all."

Mellish cast a longing glance at the door, but there was no escape for him.

"Now, when a liar is found out," said Tom Merry, "I think it is usual to make him eat his words. That's what you are going to do, Mellish."

"W-what do you mean?"

"There's the words," said Tom, pointing to the sticky paper in Mellish's fingers. "You know what you've got to do."

Potts, the Office Boy!



Mellish slithered.
 "You want me to—to—"
 "You've got to eat your words," said Tom blandly.
 "There they are."
 Manners and Lowther chuckled, but Tom's face was quite serious.

"Eat away, Mellish, or take a hiding, which ever you like." He took out his watch. "I give you one minute."
 Mellish made a wild break for the door, but Manners and Lowther collared him in a twinkling, and dragged him back.

Mellish began to whine.
 "Look here, Merry, it—it was only a joke. I—"
 "I'm afraid we're awfully dull, and can't see the humour of a joke like that, Mellish. Half the minute is gone. Will you hand me that dogwhip, Lowther?"

"Certainly! Here you are!"
 "Look here, Tom Merry, I'm not—"
 "Forty-five seconds gone!"
 "I tell you I won't!"

"Fifty seconds!"
 "You—you beast! I—I—I tell you—"
 "The minute's up! Now, then!"
 "Hold on—hold on! I'll—I'll do it!" gasped Mellish.

He stuffed the sticky paper into his mouth, and with a horrible grimace began to masticate it.
 The Terrible Three burst into a roar of laughter.
 "That's enough!" said Tom Merry. "You can chuck it now!"

Mellish gladly ejected the sticky paper into the fire, and Tom Merry opened the door of the study, and stood aside for the cad of the Fourth to pass.

"You can go," he said. "We're letting you off lightly this time. The next time you'll get what you deserve. Get out!"

Mellish hesitated. Tom Merry stood by the door with his foot half raised, with the evident intention of helping him out. Mellish took a step, and stopped.

"Are you going, Mellish?"
 "I—look here, you see—I—"
 "Kick him out, chaps!"

Lowther and Manners started towards Mellish, and the rascal made a desperate dash. But Tom Merry was ready. As the flying junior passed through the door his foot came out, and Mellish received a football boot upon his person with a terrific shock. He fairly flew through the door, and bumped on the wall opposite.

"Goal!" yelled Monty Lowther.
 Mellish turned round, red with fury.
 "You—you beast! You—"

Tom Merry made a motion towards him, and he darted down the passage. Tom laughed as he came back into the study.

"I don't think we shall get any more kind attentions from Mellish," he remarked.

And he was right.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Horns of a Dilemma.

KILDARE, the captain of St. Jim's, came along the passage towards Study No. 6, tenanted by Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy. The voice of Blake could be heard, raised in decided tones. The chief of Study No. 6 was laying down the law, as usual.

"I'm getting fed-up with Herr Schneider's blessed old paper!" said Blake. "He's walling about it all over the House. He's like a blessed Niobe, and he won't be comforted! I'm getting fed-up with it! He stopped me in the passage just now and asked me if I'd seen it."

Herries laughed.

"I heard him telling Lathom that he can't remember the formula," he said. "He's tried the experiment over again, and it won't wash. He's in a terrible way. Why can't he be more careful with his rubbish, that's what I want to know?"

"Yaas, wathah! He weally ought not to wowwy hard-workin' fellahs like us with his little twoubles!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "He asked me, too, and I said I was extremely sowwy, but I weally had not taken any particular notice lately of any stway sewaps of papah. Hallo, Kildare, deah boy! Pway come in!"

Kildare came in.

Blake pulled out the visitors' chair and presented it, with a bow. But Kildare shook his head, and remained standing.

"I only want to speak a word to you kids," he said. "It's about the paper the German master has lost."

Blake gave a groan.

"Couldn't you find some other subject to talk about, Kildare?" he asked plaintively. "Let's talk about the football match next Saturday."

"Or the latest thing in coats," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, let me speak!" said Kildare, laughing. "I've come to see you about the German master's paper. He declares that he dropped it in the Shell class-room—"

"Well, we never go there," said Blake. "Oh, yes, we did, though, to speak to Gore when he was detained! But we never saw anything of Schneider's rotten paper!"

"He has an idea that some joker must have found it, and is keeping it back for a joke," said Kildare. "As you and Tom Merry are the worst jokers in the House, he thinks—"

"My dear chap, if I had found his old paper I should have taken it back to him, this side up with care, without fail. So would Herries or D'Arcy."

"What-ho!" said Herries. "He's rather a beast sometimes, you know; but I wouldn't like to worry the old boy."

"Yaas, wathah! I should wegard it as extwemely dishonourable to wetain a papah belongin' to anoathah gentleman!"

"Then none of you has seen the paper?"

"Not a peep!"

"Not a squint!"

"Not at all, deah boy!"

"I must believe you," said Kildare. "But Schneider is making an endless fuss about it. He thinks someone will borrow the valuable secret it contains—"

"No fear of that! I defy Ferrers Locke or Sexton Blake to make out anything written by Herr Schneider!"

"Well, he wants it badly, and he declares that he dropped it in the Shell class-room, or in the passage leading to the School House studies," said Kildare. "As he missed it so soon after it was lost and went to look for it, it's impossible that it could have been swept away by the servants. Someone must have picked it up in the few minutes that elapsed between his losing it and his starting out to look for it."

Blake nodded his head in a thoughtful way.

"You've got that about right, Kildare!" he remarked.

"Eye" Wonder!



"Some fellow has picked it up, I suppose, and is keeping it back for a lark."

"Not much of a lark in worrying Herr Schneider like that," said Kildare dryly. "I regard it as a cad's game."

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah—"

"Mr. Railton has asked me to do what I can in the matter," said Kildare; "and I've come to ask you if you know anything about it, and, if not, to ask you if you'll try to find out something about it. Herr Schneider has asked Mr. Railton to gate the whole House until the paper is found."

"What!" shouted the three juniors.

"Mr. Railton is not likely to do anything of the kind," smiled Kildare. "But he is bothered about the thing, and, really, I think if Herr Schneider's beastly recipe is not found, soon he'll turn every head in the School House grey."

"I believe mine's going that way already," said Blake. "I was just saying when you came in that we were getting fed-up with this blessed old recipe. There's been too much of it!"

"Well, will you do what you can, you youngsters?" asked Kildare. "If any junior has got hold of the paper you can attend to the matter better than I can."

"Certainly, Kildare," said Blake instantly. "We'll take the matter up, though I really don't expect any of us will be able to find the paper. But we'll do our best, because we love you."

Kildare laughed and quitted the study. He went straight to the apartment sacred to the Terrible Three, and the crash of foils showed that the chums of the Shell were at home. Kildare knocked at the door and went in.

Tom Merry was fencing with Manners and Lowther, sustaining an attack against the pair of them and sustaining it well. The foils ceased their rapid play as Kildare came in.

"Hallo, Kildare! Will you take a turn with the foils?" said Lowther cheerfully.

"No," said Kildare. "I want a word with you youngsters, and especially Tom Merry. I've just spoken to Blake on the same subject."

"Go ahead!" said the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"It's about Herr Schneider's paper. I've been asked by the Housemaster to see about it. Now, does anyone know anything about it?"

Kildare looked from face to face.

"If the paper has been kept back for a joke," he said, "Herr Schneider is willing to overlook it, and let the matter pass, providing the paper is restored at once. It was undoubtedly found by someone and kept back, apparently for no purpose but to worry Herr Schneider. If anyone here has the paper, let him hand it over, and I'll take it to Schneider, and the matter will be allowed to drop."

"What rot!" said Monty Lowther. "It was the day before yesterday that Schneider lost that paper. If we had found it we should have returned it."

"I know I can take your word, you fellows," said Kildare. "If you tell me that you know nothing of the missing paper I shall believe you."

"Of course, we know nothing of it!" said Manners promptly.

"Not the least bit in the world," assented Monty Lowther. Kildare looked steadily at the chief of the Terrible Three.

"You don't say anything, Merry."

"I haven't anything to say, Kildare."

"What do you mean? You can answer a plain question like the rest, I suppose," said the captain of St. Jim's testily. "Have you any idea what has become of the German master's paper?"

Tom Merry was silent.

He could not tell Kildare an untruth; but could he betray Gore? Gore was guilty of a mean and caddish action in keeping the paper he had found. But it was not for Tom Merry to betray him. His previous action had caused much diversion of opinion in the Form, and some of the boys still persisted in regarding it as sneaking. If he spoke out now there would be no division. Every member of the Form would condemn him as a sneak.

Kildare could not, of course, guess what was passing in the boy's mind. He could only conclude that Tom Merry knew something of the missing paper, and refused to tell it.

"I am waiting for your reply, Merry."

Still the hero of the Shell did not speak.

"Merry, I ask you plainly, do you know what has become of the paper Herr Schneider lost on Wednesday afternoon? Tell me the truth!"

"If I told you anything, Kildare, it would be the truth," said Tom Merry, the scarlet leaping into his cheeks.

"I am sure of that, Merry. You have found the paper, I presume?"

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"No!" said Tom Merry hastily.

"But it has been found, I suppose? Come, Merry, this isn't worthy of you. I know that Herr Schneider has been down on you, sometimes unjustly; but he always meant well, and he is not a bad master on the whole. But, bad or good, this is not the way to get your own back. It is little better than stealing to keep the paper. It's cowardly!"

Tom turned from white to red.

"I know that, Kildare."

"Then tell me what you know of the paper. You know something about it?"

Tom Merry did not reply.

A flash of anger blazed in the eyes of Kildare.

"Then you know something of the paper, Merry, and will not speak. I shall begin to think that you have



As Blake & Co. went for him Tom Merry sent a squirt of ink

deceived me, and that you yourself are keeping back the paper to spite the German master."

Tom coloured again, but remained silent.

"Very well, Merry, if you have nothing more to say, I need stay no longer," said Kildare angrily. "This is not what I should have expected of you. I intended to ask you three to see into the matter. That is useless, apparently, as you know all about it. I hope you will think better of it, Merry, and will let Herr Schneider have his paper. That is all I have to say at present."

There was a marked emphasis on the last word.

Kildare turned abruptly and quitted the study.

Lowther and Manners looked at Tom Merry in amazement.

"What does this mean, Tom?" exclaimed Monty. "You don't mean to say that you know where the paper is, and have been keeping it dark all this time?"

Tom Merry shook his head. "It's better not to tell you fellows anything," he said. "If you're questioned, it's better for you to be able to say you know nothing." "I—I suppose so," Manners said slowly. "But I don't understand this, Tom, and I confess that I don't half like it."

And then there was an uncomfortable silence in the study.

CHAPTER 7.

Awkward for Tom.

GEORGE GORE was strolling in the quadrangle, with his hands in his pockets, when Tom Merry came up to him. Tom's face was worried, and Gore did not fail to note it, with a grin.

"I say, Gore—" Tom Merry got so far, and then he stopped.



ask from the inkpot right into the faces of the oncoming trio!

He was about to ask a favour of Gore in a way, and Gore was the last person in the world of whom he would willingly have asked anything.

Gore's insolent grin was not inviting, either. Tom Merry was much more inclined to knock him down where he stood than to talk to him.

