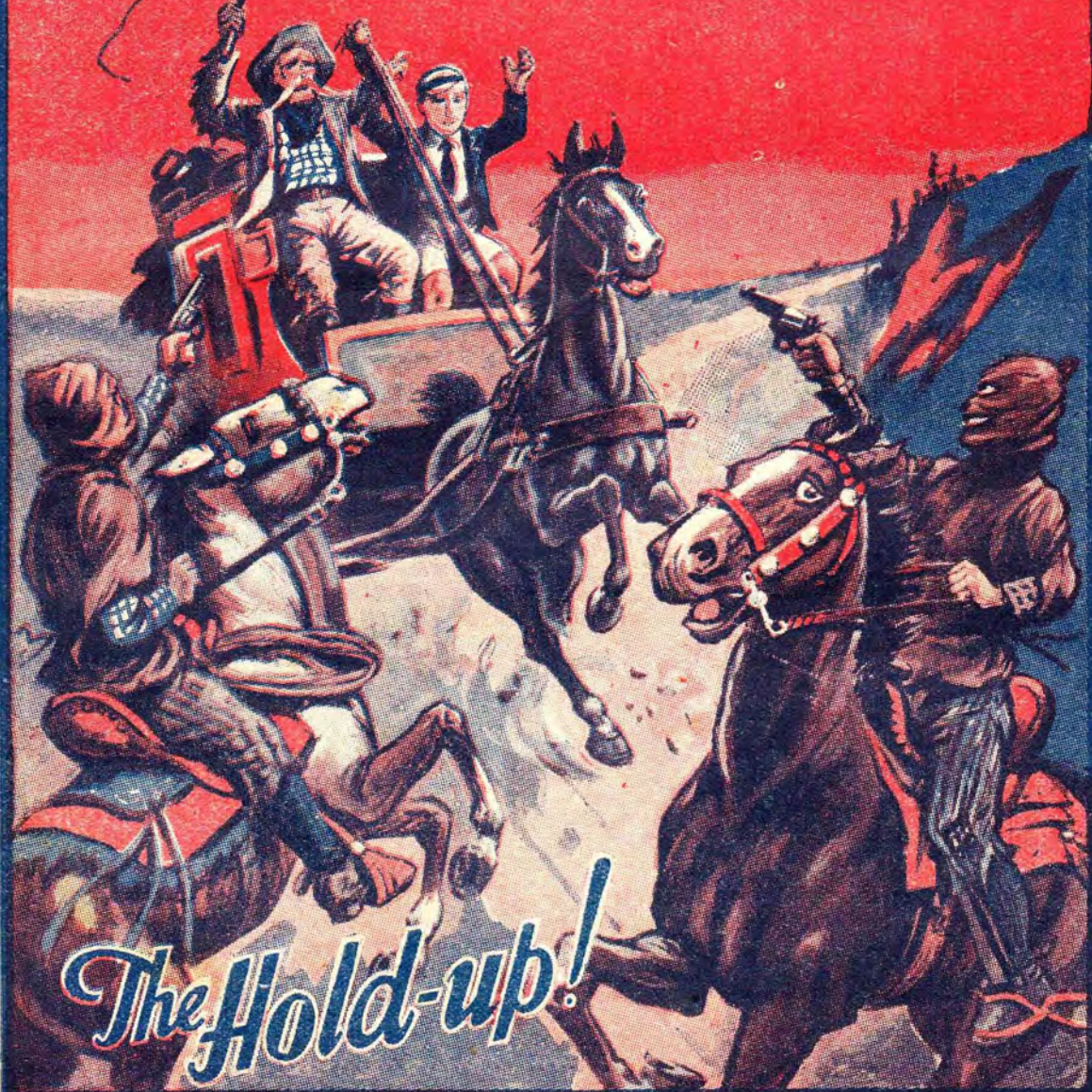


SUPER NEW PROGRAMME OF SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE STORIES STARTS INSIDE!

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2d



The Hold-up!

Read "THE TENDERFOOT OF PACKSADDLE SCHOOL!" Wonderful Wild West School Adventure Story.

THE TENDERFOOT OF PACKSADDLE SCHOOL!



The Packsaddle Bunch!

BANG!
Bill Sampson, schoolmaster of Packsaddle, stood in the doorway of the frame schoolhouse, on the bank of the Rio Frio, and loosed off a long-barreled Colt.

That was the signal for school. There was no school-bell at Packsaddle that morning. Some enterprising guy had cut the bell-rope and carried off the bell. That bell had been missing for two or three days, and Bill's gun had to serve its turn.

Bill, long-limbed and loose-jointed, in leather crackers and a red shirt, did not look much like a schoolmaster. He looked more like a cowpuncher. And he had been a puncher on the Kicking Mule Ranch till about a year ago, when the citizens of Packsaddle had decided that there ought to be a school in that growing section, and had roped in Bill to run the same. Which he did to the satisfaction of the parents, if not wholly to that of their sons.

Under Bill's left arm was a quirt. He never used a cane. He had found a quirt O.K. with refractory steers, when he rode with the Kicking Mule bunch. He found it O.K. with the boys of Packsaddle.

Bang!
Bill's big Colt roared again, waking every echo from the Rio Frio to Squaw Mountain. Nearly every man in Packsaddle packed a gun, and Bill Sampson packed the heaviest Colt in Texas.

There was a scamper of running feet. Boys who were in the fenced playground came scampering up at the

signal shot. Others, arriving on bronchos, spurred on in haste, and hurriedly turned their horses into the corral and ran for the schoolhouse.

There were about thirty of them, and their ages varied from twelve to fifteen or sixteen. Most of them looked hefty and husky. Packsaddle boys were a

Meet the pals of Packsaddle and the tenderfoot who was kidnapped and taken to school! They're here for the first time in this great yarn of Texas school adventure.

rather tough bunch, and they needed a tough schoolmaster to handle them. They had one in Bill!

"Mosey in, you 'uns!" barked Bill. Bill herded them into the big timber school-room as if they had been a bunch of steers.