"Well, what have you to say?" said Gore carelessly. "I don't know that I particularly want to talk to you, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry's eyes glittered, but he controlled his temper with an effort.

"It's about Herr Schneider's paper," he said quietly. Gore yawned.

"Great Scott! Are you going to start on that again? I'm getting sick of it!"

"So we all are, I fancy, but we shall never hear the end

of it until Herr Schneider has it back again. I want you to give it to me."

"And get a licking for my pains? Thanks!"

"It can be returned quietly, without his knowing who had it, and I will keep the secret. It can be sent by post, if you like."

"I'm not done with it yet."

"Do you intend to return it at all?"

"Perhaps—perhaps not." Gore yawned again. "Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies. I'm going to please myself entirely in the matter, Tom Merry."

"Listen to me! Kildare has asked me if I know anything about the paper."

Gore changed colour.

"You—you cad! You've told him—"

"I've told him nothing," said Tom Merry patiently; "but I don't know whether I ought to tell him or not. You have no right to keep Herr Schneider's paper."

Gore breathed freely again.

"I thought you wouldn't dare to sneak a second time," he said. "You'd be cut by the whole House if you did."

Tom Merry smiled contemptuously.

"If I thought it right to do so, all the House couldn't stop me," he replied. "But I can't make up my mind that I ought to speak. I couldn't tell Kildare a lie."

Gore was about to make a sneering remark, but Tom Merry's eyes glittered so dangerously that he thought better of it, and remained silent.

"Kildare knows that I know something," said Tom Merry. "He thinks that I am deliberately keeping back my knowledge to spite the German master. He's beginning to think that I have lied to him in saying that I haven't found the paper. You see the position I'm in?"

"Yes, I suppose," said Gore carelessly. "If you stick to the thorny path of truth, my son, you must expect to find it a bore every now and then. I'm not so particular. I should have satisfied Kildare if he had asked me."

"I dare say you would," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You would have lied, I suppose, as you lied when I taxed you with putting that note on my table. But I don't choose to lie. I don't claim to be better than other fellows, but a crawling, cowardly thing like that I can't do!"

"You've got yourself into a fix, it appears to me," said Gore. "I suppose you haven't come to me to get you out of it?"

"Yes, I have. I want you to return the paper to Herr Schneider. Then the matter ends, and no more will be said about it."

"Well, I'm not going to do anything of the kind. If that's what you want, you're wasting your breath talking. I don't see why I should consider you."

"You see the position I'm in?"

"You got yourself into it; anyway, it's no business of mine, and to speak quite frankly, I don't care a rap."

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

"Then you refuse to do the decent thing?"

"Rats! Enough said. I'm sick of the subject."

And Gore thrust his hands into his pocket and walked away whistling. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry had only rendered him more obstinate by his appeal. The thought that by his line of conduct he was causing Tom Merry trouble as well as Herr Schneider was a source of great satisfaction to George Gore.

Tom Merry's fingers itched to knock the cad of the Shell down; but that would have served no useful purpose. He turned and walked slowly to the School House. As he entered, Curly Gibson of the Third came up to him.

"Old Schneider wants to see you, Merry," he said. "He asked me to bring you to his study. And I say, he's looking awfully solemn. Look out!"

Tom Merry nodded, and walked to the German master's study.

"Come in, Merry!" said Herr Schneider, in a chilling voice.

Tom Merry entered, and waited for the German master to speak.

Herr Schneider fixed his eyes upon him with a severe expression, and there was something of scorn in his looks that cut Tom Merry to the quick.

"I haf spoken with Kildare, Merry," said Herr Schneider. "It seems to me tat dere vas no troot in vat you said to me, tat you know noddin of te missing baper?"

"I told you the exact truth, sir."

"Ach! But you know something apout te baper now, ain't it?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Answer me, Merry! Do you know anything apout mein baper?"

The hero of the Shell coloured, but his lips did not move.

"Fery vell," said Herr Schneider, with a dignity in his

manner Tom Merry had never noticed about him before—
"fery vell, Merry. You haf deceived me—"

"I did not deceive you, sir!"

"You know vere to find mein baper, and you refuse to do it. You tink it's a goot shoke to worry te old Sherman master. I did not tink you vas tat kind of poy, Merry. Go! I have nothing more to say to you!"

Tom Merry started. He had expected at least a caning for what must seem like mere obstinacy to the German master. But the contemptuous manner of Herr Schneider cut far deeper than a can could have done.

"I—I am sorry, sir. I—" Tom Merry stammered. What could he say? Nothing, or else the truth! And that was sneaking!

The German master listened grimly. As Tom Merry broke off, the German master's hand rose and pointed to the door.

"You may go, Merry. I wish to have noting more to say to you."

"I—I can't explain, sir, but—"

"I know tat you cannot explain, Merry, and I know fery vell why. You can go."

Tom Merry hesitated, but it was useless to linger, and he turned and left the room. He heard Herr Schneider give a sigh as he closed the door.

Tom Merry's heart was heavy as he walked away. He had never been in such a dilemma before, and he could not think of a way out of it. The German master's reproach cut him deeply. Kildare seemed to think that he had acted in an underhand way. His own chums had shown that they did not know what to make of him, and that his conduct made them feel uncomfortable.

There was one easy way out of it all—to go back to Herr Schneider and tell him who had his paper. But for that he would be branded before the whole House as a sneak. That was impossible!

Tom Merry's brows contracted as he met Gore in the passage.

There was an insolent grin on Gore's face as he glanced at Tom Merry. Tom's dilemma evidently afforded him much amusement, and he knew how much the hero of the Shell was worried.

But that grin on Gore's face was the finishing touch to Tom's temper. He had stood a great deal from Gore, and this was the last straw. Tom's right fist came up like a flash of lightning, and the grin was blotted out on Gore's features by the crash of knuckles on his nose.

Gore gave a yell, and went staggering across the passage, to fall with a crash against the door of Mr. Railton's study.

Tom Merry panted.

"There, you cad!"

Mr. Railton's door was only partly latched, and the concussion sent it flying open. Gore fell upon his back at full length half inside the room.

The Housemaster jumped up from his chair, and came with a bound to the spot, a pen in his hand, and a frown upon his face.

Gore was sprawling at his feet, and Tom Merry stood in the passage, his fists still clenched, his eyes still blazing.

"Merry, how dare you? Get up, Gore!"

Gore slowly and painfully rose to his feet.

The Housemaster looked from one to the other, and his stern glance fixed upon Tom Merry.

"Merry, I do not know exactly what to say to you. Why did you strike Gore?"

"For nothing at all!" whined Gore.

"Answer me, Merry!"

Tom turned crimson.

"Because he was a rotten cad!" he said, at length.

"Indeed!" said the Housemaster icily. "You must learn, I think, to give a little less violent expression to your feelings. You will stay in on Saturday afternoon and write out five hundred lines from Virgil."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry quietly.

The Housemaster shut his door sharply. Gore would have liked to give Tom Merry another taunt, but the look on Tom's face restrained him. Tom was in a dangerous mood just then.

The cad of the Shell walked away without a word.

CHAPTER 8.

Study No. 6 Investigate.

"JOLLY good weather, kids!" said Monty Lowther, on the following afternoon, as the Terrible Three left the dining-hall in the School House. "We'll have a go at the football, and then go down to the Rhyl for some skating. The ice is still as hard as a brick."

"I can't come," said Tom Merry.

"Why not?"

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"I'm gated."

"My hat! How much—how long—and who by?"

"Five hundred lines of Virgil—all the afternoon—Mr. Railton," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

Manners and Lowther gave a simultaneous whistle of dismay.

"How rotten!" said Monty Lowther. "You didn't tell us. And we can't help you; no good trying to palm off three varieties of handwriting on a chap like Railton."

"No good at all," said a voice behind Lowther, as Mr. Railton came out of the dining-room. "It would not be of the slightest use, Lowther."

Monty whirled round like a humming-top, and turned crimson as he looked at the Housemaster.

"I—I—I—I didn't know you—you were—" he stammered.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "There is no harm done, Lowther—as you have decided not to attempt to palm off three varieties of handwriting upon me."

And the Housemaster strode on.

"My hat!" murmured Lowther. "Some masters would have licked a chap for less than that. Railton's a good sort, though he is rather reckless with his impositions. But, as I was saying, Thomas, we can't assist you."

"No, I know you can't. Anyway, I'm gated for the whole afternoon, so I may as well do the lines."

"But what was the cause of such a whacking impot, Tom? Have you been playing the giddy ox without the knowledge or assistance of your bosom pals?"

"I punched Gore's head, and he fell against Railton's door."

"Oh, yes, Mellish saw it, and told me! You seem to be a lot on Gore's track lately. What has he been doing to ruffle the serenity of your supreme highness?"

"He's a rotten cad!" said Tom wrathfully.

"Granted. But if you're going round St. Jim's knocking down every rotten cad you meet, you'll have a lively old time. Some of them are in the Sixth, and if you start knocking down the Sixth, why—"

"Oh, don't rot, Monty! I admit I was hasty, but Gore would provoke a saint. Let it pass. You two chaps get down to the footer, and I'll go along and slog at Virgil."

"Well, I suppose we can't do better; but, really, Tom, the next time you want to knock Gore down, get him into a quiet place, and don't bump him on a master's door."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom, and he parted with his chums and went up to the study.

Manners and Lowther walked out into the cold, windy quadrangle. Near the steps of the School House they encountered the chums of Study No. 6.

"I want to see you fellows," said Blake, stopping them.

"Where's Tom Merry?"

"Detained for the afternoon."

"Hard cheese! But, I say, Kildare has asked us to look into the matter of that beastly missing paper—"

"Oh, mercy!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Are we never going to hear the end of that beastly paper? When I die you will find the words 'missing paper' written on my heart. I—"

"I—I assure you we're as sick of the subject as you are," said Blake. "That's why we want to get the thing found and restored to old Schneider. He won't be happy till he gets it."

"Yaas, wathah! Besides, it's quite certain that some boundah has found the papah, and is wetainin' it for a pwaetical joke. I considah such conduct extremely ungentlemanly, and I think that it's our duty to put a stop to it, don't you, deah boys?"

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "And the sooner the quicker. We're getting fed-up with it, I can tell you—"

"Well, I'm sorry we can't help you," said Lowther. "We haven't seen hide or hair of it."

"There seems to be a hint abroad that Tom Merry knows something about it," Blake remarked.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Lowther.

"Well, he might have found it, or he might know somebody who had found it, or he might know somebody who knew somebody who had found it, or he might—"

"Oh, draw it mild! You could go on for ever like that. What did Schneider want to lose his beastly paper for, that's what I want to know? What does it matter if it's lost, anyway? I tell you what—we hear too much of old Schneider! He can find his beastly old recipe himself! Come along, Manners!"

And the chums of the Shell walked off. Blake scratched his nose thoughtfully. D'Arcy flicked a speck of dust from his nicely creased trousers.

"Something strikes me, kids!" said Blake. "Did it occur to you—"

"Yaas, wathah! Those boundahs know something!" said D'Arcy sagely.

"More likely Tom Merry knows something, as the fellows

have been saying, and Manners and Lowther suspect that he's keeping it dark," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, it is vewy likely. As we have pwomised Kildare to look into the mattah, deah boys, we ought weally to follow up this clue, you know."

"Let's follow it up," said Blake. "Come on, and have a jaw to Tom Merry. There won't be any peace in the School House till Herr Schneider has found his paper, that's certain, and so the beastly thing's got to be found."

They entered the House. Herr Schneider was in the Hall, and he stopped them with a gesture of his fat finger.

"Mein poys," said the German master, "haf any of you seen vun baper lying apout anywhere in te House? You know te baper I mean, before. It is fery strange tat it is not found."

"We've seen nothing of it sir," said Blake. "We're on the hunt for it now, as a matter of fact. Kildare asked us."

"Tat is fery goot of you," said Herr Schneider affably. "You vas goot poys, after. You tink tat some poy half found te baper, and is keeping tat baper pack for vun shoke—hein?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, sir," said Blake.

"And if you find him you will get tat baper for me, mein poys, and return him. I haf tried to repeat te experiment, but I haf failed. I am in great trouble for te loss of mein formula. You will do your best, mein poys."

"Certainly, sir!" said Blake. "We'll find the paper if we can, sir."

And the chums of the Fourth went on to Tom Merry's study. They found the hero of the Shell sitting at his table, with his Aeneid and a heap of foolscap before him. His pen was going rapidly, but he stopped as they came in.

"Hallo, kids!" he said cheerily. "Want anything? I'm awfully busy."

"I can see you are," said Blake. "Yes, we want something. We're in search of information."

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"Are you? Do you want to know how to play football? If so, Manners and Lowther will give you some tips. I'm gated for the afternoon."

Blake breathed hard.

"No," he said, with forced calm, "we don't want to know how to play football. We know more than any waster in the Shell can teach us already. When I see you fellows playing footer it always tickles me. Why, you don't know how to—"

"Blake you're wandewin' fwom the point," said D'Arcy. "Pewwaps I had better explain to Tom Mewwy what we have come heah for, as—"

"Perhaps you had better keep your head closed, Gussy. Now, Merry, as I said, we're here for information. We're hunting for that blessed document the German master lost."

Tom Merry's expression changed at once, and Blake did not fail to note it.

"The chaps are saying that you know something about it," he went on. "Somebody heard somebody say that Kildare said something to Herr Schneider, or something to that effect. Now, if you know where that giddy paper is, Thomas Merry, produce it."

"I can't!" said Tom Merry.

"Do you know anything about it?"

"My dear chap, I always have a strong objection to being catechised."

"Do you mean that you won't answer my questions?" demanded Blake.

"Yes, something like that."

"But why won't you answer?"

"Can't explain. I don't want to be disobliging, but I've got my reasons. I don't want to talk about the matter. That finishes it."

"I don't understand this, Merry."

"I don't suppose you do. You don't often understand anything, do you?"

"It appeals to me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with an air of deep reflection, "that Tom Mewwy possesses some information on the subject, and wufuses to impart it to us."

"Go hon!" said Blake. "Have you worked all that out in your own brain-box, Gussy? Mind you don't overheat the apparatus."

"Pway do not wot, Blake! I was comin' to the point. Tom Mewwy possesses information upon this point, and wufuses to impart it to us. As we are in deadly earnest in this mattah, it becomes our duty to screw it out of Tom Mewwy."

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Blake thoughtfully. "Tom Merry certainly ought to tell us all he knows. If he's found the paper he ought to give it up when we ask him. If he won't speak out, we ought to rag him bald-headed, I think. What do you say, Herries?"

"I think it's a good idea," said He. a good idea, and a good opportunity."

The chums of the Fourth carried on the discussion with becoming gravity, careless of the presence of the person most concerned in the result of their deliberations.

Blake turned to Tom Merry again. Tom's hand had fallen upon the inkpot.

"You hear that, Merry? You've got to impart the information to us, as Gussy so elegantly expresses it. Are you ready to do the imparting?"

"No," said Tom Merry. "Call another time! I'm busy."

"You'll be busier soon, I think. Lock the door, Herries!"

Tom Merry half rose from his chair, but Herries was near the door, and he had it locked and the key in his pocket in a jiffy.

"Now, Tom Merry," said Blake persuasively, "will you have the goodness to tell us all you know about the giddy missing document?"

"Not in the least," said Tom Merry coolly.

"Then much against our inclinations we shall be compelled to put you through it!" said Blake. "I warn you that it will be rough!"

"Extremely wuff!" said D'Arcy. "I'm a perfect demon when I start waggin' anybody. Pway weflect in time, Tom Mewwy!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom. "Get out of my study, do!"

"For the last time!" said Blake dramatically.

"For the last time—rats!"

The chums of the Fourth waited for no more. They went for Tom Merry at once. A stream of ink spurted from the inkpot in Tom Merry's hand, and swept across Blake's face, and then Herries', and then D'Arcy's. The last-named gave a yell.

"My waistcoat! You have wuined my waistcoat!"

But Blake and Herries, careless of the stream of ink, hurried themselves upon the hero of the Shell.

Tom Merry struggled desperately, and they crashed against the table, and sent it flying.

Books and papers and ink were mixed in a heap on the floor, and in the midst of the heap fell the three struggling forms.

"Dear me!" gasped D'Arcy. "How vewy wuff! Tom Mewwy, I weward your conduct as extremely violent and ungentlemanly!"

"Lend a hand, you duffer!" gasped Blake.

The chums were two to one, but they found that they had their hands full with Tom Merry.

"What did you say, Blake?" demanded D'Arcy haughtily.

"Lend a hand, you howling idiot!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as a nowlin' idiot!"

"Gr-r-r! Pin him down, Herries!"

"I've got him!"

Tom Merry was on his back. Foolscap was under him and around him, and a Greek lexicon was under his head, and the corner of a Latin dictionary poking in the small of his back. Jack Blake was sitting on his chest, and Herries on his legs. He was overcome at last.

"Now then, Merry, have you got anything to say now?"

"Yes, get off my chest."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Blake settled himself more firmly. "I'm not getting off at present. Gussy, you image, why didn't you lend a hand when I told you?"

"You cannot expect to be assisted by a gentleman when you are wude enough to chawactewise him as a howlin' idiot."

"Gr-r-r-r! Is there anything left in that inkpot?"

"No," said D'Arcy, picking it up. "It is all over my waistcoat. Tom Mewwy has pwactically wuined my waistcoat, and I considah—"

"Never mind what you consider. Tom, you know something about that blessed missing document. Tell us all about it at once."

"Rats!"

"You see that we've got you, and I tell you that we're going to make you squirm if you don't tell us. Now, will you speak?"

"No, I won't!"

"Obstinate beast! We can't be baffled like this, chaps, when we are on the track. Tom Merry must be made to speak. How shali we work it?"

"Shave off his beastly eyebrows!" suggested D'Arcy.

"Jump on his neck!" said Herries.

"H'm! Good idea, my infants, but we'll try gentler methods first. Tom Merry, unless you tell me immediately what you know about that beastly rotten recipe, I shall put you to the giddy torture. If Herries had his cornet here I'd make him play it to you—"

"Oh, I say, Blake—"

"As he hasn't it with him, we must use a less drastic method. I shall now proceed to rub soot in your hair, and round your neck. When you have had enough, will you

please signify the same by telling me what you know about that rotten recipe?"

"No, I won't!"

"Weally, Blake, I cannot approve of the methods suggested. You will soil Tom Mcwuy's collah, and that is a thing no gentleman——"

Crash! Bump!

It was a violent attack on the door.

"Hallo, there! Open this beastly door!"

It was the voice of Monty Lowther. He accompanied the demand with a powerful kick on the oaken panels.

Blake grinned.

"Lucky we thought of looking it," he remarked. "You can't come in, kids; we're busy."

Tom Merry grinned, too. He knew that Manners possessed a duplicate key to the study door, and, as the key had been taken out on the inside, there was nothing to bar its admission to the lock. A click at the door followed Blake's words.

"My hat!" gasped Blake, in dismay.

The study door flew open, and Manners and Lowther rushed in.

CHAPTER 9.

Figgins Gives Advice.

BLAKE jumped up to defend himself, and Tom Merry jerked Herries off and sprang to his feet.

The chums of the Fourth lined up, and, for a moment it looked as if a general combat was about to commence between the Fourth-Formers and the chums of the Shell.

But Tom Merry motioned his devoted followers to hold back.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "No good rowing, though I'm much obliged to you for coming in, kids. They had me in a beastly fix."

"We heard there was something going on here," said Monty Lowther, "and we came to see. But what are you driving at, Tom? We're not going to let these kids of the Fourth make our study in this state without wiping up the floor with them."

"It wants some wiping up," grinned Blake, with a glance at the spilt ink. "And Tom Merry's impositions will want sorting out."

The chums of Study No. 6 walked out. The Terrible Three proceeded to put their study to rights. No easy task. Blake, Herries, and D'Arey went down the passage.

"Hallo! What on earth's that?" exclaimed Blake, as they passed the door of the laboratory.

A sudden report, like the bursting of a glass bottle, sounded within, and it was followed by a loud ejaculation.

"Ach! Mein Gott!"

Something had evidently gone wrong with Herr Schneider, who was experimenting again. It was no time to stand upon ceremony. Blake tore the door open, and the three juniors rushed into the room.

A startling sight met their gaze!

The German master's table was covered with bottles and retorts, jars and glasses. Half of them had been smashed, and dyes of different colours were running over the table and swamping the carpet. Several fellows were present. The herr had apparently been giving a demonstration.

Fragments of glass were scattered over the table and the floor. It was evident that there had been an explosion, due to some error in mixing the chemicals.

But the strangest sight of all was Herr Schneider.

His face and his clothes were dyed a purple colour, and the scanty locks on his head gleamed purple from a purple cranium. He was purple all over. The fellows who had been present fled precipitately, laughing.

"My hat!" gasped Blake. "Are you hurt, sir?"

"Himmel! Te ting it was exblode! I am splashed mit te dye!"

Blake giggled.

"You are, sir, and no mistake! You're splashed from head to foot! My hat!"

"Yaas, wathah! I weally twust you are not hurt, Herr Schneider? You weally pwesent a most widiculous appearance——"

"Mein Gott!" The German rubbed his brow. "Ach! Dis is all te fault of tat poy tat haf stolen mein recipe—te rascal! Mein Gott! Go away, poy! I am not hurt!"

The chums remained as grave as they could still they had closed the door behind them. Then they screamed with laughter. The sight the German master had presented had been utterly ludicrous.

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"But it's too bad!" gasped Blake, at last. "If it's really due to the loss of the recipe, it's too rotten, and the chap who's got it ought to be scragged."

The chums of the Fourth went out into the quadrangle. They were much exercised in their minds. They had not been able to "rag" Tom Merry into telling them anything, but Blake had guessed a good deal.

Figgins & Co. came off the football field. Figgins stopped to speak to the School House chums, his attention attracted by their air of intense interest.

"Hallo, you kids!" was his greeting. "What's the trouble? Has the order gone forth that blotted exercises are to be barred in the School House in future?"

"Or has Herries been playing his cornet to you, Blake?" asked Kerr.