They took their places at the bare, unpainted pinewood desks. Bill shoved his revolver back into its holster, and slipped the quirt from under his left arm into his right hand.

He stood surveying his class grimly. He looked like trouble. The Packsaddle bunch could guess what was on his mind. Bill was worried about that missing bell. He had something to say before morning class started.

"You, Poindexter!" he rapped.
"Yep!" answered Slick Poindexter.

"Where's that bell?"
"Search me!" answered Poindexter. Bill grunted.
"You, Kavanagh!" he snapped.
"Where's that pesky bell?"
Mick Kavanagh grinned.
"You can search me, Bill!" he replied.
"I guess," said Bill, "that it was one of you two that cinched that pesky bell. Ain't you the gol-darnedest, all-firedest pair of scallywags in this here school? I'll tell a man! You ain't letting on?"
"Not so's you'd notice it!" answered Slick.

Bill glared over the class.
"Any other guy got anything to uncork about that pesky bell?" he demanded.

No reply.
Bill Sampson swished the quirt. "Stand up!" he barked.
The boys stood up.
"Lean over them desks."
Thirty boys leaned over their desks. They knew what was coming now. They did not like the prospect. But they were not going to argue with Bill.

Bill Sampson walked behind his class, quirt in hand. His face was grim.

Whack!
"Ow!" roared Slick Poindexter, who got the first lick.

Whack!
"Howly saints!" yelled Mick, who got the second.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!
Breeches in the Packsaddle section were mostly of strong and tough material. But they were a poor protection against Bill's quirt. Bill gave the bunch only one lick each. But he

handed it out as once he had handed it out to steers on Kicking Mule Ranch. Every lick brought out a fearful yell.

Only one fellow raised objections. That was Steve Carson, the biggest fellow in Packsaddle School, the son of Two-gun Carson, the "bad man" of the section. He was sixteen, and rumoured to pack a gun himself, which no school-boy at Packsaddle was allowed to do.

Steve came last, and as Bill reached him, he jumped away from his desk and backed to the wall.

"Cut it out, Bill!" he snapped. "It's not good enough for me."

"Eh! What's that you're spilling?" ejaculated Mr. Sampson.

"I guess I said cut it out!" retorted Steve. "Keep it for the geeks who will stand for it."

"Forget it, Steve!" said Slick Poindexter. "Take your medicine the same as the rest, and don't chew the rag!"

"Can it, you Slick!" snapped Carson.

"I'll tell the world!" gasped Mr. Sampson. He made a stride at the tall, slim, cool-eyed fellow backing against the wall.

Steve's hand whipped to his hip.

The next moment Bill Sampson jumped as he saw himself looking at a revolver held in a steady hand.

"Drop it!" said Steve.

"Jumping Moses!" ejaculated Slick Poindexter. The whole bunch stared at Steve. Many a time had the gunman's son declared that he would pull on Bill if Bill handled the quirt on him. Now he was doing it.

Bill's rugged face was crimson. He had had heaps of trouble with the Packsaddle bunch, in one way or another. But this was the first time that a gun had been pulled on him in his own school-room.

"Put down that gat!" he roared.

"I'll say nope!" retorted Steve. "Put down that quirt, Bill Sampson, or I'll sure lay you over with a bullet in your laig, and—"

Whiz!

The quirt sang in the air, and the tip of the lash caught the revolver and jerked it away from Steve's hand. It clattered on the floor a dozen yards away.

Steve gave a startled howl. The next moment Bill's left hand was gripping him, and he was forced over a desk. Then the quirt rose and fell—not once, but many times.

"I guess," said Bill, as he laid it on, "that you won't have a hunch to pull a gun in this here school-room again, young Steve. I'll tell a man!"

By the time Bill had finished there was no more defiance left in the school-boy gunman. Steve leaned on the desk and groaned and mumbled when the quirt ceased to lick.

Bill tramped back to his high desk, facing his class.

"Now," said Bill, "I got suthin' more to spill! There's a noo kid coming to Packsaddle this afternoon. He's coming along in the hack from Hard Tack. He's a Britisher! Now, I'm telling you 'uns this! You ain't going to let down this here school afore a son of John Bull! You get me? This here kid has been to school in the Old Country, and I guess he's going to see that the Old Country's got nothing on Packsaddle—not a thing! He ain't going to write to his popper that in Texas schools the guys is called into class by the schoolmaster's gun! Nope!"

Bill paused.

Silence.

"That bell," said Bill, "has got to be perduced! If it ain't perduced by the time young Dick Carr hits Packsaddle,

every guy in this bunch is going to have the quirt, a dozen licks each, laid on hard and heavy! Chew on that!"

Slick Poindexter and Mick Kavanagh exchanged a glance. Bill spotted it, and grinned. He calculated that the school bell, whatever had become of it, was going to be produced by the time Dick Carr got to school.

Roped In!

DICK CARR was the only passenger in the little one-horse hack that made the trip by the trail from Hard Tack to Packsaddle. He sat beside the driver, looking about him with keen, interested eyes at the green grasslands, dotted with clumps of mesquite and post-oaks, stretching from the banks of the Rio Frio to the rugged slopes of Squaw Mountain.

It was not six weeks since Dick had landed from the steamer at the port of Galveston on the Gulf of Mexico. But he had seen something of the towns in the eastern part of the great State of Texas. Now he was seeing the cow country in the west. Far in the distance, a blur to the north-west, was the vast tableland of the Staked Plain, where in old days the Spanish conquerors had marched, and the Redskin raiders had ridden. It gave Dick quite a thrill when the stage-driver pointed it out with the butt of his whip, at the same time ejecting a stream of tobacco juice which Dick just dodged.

Much nearer at hand, clear in the brilliant sunlight of Texas, a straggle of shacks, shanties, frame-houses, and corrugated-iron roofs told where the cow town of Packsaddle lay. Outside the town, on the bluffs by the river, was a long, low wooden building.

"That's the school," said the driver. "You hittin' Packsaddle School, feller?"

"I'm going to board there," answered Dick. "My father's store manager at Hard Tack, and there's no school there. And I— Great pip!"