"Or Gussy reciting any of his poetry to you that he's written for the 'Weekly'?" Fatty Wynn wanted to know.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"Not so bad as that," he replied. "I wonder if you could give us advice, Figgys. Bring your mighty brain to bear on the subject, and——"

"Certainly. I'm always willing to help kids."

"Oh, cheese it! Look here, we've been on the track of that beastly missing paper belonging to the Schneider bird——"

"Great Scott! Hasn't that been found yet?"

"No. Schneider is raising Cain about it. He's just had an accident with his smelly old experiments on account of its loss. It's really hard on Schneider, and we want to get that paper back for him. We know somebody in the School House must have found it, and we believe Tom Merry knows that chap. But the fellow won't give it up, so we conclude, and Merry feels that he can't sneak about him."

Figgins nodded thoughtfully.

"It's rather a difficult position," he remarked. "It's impossible to give a chap away to a master. At the same time, the fellow must be an awful cad to keep the paper, and it comes mighty rough on Schneider."

"That's so. Now, what would you do in our place?"

Figgins reflected deeply. There was a long silence, and the School House chums waited for the result of the cogitations of the great Figgins.

The New House chief spoke at last.

"Well, I think I'd know what to do," he said slowly. "I'd find out the name of the chap who has found the paper."

"But we couldn't give him away to the masters."

"No. I know you couldn't; but you could lick him till he gave it up, and then take it back to Schneider, and hand it over to him."

Blake and Herries and D'Arey looked at one another.

The plan was simple and drastic.

But there was no reason why it should not work excellently. The wonder was that they had not thought of it themselves.

"We wouldn't mind lending a hand," said Figgins. "Look here, suppose you put it to Tom Merry. It's a jolly good idea, and he would agree, I expect. Let's all go to him and talk it over, and if he knows the chap we'll all drop on him."

And as soon as Figgins & Co. had changed out of their football things, the six juniors marched off in a body to Tom Merry's study.

CHAPTER 10.

Happy at Last!

TOM MERRY looked up very alertly as the door of his study opened. He was ready for another hostile visit. Manners and Lowther, who were still with him, jumped up at the sight of Blake. But Blake waved his hand peacefully.

"Peace, my infants!" he exclaimed. "Rows are off—right off! Figgins has given us some golden advice, and we've come——"

"Yes, I can see you've come!" said Tom Merry. "Now, if you'll kindly go——"

"Wait a bit," said Figgins; "don't be in a hurry. We're going to get you out of a fix, Merry. Explain to the boulder, Blake!"

"Listen to me, Merry. We have come to the conclusion that you have found out the chap who has got hold of Herr Schneider's mysterious document——"

"Have you? Same old topic!"

"And that you can't give him away to the masters, and that he won't give up the paper of his own accord," said Blake. "What's his name?"

(Continued on page 24.)

NEWCOME'S NEW IDEA!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1.

Not Potty.

JIMMY SILVER blinked. Lovell and Raby, who were looking over his shoulders into the end study in the Classical House at Rookwood, gasped.

Really, it was enough to make any fellow blink and gasp.

Newcome, the remaining member of the Fistical Four, who had been left to get tea ready, was standing before the mirror which rested on the study mantelpiece.

There was nothing wrong in that, of course. Provided tea was ready and he stood before the mirror in a normal manner, Jimmy Silver & Co. had no objection whatever.

But there was no sign of tea being ready. Furthermore, Newcome was looking at his reflection in a far from normal manner. It could hardly be called a look. It was really a glare—and a glare of such intense ferocity that it seemed quite remarkable that the mirror had stood it without cracking.

"For the love of Mike!" gasped Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

"Potty!" said Lovell, with conviction. "Poor old Newcome's potty! Well, my hat!"

"Hasn't even heard us yet," grinned Raby. "Better bring him back to earth! Hi, Newcome!"

"Newcome, old chap!"

"Newcome, you fathead! What's up?"

Newcome looked round.

But his glare remained. He regarded his colleagues with a fixed and stony and decidedly unfriendly look.

"Howdy, boys!" he said.

Silver and Lovell and Raby jumped.

"H-h-howdy!" stuttered Jimmy Silver.

Newcome nodded.

"Howdy!" he repeated, with emphasis. "Sit right down, boys! You're right guys, I guess! O.K. with me!"

"G-g-great pip!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at their chum in real alarm. Newcome had never previously displayed signs of insanity. But it looked as if something had unaccountably affected his mind now.

"Look here, old fellow—" said Jimmy Silver gently.

"Nix," said Newcome. "Keep your distance, Bk Shot! I got the drop on you! See this?"

Silver and Lovell and Raby hastily fell back. "This" happened to be a revolver, and Newcome was handling it with alarming carelessness.

"It's—it's a pistol!" gasped Raby.

"My hat!" exclaimed Newcome. "Keep away, boys! I don't want to have to plug you, I guess!"

"For goodness sake—"

"Got to get going now," went on Newcome. "I'll be seeing you, boys. So-long!"

With a cool nod he stalked out of the study.

Silver and Lovell and Raby were left staring at each other in a state of petrified amazement.

"Mad!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mad as a March hare! We'd better go after him!"

"Sooner the poor chap's put under restraint the better," remarked Lovell seriously. "Kim on, you men!"

The trio marched out of the study.

In the passage they stopped.

Newcome was standing flattened against the wall, his revolver pointed towards the door of one of the studies. He pointed meaningly to his lips.

"Quiet!" he hissed.

The chums of the end study stared, open-mouthed.

Newcome, after a moment's pause, slithered along the wall to the next study.

A few seconds later the door opened. The fat figure of Tubby Muffin emerged. Tubby was carrying a cake in his hands, and from the fact that Dickenson, whose study

it was, had received a hamper earlier in the day, Jimmy Silver & Co. deduced that Tubby had been engaged in a tuck-raiding expedition.

Newcome stepped out at the precise moment that Tubby rolled through the doorway. His revolver went up and stopped within an inch of Tubby's snub nose.

"Stick 'em up!" he snapped.

The fat junior jumped. His eyes goggled, and the cake dropped with a thud on the floor of the passage.

"W-w-what!" he stuttered.

"Stick 'em up!" roared Newcome.

Tubby Muffin did not stick them up. Instead, he emitted a howl of sheer terror, and made a frenzied bolt for the end of the passage.

It was then that Jimmy Silver & Co. acted. With a rush they were upon Newcome, and Newcome, who was evidently preparing to follow the fat tuck-raider, found himself bowled over like a ninepin.

"Whooop!" he yelled. "You silly asses!"

"That's better!" panted Jimmy Silver. "Sounds like sanity returning, when he talks English again. Got his gun, Raby?"

"What-ho! It's all serene, anyway," grinned Raby. "It's a dummy!"

"Oh!"

"Better and better," said Jimmy Silver, beginning to smile himself. "There may be an explanation, after all. Bring him into the study."

The struggling Newcome gave another yell.

"Lemme go, you fatheads! Whoop!"

"Here we are!" gasped Lovell, as they rushed their protesting colleague along to the end study, and landed him with a fearful bump on the floor. "Now explain why you went dippy, you unutterable ass!"

"Ow! You idiots!" snorted Newcome, picking himself painfully up and glaring at his assailants. "Who said I'd gone dippy, anyway? Can't a chap practise for the talkies now without being looked on as dippy?"

"What!"

"Jolly good mind to mop up the floor with the lot of you, only I—"

"Then were you practising for the talkies in front of the mirror just now?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

Newcome nodded.

"I was. And all I can say is—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling idiots—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just what I expected," said Newcome bitterly. "A prophet is not without honour, and all the rest of it. Perhaps you won't laugh when I'm as famous as Donald Cokeman."

"So that's it, is it?" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We might have guessed it. Ever since we went to the pictures in the vac and saw Donald Cokeman in a detective film, you've been full of it. And now it's come to this. My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle away!" snorted Newcome. "You may get a surprise when my name's outside every film show in the world. I dare say people cackled at Donald Cokeman before he got on, and now look at him! Do you know how he broke into the talkies?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"It's not. Donald Cokeman's an English chap who went to America on business. While he was there he came up against some gangsters and managed to land them all in chokes."

"He did, did he?"

"He did. And the papers made such a fuss that he got an offer to star on the films," said Newcome solemnly. "That's how he got on. Why not me?"

"Great pip! I can think of several reasons," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "One is that you're not in America, and we haven't got gangsters over here."

"Just where you're wrong!" said Newcome triumphantly. "Haven't you seen from the papers that Red Hooligan, the Brooklyn racketeer, has made a secret landing in England? He did, anyway. Came on the Plutonic."

"That's the boat old Dalton's friend, Jones, came on—chap who's coming to see him to-morrow," grinned Raby. "Come to think of it, I did read something of this chap, Red Hooligan. Think you're going to catch him, then, Newcome?"

"Well, I might."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You grinning idiots—"

"Special Edition. English Schoolboy Captures Gangster," chanted Lovell. "Hero Becomes Talkie Star." Imagine it, you men?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fatheads!" grunted Newcome. "Dashed if I'll say anything more now! Let's get tea!"

"Good egg!"

And Silver and Lovell and Raby, greatly relieved to find that their chum was not completely "potty," after all, helped him in preparing a late and much-needed tea.

CHAPTER 2.

A Chance for the Moderns.

"NEWCOME!"

No answer.

"Newcome!" repeated Mr. Dalton, the Form master of the Fourth at Rookwood, staring grimly at Newcome's desk.

Again there was no response. Arthur Newcome's attention was apparently engrossed in a sheet of paper on his desk.

The Fourth grinned.

Dicky Dalton did not grin. He was a cheery, good-tempered Form master. But his conception of the comic was naturally a little different from that of his pupils.

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"Newcome!" roared Dicky Dalton.

Newcome woke up with a start.

"O.K., chief!" he murmured absently. "I—I mean, yes, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Dalton. "How dare you use the expression 'O.K., chief!' to me, Newcome? What do you mean by it?"

"Oh dear! I— The fact is—"

"Bring me that paper you have on your desk!" rapped out the incensed Form master. "At once, Newcome! You hear me?"

"But—but—" gasped Newcome.

Mr. Dalton glared.

"Do you want me to have to get it myself, Newcome?"

"Nunno, sir; but—"

"Then bring it out at once!"

Newcome obeyed. His face was quite a sickly colour as he did so. What the mysterious paper contained was a mystery to the Fourth. Whatever it was, Newcome evidently had not intended it for Mr. Dalton's eyes.

He walked out to the front of the class and handed over the offending sheet of paper.

Mr. Dalton glanced at it. Then he started.

"Goodness gracious! So this is how you have been utilising your time!" he exclaimed. "'Notes on American Underworld Slang,' indeed! You have decided, then, Newcome, to ignore the Latin I am trying to teach you and study the barbarous expressions of American criminals?"

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver involuntarily, while from the rest of the Fourth came a smothered burst of laughter.

Newcome shifted from one leg to the other. He evidently found it a little difficult to make answer.

"The—the fact is, sir," he stammered at last. "I'm interested in American slang. I think we ought to learn a bit of it!"

"Indeed, Newcome!" said Mr. Dalton coldly. "May I ask why?"

"Well, sir, you never know who you're going to meet," argued Newcome desperately. "For instance, you told us yesterday you had a friend coming here from America in the next day or so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "You are very ingenious, Newcome. But I can assure you that my friend, Mr. Jones, who is of English nationality, is not at all likely to use expressions like 'O.K., chief!' I shall confiscate these absurd notes. Now hold out your hand!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

And Newcome, only too glad to finish the verbal part of the business, held out his hand for six of Dalton's "specials." After which he returned to his desk, completely cured of any desire to study American underworld slang during morning classes.

There was a rush to surround Arthur Newcome when the class dismissed. Dodd and Doyle and Cook, of the Modern House, were the first to reach him. The three Moderns were grinning their most expansive grins.

"Stick 'em up, big boy!" chortled Tommy Dodd. "We got the drop on you, ain't we, you chaps—you guys, I mean?"

"Oh, rather—that is, you bet!" grinned Tommy Cook. "Attaboy and ride him, cowboy! Is that correct American, old chap?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Moderns yelled. The Classics, on the other hand, frowned.

"Better be careful, you Modern worms!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "We can say what we like, belonging to Newcome's House; but no Modern outsider is going to be allowed to make a Classical look silly."

"Hear, hear!"

"Nothing to do with us—he can't help having the natural Classical look about him, I suppose!" retorted Tommy Dodd cheerfully, keeping a wary eye on the enemy. "Seriously, Newcome, is it true that you're aiming at catching that New York criminal, Red Hooligan?"

Newcome glared.

"Well, what if I am? Got anything to say about it?"

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Tommy Dodd airily. "Only that there's a mental home on the other side of Bagshot, if you're ever thinking of applying for treatment!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's enough!" said Jimmy Silver. "Chuck 'em out of the House! Down with the Moderns!"

"What-ho!"

The Classics, closed round their old rivals, and a wild scrimmage ensued, resulting eventually in Tommy Dodd and his followers being hustled unceremoniously out of the House.

The Classics then dispersed, not before several of them had made uncomplimentary references to the Classical junior who had given the Moderns a chance to crow.

The Moderns returned to their own side of the quad, grinning. They had had the worst of the battle, but they had found considerable entertainment in Arthur Newcome's new departure.

Tommy Dodd drew Cook and Doyle aside, as the rest went into the Modern House. There was a glimmer in the eyes of the Modern leader.

"You chaps! I believe there's the chance of a top-hole jape in this little stunt of Newcome's!" he said. "Remember that cutting I took out of a paper?"

"You mean the photograph of this fellow, Red Hooligan?" grinned Tommy Cook. "I remember it. You said it looked awfully like that photo Dicky Dalton keeps on his mantelpiece."

"It does," nodded Tommy Dodd. "Now, the photo on old Dalton's shelf is of the chap who's coming to see him to-morrow—Mr. Jones, from America. Suppose we leave this cutting about where Newcome is likely to find it—Newcome may then jump to the conclusion that Dalton's entertaining Red Hooligan himself!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Just found this in the quad!" he panted. "Have a good look at it, you men. Do you notice anything funny about it?"

Silver and Lovell and Raby looked at it. It was a photograph of a fair-haired, rather good-looking young man.

"Red Hooligan, the New York gangster, who is stated to have landed secretly in England," read out Jimmy Silver. "Can't see anything particularly funny in it. Do you mean that the lettering is at the side of the picture, instead of the bottom?"

"Ass! Mean to say you can't see a likeness between that chap and someone else?" demanded Newcome.

Silver and his two colleagues frowned.

"Something familiar about him, certainly," remarked Jimmy Silver. Then he uttered an exclamation. "My hat! I've got it! It's like the chap in that photo on Dalton's mantelpiece."

"You've got it," said Newcome eagerly. "Well, you know who the chap in Dalton's study is—his old pal Jones, who's coming here to-morrow from the United States. Doesn't it strike you as a little queer? Doesn't it strike you that Dalton's friend Jones and this chap Red Hooligan may be one and the same person?"

"Oh, help!"



Newcome's hand shot out and pointed at Mr. Dalton's amazed guest. "That's the man!" shouted Newcome. "He's New York's most dangerous gangster!"

"I don't say he will, but it's possible, anyway," grinned Tommy Dodd. "We can but try. If Newcome does fall, it's ten to one in doughnuts he'll try to nab Dalton's guest. And then there'll be fireworks in the Classical camp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Like the idea?" asked the Modern leader.

"Shure, an' ut's the foineest I've heard this term!" said Tommy Doyle enthusiastically. "Ye think ye can lave ut phwere the spalpeen'll stumble across ut?"

"Easy! Follow your leader and see what he'll show you!" said Tommy Dodd confidently.

And the three Tommies marched off together towards Classical territory again.

CHAPTER 3.

Newcome on the Trail.

"HALLO, hallo! Earthquake on the footer field or something?" yawned Jimmy Silver after dinner that day, as Arthur Newcome burst like a cyclone into the end study.

Newcome wore an air of excitement. He held a scrap of paper in his hand, and he had evidently been running.

"It does me, anyway," said the budding aspirant to honours in the realm of talking pictures. "I don't mind telling you that, on the strength of this photo, I'm jolly well convinced that Jones and Hooligan are one and the same."

"Great pip! You really think that Dalton's pal is an American crook?" gasped Raby. "All I can say is, you'd better keep your suspicions to yourself."

"And let him get away with it? Not likely!" said Newcome stoutly. "I'm going to make sure first, of course. But once I have made sure, I shan't hesitate. Dalton, or no Dalton, I'm going to get Red Hooligan!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I see anything funny!"

"Look in the mirror again, old bean!" advised Lovell. "Ye gods! Fancy Dalton chumming with an American gunman, you chaps! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

And Newcome obstinately refused to see anything funny in his startling suggestion.

During the next twenty-four hours Newcome kept a very careful eye on Mr. Dalton.

In that same period Silver and Raby and Lovell kept a careful eye on Arthur Newcome. They did not want to see their esteemed, though slightly unbalanced, colleague put his foot in it.

They couldn't help admitting that there was a somewhat striking resemblance between Newcome's newspaper cutting and the photograph on Dicky Dalton's mantelpiece. But the idea that Dalton was going to entertain a hunted criminal from New York was too far-fetched to be treated seriously. They concluded that the resemblance was merely a coincidence.

Newcome, however, remained convinced. He regarded Mr. Dalton now with very great suspicion. He admitted to his chums that it was possible for the master of the Fourth to be blameless in the matter—that his friend, perhaps, had turned gangster since he had known him. On the other hand, it seemed equally possible that he knew everything, and was deliberately sheltering the man from the police.

Newcome kept an open mind on that matter. It didn't matter much, anyway. What did matter was that if Red Hooligan should come to Rookwood he should capture him single-handed, thereby achieving fame which would lead to his triumphant entry into the talkies on the same lines as the celebrated Donald Cokeman.

Arthur Newcome suffered from a good deal of suppressed excitement on the following day. How he went through the ordeal of morning lessons he hardly knew. He managed it somehow; but he breathed a great sigh of relief when the morning ended.

It was Wednesday—a half-holiday at Rookwood. After dinner Jimmy Silver proposed a cycle run. Newcome politely but firmly declined. Other business far more important than cycling claimed his attention.

Silver and Lovell and Raby threatened and pleaded and begged. Their efforts were unavailing. Newcome was determined to wait in and watch the arrival of Mr. Dalton's guest at Rookwood. Since it was obviously impossible to compel a man to ride a bike against his will, Silver and Lovell and Raby eventually gave it up, and decided to stay in and see fair play.

Thus it came about that when Mr. Dalton's two-seater rolled up the drive from the station, with the Fourth Form master at the wheel, and a well-dressed stranger seated beside him, the Fistical Four were waiting on the steps of the House to greet them.

Dicky Dalton and the man from America stepped out of the car and walked into the House. The Fistical Four "capped" them as they passed, eyeing the guest with a good deal of curiosity.

Silver and Lovell and Raby rather liked the look of Mr. Jones. He was tall and of athletic build, and his face was good-looking and pleasant. Certainly he was the last man on earth they could imagine as a wild gangster from the underworld.

But Newcome saw him in a different light. When the pair had passed he turned eagerly to the rest.

"What do you think, now?" he asked triumphantly. "Isn't it a cert? Isn't he the living image of the picture in the newspaper?"

"If you think that chap's a blessed criminal, it's a cert that you're off your rocker, old bean," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Give it up, for goodness' sake, and let's have tea! Here, what the thump—"

"The fathead's following 'em!" gasped Lovell, as Newcome suddenly darted off in the wake of Dicky Dalton and his guest. "After him!"

"What-ho!"

And Silver and Lovell and Raby joined in the chase.

CHAPTER 4.

Unmasked.

BUT they were too late.

As they came in sight of Dicky Dalton's study, they were just in time to see the master and his friend enter.

Newcome calmly followed them in.

Silver and Lovell and Raby halted at the half-open door in a state bordering on frenzy.

"Of all the idiots—" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Of all the stark, staring imbeciles—" muttered Lovell.

"Of all the blithering bandersnatches—" groaned Raby. Words failed them. They stared into Mr. Dalton's study, hypnotised.

Meanwhile, Newcome went to work. Most fellows would have run a mile rather than enter Dicky Dalton's room on Newcome's mission. But he felt sure that he was on the

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right track, and that conviction gave him the courage to do what he would not have dreamed of doing in the ordinary way.

"Excuse me, sir," he said.

"Well, Newcome?"

"You may think that what I'm going to do is peculiar, but you'll soon see that it's perfectly justified."

Then Newcome whipped out a revolver—the same dummy revolver which Raby had seized in the Fourth passage—and, with a quick movement, wheeled round on the Form master's guest.

"Stick 'em up!" he yelled.

"What!"

"Stick 'em up!" roared Newcome. "I've got the drop on you, Red Hooligan! You may have got past the police at Southampton, but you're not gonna get past me, I guess! Stick 'em up!"

"What—what—"

The startled visitor stared at Newcome, and stared at his revolver. Then he stared at Mr. Dalton, who, in his turn, was staring at Newcome in blank and speechless astonishment.

"The boy is mad?" asked Mr. Dalton's guest.

Dicky Dalton gripped the edge of his desk. He seemed on the point of fainting.

"N-N-Newcome!" he managed to stutter. "Boy! Wretched youth!"

"Stick 'em up, I tell you!" hooted Newcome. "I guess you don't wanna hole drilled in you, do you? You get my drift?"

Mr. Jones or Red Hooligan, which ever he might be, looked at his host and gave a helpless gesture.

"The boy is demented, Dick!" he said. "How long has he been like this?"

Mr. Dalton began to recover his faculties. In two swift strides he reached the gangster-gatherer of the Fourth, and in a fraction of a second, to Newcome's dismay, he had snatched the dummy revolver from him.

"Look here, sir—" said Newcome warmly.

"Boy!" roared Mr. Dalton furiously. "Misguided creature! How dare you attempt to play a practical joke on a guest of mine before my very eyes? Are you utterly bereft of your senses, Newcome?"

"Not at all, sir!" came Newcome's reply. "I'm only trying to capture one of New York's most desperate gangsters! This man may be a guest of yours, but I may tell you that he is also Red Hooligan, wanted by the New York Police! If you don't believe me, look at this!"

"Newcome!" gasped Mr. Dalton.