"Stick 'em up!" came a sudden shout from the trail.

Andy Butt, the driver of the hack, pulled on his ribbons. Beside the trail, at that point, was a stretch of uncleared chaparral. From the thickets two riders on bronchos suddenly emerged, and halted directly in the path of the hack.

Who they were, and what they were like, would have got any man guessing. Each of them wore a flour-sack over his head, inverted, the open end tied round his waist. Eye-holes were cut in the sacks, and slits for breathing. Both riders held levelled revolvers. And Andy, surprised as he was by a hold-up so close to the town, was not the man to argue with guns. He pulled in his horse so sharply that the animal nearly landed on its haunches. Up went Andy's hands over his Stetson hat—one still holding the reins, the other his whip.

Dick Carr stared blankly—too startled and amazed to obey the order to "stick 'em up!"

He had heard of rustlers and road-agents in the cow country; but seeing them was another matter.

"Say, you geek!" called out one of the riders. "You light down, pronto! That means you, you young jay!"

Dick just sat and stared.

"Say, you want to light down, big boy," said Andy Butt.

Dick nodded, and descended from his seat into the trail.

"Say, you in the flour-sacks!" called out Andy. "I'll say you're missing

your guess. This guy is only a kid for Bill Sampson's school at Packsaddle, and I'll tell a man he's got no dollars in his rags."

"Aw, can it, Andy! We don't want his dollars! We sure want the duck himself!" answered the one who had spoken to Dick. "Stand back from that hearse, you young guy! Andy, you can beat it!"

"I swear!" ejaculated Andy. "You ain't kidnapping my passenger!"

"You've said it, Andy!"

The stage-driver stared hard at the speaker, and, to Dick's surprise, a sudden grin overspread his face. Dick figured that Andy Butt had recognised the rustler's voice; but why that should make him grin was beyond the English boy's understanding.

"Say, what's this here game—" began Andy.

"Drive on, you geek, and don't chew the rag!" snapped the flour-sacked rustler; and he flourished his revolver at the stage-driver.

And Andy, grinning, drove the hack on towards Packsaddle, leaving Dick Carr standing by the trail.

The two horsemen rode up to him. One of them kept him covered with a revolver. The other looped a lasso over him, and drew it taut, fastening his arms down to his sides.

"Step lively!" he rapped.

"Look here—" began Dick.

"Step it, pronto!"

As the rustler set his horse into motion, and the lariat pulled, Dick Carr had no choice about stepping it. He tramped after the riders, and was led into the depths of the chaparral, out of sight of any man who might have been riding the Packsaddle trail that afternoon.

His heart was beating fast.

He was not afraid. Dick Carr had plenty of pluck, and plenty of nerve. But he was deeply excited, and he was uneasy. He had heard of the kidnapping gangs of the Wild West. Apparently he had fallen into the hands of lawless kidnappers.

"Look here!" panted Dick, as they halted in the shades of the chaparral. "You're making some silly mistake! I'm a schoolboy; I'm no use to you!"

"I guess you're no use to anybody, bo!" said the fellow with the revolver, with a snigger under his flour-sack.

"You've said it, begob!" remarked the other.

The speaker, Dick guessed, was Irish-American. It struck him that both the voices were boyish. He had heard that Packsaddle was a tough country. No doubt it was if fellows no older than himself took to rustling and kidnapping. They said no more. They dismounted in the chaparral, and one of them drew a big red Mexican scarf from under his flour-sack. He bound it over Dick's face, completely blindfolding him. Only his mouth was left uncovered.

He could not resist, with the lariat gripping his arms to his sides. Neither did he think of resisting under the muzzle of a six-shooter. Dick had not been long in Texas; but he had been there long enough to learn that it was unwise to argue with the man who held the gun.

Leaving their horses they led the prisoner through the chaparral, taking him by either arm.

Where he was led he had not the faintest idea. He could see nothing—hear nothing but the brushing of the thickets.

When that sound ceased he guessed

that he was out on the open plain. But where he was going was a blank to him. Once he was dragged headlong into a bush, and the three of them crouched there in silence, a gun pressing to Dick's neck as a warning to keep quiet. He guessed that they were taking cover to escape observation.

Then at last they moved on again. Suddenly there was another halt. He heard a clambering sound, and was left alone for a minute or two.

Then there came a drag on the lariat, and he felt himself rising. They had climbed a high fence, and were dragging him up after them against the timber.

He could see nothing; but he knew that they sat astride of the fence as they lowered him on the inner side. He heard them jump down after him.

One of them hurried away, leaving him with the other. Then a voice called in cautious tones:

"O.K.!"

He was led on again. He was now in a building of some kind. Was it the bandits' lair? Or where was he?

"Pronto!" whispered a voice. "We're sure on time, but I guess there ain't ten minutes to go."

"That'll see us through."

Seeing nothing, Dick's ears were keen and alert. He knew that a rope was tossed up to a beam overhead. One end of it came slithering down. The loop of the lasso was adjusted carefully under his arms. Then he felt a drag on the rope, and he was pulled clear of the floor.

He swung in the air.

Something was tied to his feet. He could not begin to guess what it was. Then there was a subdued chuckle, and a sound of retreating footsteps. The kidnappers were gone.

Dick Carr's brain was fairly in a whirl. They had brought him into some unknown building, and left him swinging on the lasso from a beam with something tied on his feet. For some minutes he swung there, and then he began to struggle, in the faint hope of getting loose.

Clang, clang! came from below him.

He gasped with amazement. He knew now what was tied on his feet. It was a bell. It rang and clanged as he struggled and swung.

Bill Gets the Bell Back!

CLICK!

Bill Sampson snorted.

He was wrathful.

It was the hour of afternoon classes at Packsaddle School. The school bell was still missing. Bill stood in the porch, his Colt in his hand, to give his signal-shot to the Packsaddle bunch. But when he pulled trigger there was only a click instead of the usual roar of the Colt.

"By the great horned toad!" hooted Bill. "Say, what guy's been monkeying with my gun?"

He glared at the gun. The cartridges had been withdrawn. During dinner it was Bill's custom to hang up his gun-belt on a nail. Nobody had ever ventured to monkey with it before.

Somebody had done so now. It did not occur to Bill that a fellow had wanted that revolver for a time, and wanted it unloaded, and so had borrowed it and extracted the cartridges. Bill concluded that it was a joke on him, and he breathed with wrath. He had not thought of the gun till he had wanted it to shoot the signal for afternoon school.

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"Jumping painters!" howled Bill. "I'll sure hand out the quirt to the guy that's been fooling with my gun! I'll tell a man!"

There was a snigger from some of the fellows in the playground. They seemed amused by Bill.

"Here, you Slick—you Mick!" roared Bill. "Where you been since chuck? I ain't seen you cavorting around." He glared suspiciously at Poindexter and Kavanagh. "I guess you been monkeying with my Colt! Say, if that bell ain't to home this afternoon, I'll say—Great gophers!"

Clang, clang, clang!

Bill Sampson stared round him blankly. It was the clang of the old iron school bell—that cracked and unmusical clang that had often awakened the echoes of Rio Frio, but had not awakened any for the past three days. Now it was waking them again.

Clang, clang, clang!

That bell generally hung over the school roof. The cut bell-rope was still dangling down, but the bell was not in position!

Bill for the moment did not know whence the ringing of the bell came. He stared and glared in amazement.

"Say, Bill, your bell's come agin!" grinned Steve Carson.

"Where's that bell?" roared Bill.

"Sounds like it was in the school-room!" said Slick Poindexter. "Didn't you allow that it had got to be brought back, Bill, along with the Britisher when he hit Packsaddle? Looks like it was."

Clang, clang! Rattle! Clang!

"Jumping Injuns!" gasped Bill.

He rushed across the porch to the doorway of the school-room. Most of the Packsaddle bunch rushed after him, curious to know what it meant.

After Bill's threat that morning to quirt the whole school if the bell did not turn up that day most of the bunch had expected it to turn up. They guessed that the guys who had cinched that bell would not want any more quirt. Now it seemed to have turned up!

Bill Sampson rushed into the school-room. He stopped dead, with a gasp of astonishment, at the strange sight that met his gaze.

"Howling coyotes!" he stuttered.

He stared, and the bunch behind him stared. It was an amazing sight.

From one of the beams across the timber school-room a boyish figure swung at the end of a lasso. The face was hidden by a red Mexican scarf tied across it. To the feet was tied the bell—ringing and clanging as the swinging figure wriggled and struggled.

Clang, clang, clang!

The school bell was ringing on time! It was Dick Carr who was ringing it, though quite unintentionally!

Wherever Dick Carr fancied that he might be, he certainly never dreamed that he was in the school-room of the cow town school.

But that was where he was! And the schoolmaster of Packsaddle stared at him with bulging eyes.

"Say, what's this game?" roared Bill.

"Who's that geek?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the bunch.

"How'd that gink get here?" roared Bill. "Who's strung him up in this goldarned school-room, I want to know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bill Sampson rushed at the swinging figure. He could not tell who it was, with the face covered by the Mexican scarf. He figured that it was one of the bunch, larking. And as he reached it he handed out a lick of the quirt.

"Oh!" roared the swinging one, as he

got the lash, and he struggled and kicked frantically.

Bill was not expecting that! A boot crashed on Bill's bearded chin, sending him staggering backwards with a fearful howl.

"Whoooo! Jumping painters!" gasped Bill.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Packsaddle bunch. The cow town schoolboys were enjoying this.

"I'll say this is the bee's knee!" exclaimed Bill, and he grasped at the swinging figure, getting hold of its legs.

"Now then, you jay—you pie-faced, pesky gink, what's this game?"

"Let me loose, you silly rotters!" yelled the blindfolded fellow.

"You let that rope go, you Carson!" yapped Bill.

Steve unhooked the end of the lasso, which was fastened to a desk. He let it go suddenly, and the swinging figure came down with a rush.

Bump!

There was a yell as the fellow in the lasso hit the floor. Bill leaned over him, loosened the loop, and pulled off the lasso, and jerked the Mexican scarf from the face. With a swing of his powerful arm he landed the fellow on his feet. He stared at him.

He saw a rather handsome, sturdy, fair-haired fellow, a complete stranger to him. It was not one of the bunch, after all.

"Say, who's you?" yapped Bill.

The new boy at Packsaddle panted. He stared round him with starting eyes. He was more surprised than Bill.

"I'm Dick Carr?" he gasped.

"You're Dick Carr? You're the noo kid?" stuttered Bill. "You was coming by the hack from Hard Tack! How'd you get here like this?"

Dick gasped. His brain was in a whirl of amazement. He could see that he was in a school-room! He had been left, as he fancied, in a bandits' lair. It was a big surprise.

Bill grasped him by the shoulder and shook him.

"Spill it!" he hooted. "How'd you get fixed up here in the school-room! Say! Uncork it, pronto!"

"I—I—I was kidnapped off the hack!" gasped Dick. "I—I—I thought that—oh crumbs!—I was kidnapped by rustlers—two rustlers in flour-sacks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the Packsaddle bunch.

Bill fairly blinked at the new boy.

"Kidnapped by rustlers!" he gurgled.

"Kidnapped nothing! Rustlers nunk! Some of this here bunch has played this game on you! You know anything about it, young Poindexter?"

"What'd I know, Bill?" answered Slick.

Dick Carr gave a jump as he recognised the voice of one of the rustlers!

"What about you, Kavanagh?" hooted Bill.

"Nothing about me, begob!" answered Mick.

And Dick jumped again as he realised that the other rustler was speaking!

He stared blankly at the two cow town schoolboys. He understood now.

Bill gave him a vigorous shake.

"Say, big boy! You savvy you cinched you and strung you up here?" he demanded.

"I guess it was some of this bunch, and I'll say I'm going to take their skins off with my quirt! You wise to them guys, say?"

Dick Carr was already "wise" to the guys! But he did not mean to say so.