He snatched the news-cutting from the junior's hand and stared at it. Then he started.

"Dear me!" he said.

Newcome's supposed gangster joined his host and looked at the scrap of paper on which Newcome's fond hopes had been built.

Then, to Newcome's surprise, he suddenly yelled with laughter.

"Look here—" said Newcome.

"Oh dear! This is really funny!" gasped the visitor. "You see what has happened, Dick?"

Mr. Dalton passed his hand over his forehead.

"I confess I do not. This is your photograph, apparently cut out of a newspaper. Yet the letterpress states that it is the photograph of a notorious criminal!"

"Exactly!" smiled Mr. Jones. "But the letterpress relates, most evidently, to the next picture. In many newspapers containing news pictures the appropriate paragraph is printed at the side, where it may quite easily be confused with another picture altogether. That is what has happened here. Whoever cut this out, cut out the wrong paragraph to go with it!"

"But," gasped Newcome, almost paralysed at the thought that such a mistake could have been made—"but that means that you were in the news at the same time, then? If you're not Red Hooligan—"

"I can assure you I am not!" laughed the visitor. "Nevertheless, my picture is in the newspapers quite as frequently as that of the gangster. Although I have come to England incognito, I am at least as well known as he is. Perhaps you have heard of me? My screen name is Donald Cokeman!"

Newcome jumped.

"D-D-Donald Cokeman? The—the talkie star? But—but you can't be! His hair is dark and yours is fair, and—"

"In many of my films I have worn a dark wig. Anyway, I'm Donald Cokeman, whether you believe it or not. Ask your master!"

Newcome, his face a study, turned to Mr. Dalton, who nodded.

"It is true, Newcome. This gentleman did not wish his

identity generally known. But since he has chosen to reveal it himself, I can only confirm it. And now, Newcome, what have you to say regarding your monstrous behaviour?"

"I-I-I— Oh dear!" groaned Newcome, as the full realisation of his dreadful faux pas came to him. "D-D-Donald Cokeman! Of course! I can see it now! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell from the passage. Jimmy Silver & Co. could not help themselves. The revelation that the man Newcome had thought to be Red Hooligan was none other than Donald Cokeman, the film star, whose career Newcome had sought to emulate, was too much for them. They fairly howled with uncontrollable mirth.

Mr. Dalton passed his hand over his brow. He seemed almost overcome.

"I will deal with you later, Newcome," he said. "For the moment, you may go."

"One moment!"

It was the voice of Mr. Jones, alias Red Hooligan, alias Donald Cokeman. Donald Cokeman's eyes were twinkling.

"Before the boy goes, Dick, I should like to know what

impelled him to take so much interest in Red Hooligan."

"I—I—" Newcome floundered for a moment, then he managed to explain: "Well, you see, sir, I had read that you got on the films through rounding up some real gangsters, and I thought I might do the same as you!"

"And in trying to do it you only succeeded in rounding up—myself! Ha, ha, ha!" finished the talkie star. Then he went on: "Dick, if I may ask a favour, will you let this boy off scot-free? He's worth it!"

"Well, well, I suppose no harm has been done. You may go, Newcome. Be more careful in future!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Newcome. Then he took his courage in both hands and asked Mr. Donald Cokeman:

"I—I wonder if you'd honour me and the other chaps in my study by coming to tea with us before you go?"

Donald Cokeman smiled.

"Thank you, Newcome. I accept, with pleasure!"

And Newcome walked out of the Form master's study on air—in spite of all that had happened!

(If Newcome started Rookwood this week it's nothing to the shock they get next week when Tubby Muffin takes up soccer in "TUBBY'S WINNING GOAL!")

EASTWOOD SHIELD LEAGUE.

HIGHCLIFFE CHECKED!
ST. JIM'S ON TOP AGAIN
WITH CRIPPLED TEAM!

By "OLD BOY."

St. Jim's, Wed.

WITH Highcliffe playing a critical game with St. Frank's, and St. Jim's on the same afternoon entertaining Bannington Grammar School, I arrived at St. Jim's expecting to find league points the sole topic of conversation.

Instead, I found Baggy Trimble the sole topic.

Everybody was discussing Trimble.

He had not been picked for the team. It appeared that he had at lunch-time slithered down the banisters into the Hall. He had done that often enough before, but this time Kangaroo, the St. Jim's centre-half, happened to be strolling past the foot of the stairs. Trimble and Kangaroo collided—hard. And when Kangaroo scrambled up, it was to find that he had twisted his ankle, whether seriously or not had not yet been decided.

Tom Merry advised rest, but Kangaroo said he was fit to play, and insisted on doing so, if he was wanted. Naturally he was wanted, but Tom Merry and a number of juniors were doubtful as to whether his ankle would stand a gruelling tussle. Hence the frequent and painfully frank mention of Trimble's name all over St. Jim's.

Just before the kick-off Kildare examined Kangaroo's ankle, and warned him that he would do better to rest it. But Kangaroo was adamant, and took the field with the team as usual.

From the whistle, Bannington made a rush on goal, and Harry Noble, alias "Kangaroo," was in the thick of it. The ankle seemed to be standing the strain well, and the Saints breathed freer. But there was a yell of dismay as Kangaroo was seen to go down in a heap under a Bannington forward—and when he was helped up, he was seen to limp hopelessly on one foot!

A further kick had finished Kangaroo's ankle for the match, and the Saints were left to struggle with ten men. They had hardly resumed ere the Bannington men came through, and Bird sent the ball in as Fatty Wynn rushed out to stop him.

One down!

As if that was not enough, a few minutes later Kerr, in attempting to head clear, took the ball with its full force on the side of his head, and went down and out. While Kerr was being doctored, St. Jim's

were disorganised, and Warren of the visitors scored a second!

Kerr returned, but had had only one kick before he received a nasty crack on the knee, and he was helped off by Owen and Lawrence, while the rest of the team tried not to look as glum as they felt.

Only Tom Merry's lips set a little tighter, and he spoke a word to his men.

"Never mind. We'll beat 'em yet!"

That was the spirit that St. Jim's resumed in, and it was the spirit that kept Bannington from running away with the game. With only nine men, the Saints' attack was unable to get going in its usual style, but Tom Merry and Gussy and Talbot, the three forwards, made frequent dashes into the enemy country, and it was not long before they were rewarded.

A long clearance found Tom Merry unmarked, and he sprinted through with deadly intent. Without waiting for the goalkeeper's rush, he sent in a powerful drive that flashed past the keeper's ear,

and brought a wild shout to the lips of the crowd who watched.

Two to one!

St. Jim's took sudden heart, and a few moments later Blake broke through and levelled the score with a cross-drive that took the goalkeeper completely unawares.

"Up, Saints!"

"Come on, the nine!"

With nine men, St. Jim's pressed as though they had been ninety.

Once again Tom Merry found an opening, and his head deflected the ball through—number three to St. Jim's! A minute later and Ernest Levison beat the backs and crashed the ball home for number four! Again they came—and for the third time, Tom Merry beat the goalkeeper, his shot going well down to the left of the custodian.

At half time, the Saints led 5-2, and there was much jubilation, in spite of the sympathy that was felt for Kangaroo and Kerr, both of whom were busy rubbing embrocation on their hurts.

On the resumption, Bannington made a spurt, but the nine Saints held them, and Blake, with a drive from thirty yards out, added a sixth goal. In the last few minutes, St. Jim's were awarded a penalty for a foul on Tom Merry, and Tom turned and beckoned to George Figgins up from back to take it.

Figgins loped the full length of the field, steadied himself, and put in a low ground shot that was in the net before the keeper could turn his head!

"Good old Figg!"

It was the seventh and last.

At the finish Bannington were a well beaten team, but it must be said that they found St. Jim's in unconquerable form. Even with nine men they concentrated on attack, and with it, carried the day!

News regarding the Highcliffe-St. Frank's match was eagerly awaited, and on the phone to a friend at Highcliffe, I heard the whole story.

St. Frank's, after two successive defeats, showed wonderful form, and in the first half carried all before them, scoring twice. In the second half Highcliffe were unlucky not to equalise; they could do everything but score. Their last-minute goal came too late to save the game.

As a result of this, St. Jim's go to the head of the table again, but Rylcombe are level on points, and Greyfriars, who won 7-2 against St. Jude's—the same score as St. Jim's—are only one point behind.

Next week St. Jim's meet Highcliffe—and the question is, will Kangaroo and Kerr be fit to play? At the moment Baggy Trimble is easily the most unpopular fellow in the lower school. As I left, I heard a podgy roar: "Yooooop!"

RESULTS.

ST. JIM'S 7	BANNINGTON
Merry (3)	GRAM. SCH. ... 2
Blake (2)	Bird, Warren
Levison, Figgins	
Teams: St. Jim's: Wynn; Figgins, Kerr; Redfern, Noble, Lowther; Talbot, Levison, Merry, Blake, D'Arcy. BANNINGTON: Challis; Green, Wray; Long, Griffith, McDonald; Warren, Dexter, Bird, Denver, Phillips.	
BAGSHOT ... 0	CLAREMONT ... 0
GREYFRIARS ... 7	ST. JUDE'S ... 2
Hurree Singh (2)	Raleigh (2)
Cherry, Wharton (3), Nugent	
HIGHCLIFFE .. 1	ST. FRANK'S ... 2
De Courcy	Tregellis-West, Watson
REDCLIFFE .. 1	RYLCOMBE
Judd	GRAM. SCH. 4
	Gay, Tadpole, Simbad, Monk
ROOKWOOD 10	ABBOTSFORD 0
Silver (3) Lovell, Dodd (3)	
Mornington (2)	
Grace	

LEAGUE TABLE TO DATE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts
St. Jim's	..	9	6	2	1	35	12
Rylcombe	..	10	6	2	2	26	16
Greyfriars	..	9	6	1	2	30	10
St. Frank's	..	9	6	1	2	24	9
Highcliffe	..	9	6	1	2	26	12
Rookwood	..	9	6	1	2	33	21
Claremont	..	10	1	4	5	14	22
Redcliffe	..	9	2	2	5	11	18
Bagshot	..	9	2	2	5	9	25
St. Jude's	..	9	1	4	4	9	25
Bannington	..	9	1	2	6	7	22
Abbotsford	..	9	0	2	7	9	41

LEADING GOAL SCORERS:

Wharton 16, Merry 15, Courtenay 13, Gay 12, Dodd 12, Baxter 8, Raleigh 7.

The Sneak of the Shell!

(Continued from page 18.)

"Come, Tom, no harm in telling that much," said Lowther.

"It's Gore."

"Gore! Of course! We might have guessed it. That's what you slogged him on the nose for yesterday, I suppose, when he bumped on Mr. Railton's door."

"Yes, it was, as a matter of fact."

"Good! We'll give him some more. Come along, we're all in this together. Does anybody know where Gore is?"

"We'll soon hunt him up."

The juniors left the study together. The Terrible Three joined in the idea keenly enough. It was a simple way out of the difficulty.

They visited Gore's study, but he was not there. They looked into the gym, but he was not to be seen. Finally they spotted him just going to the bicycle-shed, and they ran him down at the door.

George Gore looked a little alarmed to see nine juniors closing in round him. He looked from one to another and changed colour slightly.

"Glad to see you, Gore!" said Blake affably. "Where's that paper?"

"Eh?—What paper?"

"The valuable document Herr Schneider lost mit himself before!"

"Yaas, wathah! Hand it over, Gore!"

Gore gave Tom Merry a spiteful glance.

"So Tom Merry's told you—"

"Yes, certainly," said Tom Merry quietly. "I have told them that you have the paper, Gore. There was no reason why I shouldn't. It was impossible for me to give you away to Herr Schneider, and you have taken advantage of that fact to give me trouble. You know both Kildare and Herr Schneider consider that I have acted meanly in the matter, and you refuse to clear me. But Figgins has suggested a way of getting out of the difficulty—"



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"Yaas, wathah! We are going to give you a feashful thwashin, Gore!"

Gore scowled savagely.

"You'd better not touch me! I'll—"

He looked round like a cornered cat for a way of escape, but the juniors were in a circle round him, and there was no room to escape. They evidently meant business.

"You can't get away," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You are going to give up that paper, Gore. That's what Figgins suggested—making you give up the paper, and taking it back to Herr Schneider ourselves."

"If you mean to sneak—"

"There will be no sneaking in the matter. We shan't mention your name, or anything else, for that matter. We shall just return the paper to Herr Schneider."

"I—I haven't it now. I—"

"Don't tell lies. You wouldn't trust it out of your hands. You've got it about you, and you're going to hand it over."

"I'm going to do nothing of the sort," said Gore defiantly.

"You rotten ruffians, if you start any hooliganism, I'll—"

"Hooliganism or not, you're going to give up that paper."

"You're little better than a thief for keeping it! Now, hand it over."

"I won't!"

"Very well." Tom Merry set his teeth. "You refuse! We're going to have it, whether you like it or not. I know you've got it about you, and if you won't give it up, a search will pretty soon place it in our hands."

"You dare not—"

"You'll see. Are you going to hand over the paper?"

"No!" yelled Gore.

He made a desperate dash to break through the ring and escape. In an instant Figgins and Blake grasped him and dragged him back. He went reeling to the ground.

The next moment the search would have commenced, but just then an athletic figure stepped out of the door of the bicycle-shed. The juniors paused as they saw the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare's face was very stern and set.

"You did not know I was there," he remarked. "I did not, of course, intend to overhear anything not intended for my ears, but I could not help it in this case. I am glad it has happened, however, as it shows me that I did you an injustice, Merry."

"I couldn't explain, Kildare," said Tom.

"No. I understand that now, and I am sorry. Gore, get up!"

Kildare's voice was sharp and contemptuous as he addressed the cad of the Shell.

George Gore was very pale as he rose to his feet.

"Hand me that paper belonging to Herr Schneider, Gore!"

"I—I—"

"At once!" rapped out Kildare.

Without another word, Gore drew the document from his inner pocket, and handed it to the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare glanced at it, and then put it into his pocket.

"I—I—it was a joke!" stammered Gore. "I—I meant to return it some time, Kildare. Of course, I wouldn't have kept it for good. I—"

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare, with cutting scorn. "As I became aware of your rascality in this matter by accident, I cannot very well punish you, Gore, or report your conduct to the Housemaster."

Gore looked considerably relieved.

"But I shall have my eye on you in the future. If Tom Merry were to give you a thrashing for the harm you did him, I should not blame him."

There was a general grin among the juniors.

"I shall take this paper back to Herr Schneider," resumed Kildare, "and I shall explain to him that an injustice was done to Tom Merry, so as to set that matter right. You can rely on that, Merry."

And the captain of St. Jim's walked away to the School House. Gore would have followed, but Blake passed an arm through his.

"Don't buzz off like that, Gore," said Blake sweetly. "Merry wants to speak to you."

"Come into the gym, Gore, will you?" asked Tom Merry politely.

"No, I won't! I—"

"Do you prefer with or without gloves?"

"I—I won't—"

But even while he was objecting they marched him into the gym. There was no escape for the cad of the Shell, and though he chose to have the gloves on, his punishment was a pretty severe one, and D'Arcy was quite correct in describing it afterwards as a "feashful thwashin'!"

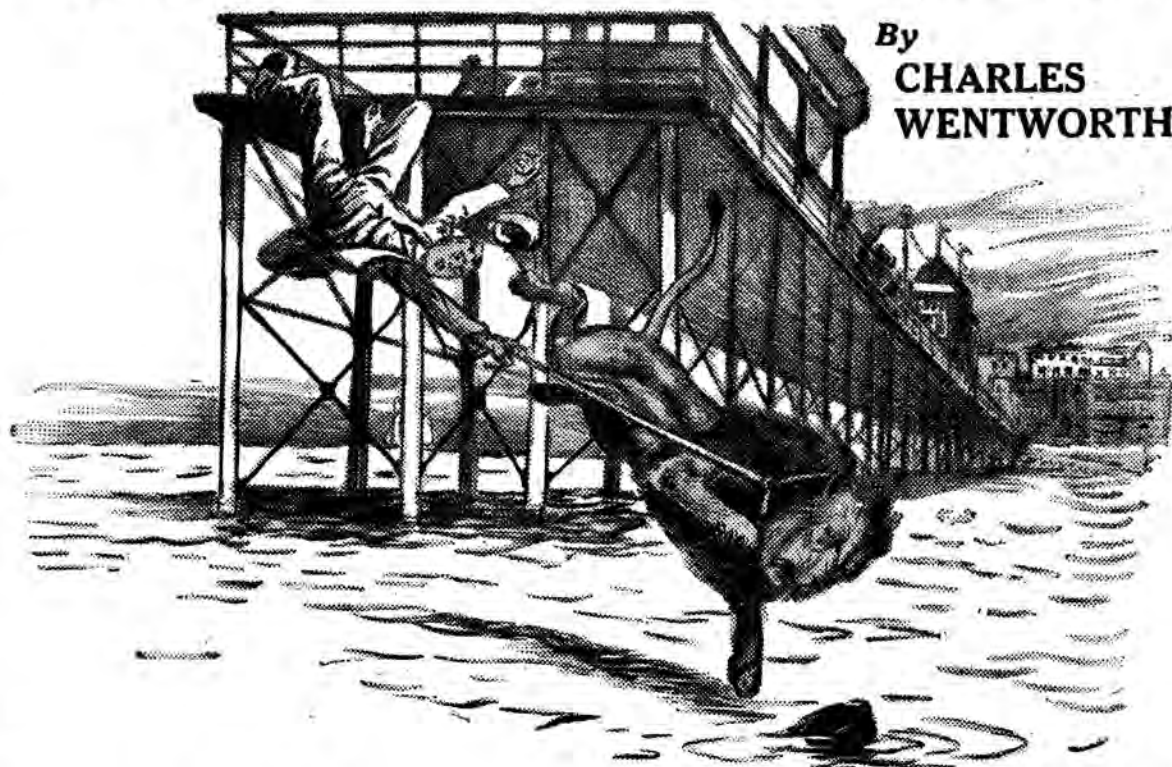
THE END.

"Tom Merry got out of an awkward fix pretty well that time, but he takes on a tougher job next week in a thrilling yarn called **"THE MYSTERY OF THE HUT!"**

RIPPING COMPLETE ADVENTURE YARN!

THE PUNCHER PALS!

By
**CHARLES
WENTWORTH.**



CHAPTER 1. The Big Game Hunt.

THE Puncher Pals had spent the night beneath the stars, and they were packing up on a glorious summer's morning when strange sounds from a distance made Sprouts prick up his cauliflower ears. His face, which bore the scars of many fights, expressed surprise.

"There's something up!" said he.

Percy Vere listened for a moment, then went on working.

"It reminds me of when I was big game hunting in India," he remarked. "Similar sounds and cries were made by the beaters in the jungle. But let us be moving. I think we will head for Brighton to-day."

Brighton and the sea! Sprouts and Skid Collins tackled their job of packing the tent, the cups and saucers, and the breakfast debris away on the big Rolls-Royce car with doubled energy. In all their holiday tour with Percy Vere and the big car they had been promised no such treat as this. Whistling as he worked, Sprouts bent to stow away the grub. The sounds had come appreciably nearer. Sprouts could hear men shouting and bounds baying.

"Hoi, hoi! Ha, ha, ha! Hoi!" The men must be crazy! He could hear the beat of heavy sticks among the bushes, and was in the act of picking up a big can of bully beef when a loud sniffing behind and a hot breath upon the seat of his trousers caused his hair to stiffen. Then—Bang! A deafening report close by, and the whistle of a slug close to his ear caused him to flatten out and twirl round on his hands, and he found himself staring into the wide open mouth of the biggest lion, with the biggest mane that ever he had seen. Bang! A bullet whanged through the crown of Sprouts' chauffeur's cap, carrying it yards away, and with a howl he swung himself upon his feet and tore for the car.

In the Rolls Percy Vere carried everything. For Sprouts to haul down the gov'nor's gun-case and take out, break

and fill, one of the sporting guns was the work of a moment. Sprouts braced himself, and aimed the gun at the lion who was coming towards him. But even as he pulled the trigger Percy Vere knocked the barrel up, the spreading buckshot scattering among the bushes. From the screen echoed wild cries.

"I will not have the animal shot, Martin," admonished Percy Vere. "In their own country they may be wild, but this beast must have escaped from a zoological gardens, a private collection, or a travelling circus, and is doubtless tame."

He leapt to the tin of bully beef, yanked a whole mass of the compressed meat out with a carving fork, and held it out to the lion. It was gone in a gulp, and the lion sat up and begged.

Skid tries his hand at lion-taming, and it is a roaring success—for the lion!

Just at that moment a horde of yokels and farm-hands burst into view. They were armed with shot guns, pitchforks, choppers, and other weapons. One man carried a rifle, and another an assegai, secured from only he knew where. Catching sight of the lion they ad-

vanced in solid line, the man with the rifle covering the begging lion.

With a single bound Percy Vere leapt in front of the mighty beast, holding up his hand, his shotgun at the trail.

"Stop!" he cried. "You shall not kill the faithful beast. He belongs to me. Back, the lot of you!"

A burly farmer, full of rude health and wearing a mighty crop of whiskers, spoke up for the hunters.

"Belongs to 'e, do 'e?" he cried. "Then take 'un away. We can't 'ave 'un chasin' wee children about the town."

"Thought he'd escaped from a circus," said another of the crowd.

"What ever he has escaped from, he is mine!" cried Percy Vere, showing how peaceful the lion was by setting

his hand upon its mighty head. "Sprouts, crank up! Let's get away from here!"

Picking up his perforated cap Sprouts saluted, and, with one eye on the lion, took his place behind the wheel. Skid Collins slung the last of the luggage into the kobs; Percy Vere sprang into the padded scoon, and the lion, without a moment's hesitation, leapt in after him.

Percy slammed the door, and as the car moved off towards the near-by road the crowd of countryfolk, weapons in hand, gaped and ogled in blank dismay. They saw the lion leap upon the seat beside Percy Vere, and stretch his snaggy head on Percy's lap. The noise of another horde of advancing beasts rang loudly from the left. At fifty an hour the kobs streaked from view, leaving behind only a cloud of dust. The bewiskered farmer loudly voiced the sentiments of all the rest with a roar of: "Well, I'm danged!"