"I never saw their faces," he began.

"I took them for rustlers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the bunch.

"Aw, can it, you young jay!" growled Bill. "I'll tell a man you're the tender-



Crack! Crack! "Jump, you gink, jump!" exclaimed Carson. With bullets "fanning" his feet, Dick had to jump, or get the hot lead in his toes! The bully loosed off rapid shots, and Dick jumped swiftly and actively. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Packsaddle bunch.

foot from Tendertown! You're the prize boob! You're the goob from Goobsville! And then some!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Can the cackle!" roared Bill. "You're late for class already! Get in your places, or—"

Bill cracked the quirt. There was a rush of the Packsaddle bunch to their desks.

Tenderfoot's Jump!

TIN TUNG, the Chinese cook and man-of-all-work at the cow town school, took Dick Carr to the chuckhouse, where he ate his dinner, which was late, and which he wanted after his long trip. Then he was taken to the bunkhouse, where he was shown his bunk and a locker, and where he found his suitcase, which had been landed by Andy Butt.

There were a dozen bunks for the boarders; the rest of the bunch were day boys, who came up on foot from the cow town, or rode in on bronchos from the neighbouring ranches.

The cow town school, with its chuckhouse and bunkhouse, struck Dick as being fixed up more like a ranch than a school, and he would never have taken Bill Sampson for a schoolmaster, but for a cowpuncher, and a fairly tough one at that.

But when, later in the afternoon, he presented himself in the school-room, he found that there was another teacher—a little man, in a tail-coat and horn-rimmed spectacles, who was called Small Brown—Brown being his name—and who, Dick afterwards learned, was a graduate of a college in an eastern State.

Small Brown supplied the knowledge, while Bill supplied the authority. Small Brown's tail-coat was the only one in the valley of the Rio Frio. He had sported a plug hat on his first coming, but it had been riddled with bullets by playful punchers and discarded.

Grinning faces and chuckles greeted Dick as he came in, and Bill pointed him to his place with the butt of the quirt.

His face was red as he sat down. He could see that all Packsaddle School had heard the story by this time of the "kidnapping" of the new guy from the Hard Tack hack, and chuckled and chortled over it. Even Bill was grinning, and there was a glimmer of amusement behind Small Brown's horn-rimmed spectacles.

Dick's chief desire was to punch the heads of Slick Poindexter and Mick Kavanagh, whom he knew to be the "rustlers" who had kidnapped him from the hack. He was wise to them now.

But they evidently did not guess that he was wise to them, for when school was dismissed they joined him as the bunch tramped out with friendly grins, and Slick gave him a smack on the shoulder.

"Say, that sure was tough, young Carr!" declared Slick. "I'll say that game was real tough on a new guy."

"You're shouting, begob!" agreed Mick.

"There's some of this bunch," went on Poindexter solemnly, "who'll give a new guy the glad hand, and help see him through. Me, Slick Poindexter, I'm one—and this red-headed galoot, Mick Kavanagh, is one more! Ain't that so, you Mick?"

"I should smile!" said Mick.

Dick Carr nodded cheerfully. Knowing what he knew, he guessed that another game was coming. This time, being on his guard, he did not think that the playful pair would get by with it.

"Mosey round and give the shebang the once-over!" said Slick, and they led him across the playground towards the river.

Most of the bunch stared at the new fellow and grinned. Steve Carson

came up, with his accustomed swagger, and looked him over, with a jeering grin that brought a gleam to Dick's eyes.

"Some tenderfoot!" said Steve. "Say, you ever been fanned, bo?"

"Fanned!" repeated Dick Carr. He had not been long enough in Texas to have learned what fanning was.

"Ain't he the prize boob?" said Carson. "Say, you guys, you stand clear while I fan him!"

"Aw, can it, Steve!" snapped Slick. "You keep your gun packed, if you ain't honing for some more of Bill's quirt. Besides, we're going to show the new guy the tenderfoot's jump."

Steve burst into a chuckle.

"Carry on!" he said.

And he stepped aside, and Dick Carr walked on with the two fellows who were showing him round. A gate in the school fence gave access to the grassy bluffs that overhung the Rio Frio.

In the rains, the Frio ran high, almost to the summit of the bluffs. But when the river was low, as it now was, a wide stretch of mud lay below the bluffs, and the water was a dozen feet out.

On the edge of a bluff, where it dropped sheer to the yellow, sticky mudbank, the three stopped. Slick and Mick exchanged a wink.

"Say, bo!" drawled Slick. "You look across the Frio—I guess you can see the Kicking Mule Ranch from this here spot."

Dick Carr did not look across the Frio. Being "wise" to the playful pair now, he guessed why they had brought him there, and why the spot was called the tenderfoot's jump. And Dick's idea was that he was not going to play the tenderfoot and be tipped off the bluff into the mudbank ten feet down.

He made a sudden unexpected grasp at Slick Poindexter, and before that

cheery youth knew what was happening he was tipped off the bluff.

"Squash!" Slick landed in thick mud ten feet down.

"Howly, Moses!" stuttered Mick. "What intirely— Oh, begob!" He tipped over after his comrade under a vigorous shove, and landed beside Slick in the yellow mud.

Dropping on his hands and knees on the edge of the bluff, Dick Carr looked down at them and grinned.

Gasp and gurgles came from below as Slick and Mick struggled up out of the mud. They were sticky and smothered from head to foot, and they stood waist-deep in mire, glaring up at him with muddy faces in wild wrath.

"Say, what game do you call this?" bawled Slick. "You pesky, ornery, pifaced tenderfoot, I'll sure sock you a few for this."

"Urrrrgh!" gurgled Mick, spitting out a mouthful of mud. "It's choked I am intirely, begob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Dick Carr. "You look muddy! Don't you reckon that's funny—as funny as sticking up a fellow on the trail and kidnapping him?"

"Aw, begob, he knows it was us, Slick!" gasped Kavanagh.