CHAPTER 2.

Buying a Collar.

"THE gov'nor certainly does manage to find 'em," commented Sprouts as he kept up the smart pace and turned into the main road to Brighton. "An', my word! the way he tamed that lion! But what are we gonna do with it?"

Skid looked oack through the crystal glass partition. "I nope he keeps it, Sprouts," he said. "For, after all, a lion would be much more exciting than a dog, and I like dogs."

Sprouts scowled as he yanked the fast car round a ticklish bend, keeping cleverly inside the white chalk line. It was as well, for a lorry loomed up right over them, its wheels well over the guiding mark.

"If Dumps," said Sprouts, calling Percy Vere by his nickname, begotten from the famous sweets he manufactured, and from which he had earned his millions, "keeps that lion, I'm gonna resign. Don't yer see what it'll mean? Everywhere we stop the perlice will be after us. If we camp out on a common the whole neighbourhood will come out, armed with shotguns and rines, and the next time the bullet will go plumb through me 'cart, and not through me 'at, and I 'ad quite enough of that sorta thing on the Somme, kid. And so I wanta know what he's gonna do with it?"

Within a minute Sprouts knew, for rolling down the glass screen Percy said, as he stroked the head of the sleeping lion, and covered its great body with a rug:

"Sprouts, on the hoarding we passed just now I saw posters announcing a visit of Professor Sackem's Circus to Brighton this week. It is Monday. They will open to-day. No doubt this fine beast escaped while they were on the road. We will make for Brighton as fast as you can drive. But stop at Crawley. You are bound to see a harness-maker and seller of dog-collars there. It might be as well to buy a collar and a lead."

"He ain't a Pekinese; he's a lion, gov'nor," remarked Sprouts correctly. "And if you try leading him about the town you'll be locked up or fined."

"A surer thing than that," cooed Percy Vere, "is that if you don't obey my orders, you'll be sacked."

Sprouts Martin received a weekly wage of eight pounds for his job, and saved most of it. He obeyed.

"I want a collar for the biggest dog alive," said Percy Vere, leaning over the counter of the saddler, whose shop he entered in Crawley. "And I also require a strong lead."

The saddler, a little man with a face like leather, who smelt like leather, and wore a white apron and pince-nez above a bristling moustache, turned a pair of eyes like a dead mackerel's on Percy Vere.

"St. Bernard's are out of date. Don't keep any big collars. No sale for 'em."

"Then," cried Percy Vere, pointing to a collar hanging from a rafter, the biggest collar he had ever seen—a collar made of silver-plated metal, and lined with red morocco leather—"what's that?"

"Sample," said the saddler, going on with his work and ignoring his customer. "Made for the exhibition. Ten pounds wouldn't buy it."

"I'll give you five," said Percy Vere.

When he had left the car Percy had pulled the roller blinds right down. But now an inquisitive Crawley bobby on the prow, noticing the shuttered car, yanked the door open to see what was inside, which was just what the lion wanted. Leo had missed his sleeping partner, and with a thrust of its paws flattened out the policeman, then sprang over his prostrate body into the saddler's shop, arriving with a mighty bound upon the counter.

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"I'll take three," the saddler moaned, as he slid beneath the counter.

Percy Vere tore down the collar, clasped it round the lion's neck, which it fitted perfectly, seized the strongest lead he could find and a dog chain, in case the lead should fail him, planked four Treasury notes upon the counter, and dragged the captive lion at the end of the lead out of the shop and into the car.

The policeman was seated on the pavement with his helmet by his side and blowing his whistle in three diversified blasts. People were running from all directions.

"Brighton!" ordered Percy, as he slammed the door.

Sprouts just passed the gates of the level crossing before they closed. And it was as well, for police were tumbling into the nearest car to hand, whilst a frantic man with long hair and a waxed moustache did a nose dive behind the wheel of another. The moment the gates were opened they trailed after the Rolls in hot pursuit.

CHAPTER 3.

Brighton by the Sea.

SPROUTS MARTIN deserved medals for his driving that day. At times, when Skid looked back from the top of a hill he could see a whole string of cars coming in chase of them. But do what they would, they could not gain. The pals found peril on this road, however. A mobile police officer on a bike barred the way, and spread his hands to stop the car. As they flashed past him they saw him doing a nose dive over the handlebars of his machine; his sidewise jerk had been too abrupt.

A few miles farther along the road they found a line of policemen strung out from hedge to hedge. But they had not the nerve to stand firm to that charging bonnet with its hurthing tons of metal and ballast behind it driven at seventy. They went down like skittles.

"Skid," moaned Sprouts, "we'll get six months for this. Why pinch the animal? Why not let 'em shoot it? The perlice 'ave got the number of the car. The gov'nor can't get away with it. I wanted to 'ave a nice time by the sea, and now we look like landin' in Brighton Gaol."

"Sprouts!" Percy Vere's voice came in ringing command from behind.

"Yes, gov'nor?"

"Turn off the main road. We'll go via Horsham. The circus, I see, is at Hove. No harm can come to us. We'll restore the lion and explain."

Sprouts obeyed instructions, turning into side roads and by-lanes, and so their pursuers were left behind. Mopping his brow, for he reckoned he had performed a miracle, Sprouts steered the Rolls through the crowded and busy streets of Brighton by the sea, and, to his great relief, arrived at last at an open space where circus tents were being run up and a menagerie arranged for the opening performance of a week's stay that night.

Sprouts steered the car right bang among the showmen. And there were some who did not like it. A particularly gorgeous motor caravan proved to be the travelling home of Professor Sackem, and the professor was standing with one Hessian booted foot set upon the caravan steps when Percy Vere leapt out of the Rolls and dragged the lion in collar and on lead towards him.

"Professor Sackem, I believe," said Percy.

The professor cocked the cigar he was smoking an inch higher by clenching his teeth.

"Well, what about it?" he cried.

He had been having an argument with the bearded lady, and his tone was not exactly friendly.

"I've brought your lion back," said Percy Vere.

Professor Sackem stared at the lion, then shook his head, setting the black locks which rolled down on to his shoulders waving in the breeze.

"He don't belong to me!" he cried. "Wouldn't be seen dead with 'im!"

It was certainly a blow. Percy Vere gasped. He was not a man to make mistakes as a rule. Efficiency was his middle name and accuracy his first. In his perplexity he handed the lead to Skid and began to argue.

"But he must be," he cried. "You've got a menagerie, and—of course—"

"I've got a menagerie, but I never thought of putting you in it!" snapped the professor. "Don't bother me; I'm busy with my freaks!"

Now, just at that moment Bebe, the ape, who was always loose, came loping towards the professor's caravan. In a moment he caught sight of the lion. Bebe was friendly with all the circus animals, played pranks with them, and with a series of wild, flying leaps he swung himself on to the lion's back, catching hold of its great mane. But the lion, the Puncher Pals discovered afterwards, hated any kind of

monkey, having been scared by one when a tiny cub, and, turning, bolted.

The pull of the lead nearly yanked Skid off his feet. "Whoa! Whoa!" yelled Skid, giving the lead a double turn about his right forearm and carrying on at the run. "Steady, boy, steady!"

But the monkey was pulling at the lion's mane, and the lion, scared stiff with fright, raced onward across the fair-ground and into the street. Skid set his teeth and settled down to some strong running. It would never do for him to let go now. If that lion once got loose from him and tore into Brighton town, goodness only knew what might happen. People might be killed. Panic might result in the loss of many lives. If men were to hunt the lion with shot-guns they might kill pedestrians as well as the lion itself, and Skid knew the lion to be a harmless beast. He must not let go, even if holding on were to kill him.

As they raced down a street leading to the front women fainted, men bolted into doorways and climbed up into lorries and stationary taxis. A butcher with a trayful of meat upon his shoulder dropped the lot and shinned up a lamp. For one moment only did the lion pause, to seize a joint of beef, and then race on again.

As Skid turned on to the front and the lion dived among the motor traffic a policeman darted to a telephone box and sent out an SOS call. Skid was now running along beside the shimmering sea. He had gained his second wind, and was good for a mile or two more, with a bit of luck. Ahead of him, beyond the lawns, the West Pier loomed up. Hazily he regarded it as a distance-post, and wondered if he would ever reach it. Skid saw people fleeing right and left as the lion hove in sight.

"Lion! Lion! Lion! Lion!" The shouts could be heard for half a mile.

And now he heard Sprouts and Percy Vere shouting, and, half-turning his head as he raced onward to the tugging of the leashed lion, he saw the Rolls-Royce being driven along

on the wrong side of the road in order to be near him, with Sprouts behind the steering-wheel and Percy Vere leaning out of the window.

"Hold on to him, Skid!" bawled Sprouts. "You'll 'it a brick wall soon, and that'll stop 'im."

"Guide him down to the sea," advised Percy Vere. "The sea will stop him."

Skid's own honest opinion was that no power on earth could stop him, and, holding on and feeling nearly all in now, he came to the entrance to the West Pier. A man had just opened the gates to allow an invalid-chair to pass. Accompanying it was a big Great Dane, which no sooner saw the monkey than he swept it off the lion's back and chased it to a shelter, on the roof of which it perched, chattering madly.

Having got rid of the monkey, the lion's pace eased perceptibly. The shaggy beast turned on to the West Pier, the man in charge of the invalid-chair doing a nose dive as it came. A pier official closed the gates. The lion raced on with Skid. To the end of the pier they went, and then the inquisitive lion, rising up on the seat to have a look over the edge, dropped the joint of meat. Splash! As it hit the sea below the lion dived after it, and Skid, faithful to the last, still holding on to the lead, followed him.

They hit the water together and came up swimming. Skid let go the lead at last and struck out for the shore. The lion, knowing little about-bathing, took a side glance at him and paddled on alongside.

Crowds stared down from the pier. Thousands of people lined the beach ashore. After all, if a boy had the nerve to run about with and swim alongside of a lion, there could not be much danger, their dull brains had at length registered.

As he made his few last strokes and waded up the shingle with the lion beside him, Skid saw Sprouts and Percy Vere pushing their way through the crowd. And beside them was a man with a mane of black hair, who wore moustache and imperial.

As the lion shook the sea water from its sodden coat like a great, big dog, the man rushed to it and threw his arms about its neck. The lion reared to greet him, and licked his cheek. Tears, streamed down the stranger's cheeks as he turned to Percy Vere and offered him his hand.

"My friend," he almost sobbed, "I lose my favourite lion, my fine performing lion, my beautiful Mustapha. I am afraid the people shoot him. I find him again in Crawley, where he get into the so big motor-car with you. I chase you. The police chase you. We get to Brighton. And now I get my lion back, and we perform to-night at the London Palladium according to the programme—is it not? Yes?"

"Then you are the great Tony the Greek?" gasped Percy Vere, remembering advertisements he had read. "And this is Mustapha, the famous thought-reading lion?"

Tony the Greek bowed, his hand on his heart.

"If you so please," he cried, with a scrape. "Mustapha, he open the cage on the road and give-a the slip. It is in the morning papers."

But, owing to his habit of camping and sleeping in the wilds beneath the stars Percy Vere had not read the morning papers, he had yet to buy them from a stall in Brighton.

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