"I guess I'll sock him, all the same, when I get out of this!" gasped Poindexter. "I'll sure sock him a few, and then some! Urrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Muddy fists were shaken at the new fellow grinning down from the bluff. But they could not get at him. They had to trample and wallow through the mudbank under the bluffs for a distance before they found a way up. Dick Carr cheerfully left them to it, and walked back to the playground of Packsaddle School.

Fanned!

CRACK! Dick Carr jumped clear of the ground.

The revolver rang out as he entered the playground and the bullet

smashed on the ground an inch from his foot.

Crack!

He jumped again. This time the bullet grazed his boot. An inch nearer and it would have gone through flesh and bone.

He stared blankly as he jumped. He was startled. He expected things to be rough and tough at Packsaddle School, but he did not expect a fellow to be blazing away with revolvers in the playground.

But that was what was happening.

Steve Carson stood a dozen feet from him, two six-shooters in his hands, his own and one of Bill's he had "borrowed." He loosed off rapid shots. A crowd of Packsaddle fellows, keeping back from the line of fire, looked on and roared with laughter.

Crack, crack!

"Jump, you gink, jump!" shouted Carson.

Dick jumped.

He guessed now what "fanning" was. The bully of Packsaddle was fanning him with shots. And he had to jump. Fanning was a dangerous game. Carson had sent the first two shots close. Now he was shooting at his boots. That was the cowpuncher's game of fanning. A fellow who was fanned had to keep jumping, or get hot lead in his toes.

"Stop that!" yelled Dick.

"Jump, you gink, jump!" chuckled Carson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fan him, Steve!"

"Jump, tenderfoot, jump!" yelled the Packsaddle bunch.

Crack, crack!

Dick Carr jumped swiftly and actively. His eyes gleamed, and his face was red with wrath, but he knew what he had to do, and he did it. Roars of laughter from the bunch greeted the performance.

A dozen shots rang out, and the revolvers were empty. Steve, roaring with laughter, prepared to reload the guns. He was going to keep up this game and frighten the tenderfoot out of his five senses. That was the big idea, at all events.

You must read

"THE MISCHIEF-MAKER OF THE REMOVE!"

By Frank Richards



This splendid school story of Harry Wharton & Co., the world-famous chums of Greyfriars, appears in to-day's **MAGNET**. Horace Coker's cousin, Edgar Caffyn—a rotter of the first water—is a newcomer to the Remove Form. From the very first moment he joins the school it is clear that the crawling worm has set out to make all the trouble for Horace that he can. There's an ulterior motive behind Edgar Caffyn's presence at Greyfriars. Read all about it in this week's grand issue of

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But Steve did not get away with it. For the moment the six-shooters were emptied, Dick Carr rushed forward. Steve, groping for cartridges, never got them out. A clenched fist, that seemed like a lump of iron, crashed on his jaw, and the biggest fellow at Packsaddle went over backwards and landed with a crash on his back. The revolvers flew from his hands.

"So that's fanning, is it?" panted Dick. "You won't fan me again in a hurry, you booby!"

"By thunder!" Steve Carson struggled to his feet. His jaw had a fearful ache in it.

He hurled himself at the new guy.

Then the Packsaddle bunch registered surprise! They expected to see the English schoolboy go down, knocked out and smashed. They guessed that Bill Sampson would have to carry in what was left of the tenderfoot and put it to bed.

But that was not what happened.

Right and left, a pair of clenched fists met Steve Carson. He was older and bigger and taller. But that did not seem to help him. Crashing knuckles on his jaw staggered him; crashing knuckles in his eye sent him spinning. He landed on Texas again, bumping.

The Packsaddle bunch yelled with surprise and delight. Nobody in the bunch had ever been able to handle Big Steve. He was handled now.

He staggered up, gasping, panting, purple with fury. He flung himself headlong on the tenderfoot.

For three or four long minutes there was scrapping such as had never been seen in the Packsaddle playground before—though the Packsaddle bunch scrapped often and hard.

Two muddy figures that came squelching from the river stopped and stared, and then ran on to join the excited crowd. Slick and Mick were looking for the new guy to sock him. But they did not want to sock him now. They grinned with gleeful appreciation as he knocked the bully of Packsaddle right and left.

Dick was getting some tough punishment. But he did not seem to mind. He was handing over more than he got.

Crash went Big Steve again! This time he did not get on his feet! He lay spluttering and gasping, whipped to the wide.

"Whipped!" yelled Slick Poindexter. "Howling horns! I'll say that tenderfoot is some lad!"

"You're shouting, begob!" chuckled Mick.

Dick Carr stood panting for breath, a little uncertain on his pins as he dashed a stream of red from a damaged nose. He was game to go on. But Steve was finished.

"Say, bo, you want to bathe that nose!" chuckled Slick, and he slipped his arm through Dick's, and led him away towards the bunkhouse. Mick, on the other side, slipped an arm through the other.

Dick Carr blinked at them rather uncertainly. But they grinned at him with friendly grins. The hatchet was buried. Dick, Slick, and Mick were going to be friends.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "THE HOLD-UP AT PACKSADDLE!") Watch out, chums, for this all-thrilling complete yarn of the further adventures of the Packsaddle boys. Ask your newsagent to reserve your GEM for you every week.)



CHAPTER 1.
D'Arcy Objects!

"I OBJECT!"

"Look here, Gussy—
"I wepeat, I object!"
And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke as if he meant it. His tone was very firm, and he had jammed his monocle into his eye in a very determined manner.

The juniors gathered in Study No. 6, in the School House of St. Jim's looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in great exasperation.

They were all agreed upon the matter under discussion with the exception of the swell of the Fourth, and it really was too bad of D'Arcy to set himself up against an overwhelming majority in this way.

But Arthur Augustus never stopped to count the odds against him, either in argument or in fistical encounters.

"I wepeat," he said firmly, as he surveyed the exasperated juniors through his famous monocle, "I wepeat once more, I object!"

"Ass!"
Every voice in the study chimed in with the word. The fellows seemed all agreed that D'Arcy was an ass. It was one of the few points of agreement between them. As a rule, the seven fellows in Study No. 6 did not find it easy to agree.

They were Blake, Digby, Herries and D'Arcy of the Fourth, to whom the study belonged. The other three fellows were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, known as the Terrible Three. The Terrible Three had come into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form to take counsel with Blake & Co. in the matter, and Blake and Digby and Herries were in hearty agreement with them. Arthur Augustus wasn't, and he did not hesitate to say so.

"Look here," said Tom Merry

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

warmly, "what have you got to object to, you ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"
"We've all agreed about it," said Blake.

"I haven't, Blake, deah boy."
"Well, you don't count, anyway," Monty Lowther remarked.

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"Let Gussy state his objections, and we'll argue him out of them; and if that's no good we'll bump him," said Herries.

"Hear, hear!" said all the juniors together.

"I should wefuse to be bumped," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "I have no objection, howevah, to statin' my objections. It appeahs that

When Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, three new boys, arrived at St. Jim's, neither the School House nor the New House wanted them! But it was another story after the New Firm had made their presence felt!

thwee Board school chaps are comin' to St. Jim's—"

"That's it!" said Blake. "Three of 'em. Since St. Jim's agreed to take in chaps on the County School scholarships, I suppose it can't be helped."

"Yaas, wathah! I have not the slightest doubt that the thwee chaps will be all wight—"

"Who said they weren't?" demanded Tom Merry.

"You have certainly hinted that they mayn't be all right."

"I haven't said anything of the sort! I only said that as we don't know the chaps, or anything about them, we don't want them in the School House," said Tom Merry warmly. "There is room for them in the New House, and Figgins & Co. are welcome to them. That's what I said."

"But you were pwoposin' to—"

"To see the Head, and ask him to put them into the New House," said Tom Merry. "Why not? If they're all right Figgins & Co. are welcome to them. If they're not all right we don't want them here. Don't you understand logic?"

"I object!"
"Why?" roared Blake. "What objection have you got, you ass?"

"It is puttin' a slight on fellows who have nevah done us any harm," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "If they get to heah of our action it will hurt their feelin's."

"Oh, ring off!" exclaimed Blake. "You don't look at it in a reasonable way, Gussy. These three new chaps—what are their names?—Redfern and Thingummy and What'shisname—are strangers to us, and they come from goodness knows where. I suppose they are clever chaps, to win scholarships. But that isn't the point. We don't want them in the School House. If we speak to the Head, and point out how the junior studies are crowded, he may think it best to put 'em in the New House. That would be better."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "I've spoken to a good many fellows in the Shell, and they agree. Kangaroo and Dape, and Glyn and Gore have promised to come to the Head with us."

"And Reilly and Hancock, and Lumley-Lumley have agreed, too," said Blake.

"You see, Gussy—"

"Everybody's against you."

"So shut up, and come along with us to the Head."

"I wefuse to shut up, and I uttably decline to come with you to the Head upon such an errand," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I object!"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated.

"Veally, Blake—"

"Look here," bawled Manners, "what is your objection? Why shouldn't we try to shift the new kids into the New House?"

"Yaas, all wight, if they were ordinary kids," said D'Arcy; "but the fact that they come from a County Council school makes all the difference in the world. It is bound to get to their ears aftahwards, and they will think that we have a wotten, snobbish objection to them because they come from a Board school. I should stwongly object to being wegarded as a snob."

"So you think—" began Lowthor belligerently.

"Yaas, deah boy. I think that what you are pwoposin' would be snobbish, not to say caddish!" said the swell of St. Jim's firmly.

The juniors glared at him.

"Well, you cheeky ass!" gasped Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to be called a cheeky ass! I considah that you are a set of remark-able asses yourselves! I'm afwaid I cannot waste much more time on this discuss, as I have to go down to Wylcombe to see my tailah. Pway give up the whole idea. In a delicate mattah of this kind you can always depend

upon the opinion of a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Are you coming to the Head?" roared Blake.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I wegard it as caddish!"

"Oh, bump him!"

"Bai Jove, I wefuse— I— Oh! Ooooooop!"

Arthur Augustus was at liberty to refuse, but his refusal did not make any difference. The exasperated juniors seized him, and he was swung off his feet, and bumped on the floor of Study No. 6 with such force that the dust rose in little clouds from the carpet.

"Yawwooh!"

Bump!

"Owl! Weflease me, you feahful asses! You are simply wuinin' my twousahs! Owl!"

Bump!

Then the juniors, laughing loudly, crowded out of the study, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting in a little cloud of dust and gasping for breath.

"Ow, ow! The uttah wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus, as he scrambled to his feet a few minutes later, when his head ceased to turn round. "Bai Jove! Owl! I shall have to go and change my twousahs before I go out!"

CHAPTER 2.

Rival Deputations!

TOM MERRY & CO. crowded out of Study No. 6, and down the passage. They were joined in the passage and on the stairs by a good many more juniors.

The news of the impending arrival of the three scholarship boys had stirred St. Jim's very deeply.

The juniors were not given to reflecting very deeply, as a matter of fact; but, like most boys, they were very conservative in their ways of thinking when they thought at all. They were fond of the old school they belonged to, and they disliked any idea of change in the old customs. Even changes that were made for their comfort did not always meet with their approval.

It was related at St. Jim's that when the New House was built, a hundred years before, the fellows of that day had complained loudly at the innovation, though at the present day a great deal of fun and occupation was derived by the juniors from the keen rivalry between the two Houses.

The fact that St. Jim's, like many other Public schools of the present day, had been thrown open to scholarship boys from the County Council schools, was a sore point with some of the fellows. That snobbish fellows like Levison and Mellish and Crooke should object was natural, but it was rather surprising to find Tom Merry & Co. on the same side. But the juniors had not thought much about it. They only knew that it was a great change, and they objected to change on principle. St. Jim's had done very well as it was for a good many centuries, and why shouldn't the Board of Governors let well alone? That was what the juniors wanted to know.

Quite a crowd of fellows followed Tom Merry & Co. in the passage which led to the Head's house. As they drew near the door of the Head's study three juniors were sighted coming down the passage from the opposite direction, and evidently with the same destination.

"Figgins & Co.!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

The two parties met outside the Head's study, and regarded one another very suspiciously.

"Hallo!" said Blake.

"Hallo!" said Figgins.

"What are you doing here?"

Figgins grinned.

"What are you doing here, if it comes to that?" he replied.

"We're going to see the Head."

"How odd!" grinned Kerr. "So are we!"

And Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"Just so!" he said.

Tom Merry stared at them in surprise.

"Look here!" he exclaimed warmly.

"If you've heard about—"

"The three new fellows!" grinned Figgins. "Yes, we've heard. Redfern and Owen and somebody or other—they're coming this afternoon."

"What are you going to the Head for?" demanded Monty Lowthor.

"Tell us what you're going for?"

"Fair play, you know," said Kerr.

"Well, we're going to speak to the Head about the new kids," said Tom Merry cautiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"What are you cackling about, you ass?"

"Why, so are we, that's all!"

And Kerr and Wynn chuckled. The coincidence seemed to strike them as extremely comical. But the School House juniors looked wrathful.

"Look here, we're not having that!" exclaimed Blake; "it was our idea first!"

"What was?"

"To—to see the Head and ask him to—to—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "To put the new bounders into our House, I suppose?"

"Well, yes."

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"It was our idea at the same time, then. We talked it over, and came to the conclusion that the School House was the place for them!" chuckled Figgins.

"Now look here, you New House rotters, you've got to travel!"

"Rats!" said Figgins cheerfully. "We're going to see the Head and ask him to put the new chaps into the School House!"

"You're not!" roared Blake.

"We are!"

"We'll jolly well shift you first!" said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps, and rush 'em out of the passage!"

"Good egg!"

The School House juniors rushed on to the attack. Figgins & Co. were outnumbered, but they did not think of retreating. They put up a splendid fight, and in a moment a wild and whirling combat was raging in the passage.

In the excitement of the moment the juniors had forgotten that they were outside the Head's study and the probable effect upon Dr. Holmes of a scrimmage just outside his study door.

"Give 'em socks!"

"New House cads!"

"Yah! School House rotters!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Bump, bump, bump!

Tom Merry and Figgins, locked in a deadly embrace, reeled and bumped against the door of the study. It was opened from within at the same moment, and the Head, his face pink with anger, looked out. The opening of the door was fatal to Figgins and Tom Merry; they rolled into the study fairly at the feet of the headmaster.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head, amazed.

"Cave!" shrieked Monty Lowther.

Up and down the passage the juniors fled wildly. Like the vision of a dream they vanished from the astounded gaze of the Head. But Figgins and Tom Merry had no chance to vanish. They separated and scrambled to their feet, with the eye of the Head fixed sternly upon them.

"Merry! Figgins! How dare you!"

The culprits hung their heads. They realised the enormity of their offence—too late! And if the Head had flogged them they could hardly have complained. They stood before him shame-faced, with hardly a word to say.

"I am surprised and shocked," said Dr. Holmes severely. "Hold out your hands!"

He picked up a cane.

Tom Merry and Figgins exchanged a rueful glance. It was not much use stating to the Head now what they had come for in the first place. They took their caning, two on each hand, with grim fortitude, and the Head dismissed them with a gesture.

The two juniors closed the door, and looked at one another grimly in the passage, folding their hands under their armpits and squeezing them.

"Ow!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh!" said Figgins.

And then they went their ways.

CHAPTER 3.

Gussy Finds Friends!

"BAI Jove, this is wotten!" Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, who, arrayed spotlessly as usual, had reached the old High Street of Rylcombe. While Tom Merry & Co. had gone on a deputation to the Head of St. Jim's with such disastrous results, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was walking down to the village upon a most important visit to his tailor.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! Did you hear about the lorry-driver who drove a lorry full of "Magnets" round Trafalgar Square? He "attracted" so many "Modern Boys" that he has been presented with a valuable "Gem." Yes, more news: "Wayland widow routs six bandits," runs a headline. The widow's smite! You know young Jameson's neck? I hear he has just fallen into the school fountain right up to it! Gore says wrestling is good for health. A grapple a day keeps the doctor away. Mr. Ratcliff went into a Wayland restaurant. "Do you serve crabs here?" he asked. "We serve anybody, sir," replied the waiter. Helpful Hints Department: Never slap a mosquito and miss—or it may take it for an encore and make a "stinging" reply! Remember,

Most of D'Arcy's clothes were made in London. But if he wanted anything in a hurry, he would have it made at the local tailor's, giving very particular instructions as to cut and fit. D'Arcy's last waistcoat had been sent home with nearly an inch too much space under the arms. The swell of St. Jim's was going down to have a very serious talk with his tailor about it.

Just as Arthur Augustus entered the village two youths came out of Mother Murphy's tuckshop, and three boys stepped from the railway station up the street. The latter D'Arcy did not notice. The former engaged all his attention. For the two youths were Gordon Gay and Frank Monk, of Rylcombe Grammar School; and they turned towards D'Arcy the moment they saw him. The gleam of fun in their eyes showed that they meant to rag the swell of St. Jim's—a little harmless amusement which the Grammarians were much addicted to, and which was heartily repaid in kind by the St. Jim's fellows.

"Gussy!" ejaculated Gordon Gay.

"The great and only!" murmured Monk.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Shall we duck him in the horse pond, or make him eat his silk hat?" said Gordon Gay, with an air of meditation.

"Both!" said Monk.

"I am due at my tailah's now, and I shall probably have to stay there a long time," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I have therefore no time to twash you now, you Gwammah School boundahs!"

"Jolly lucky for you, Gussy!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway let me pass."

"Go hon!"

Arthur Augustus strode by with his nose very high in the air—too high, in fact, for it prevented him from seeing a foot held out for him to trip over—and he promptly tripped over it.

"Oh—ah!"

Arthur Augustus staggered wildly forward, but he did not reach the ground. Two strong pairs of arms caught him, and he was lifted off the ground in the grasp of Gordon Gay and

if you want to drive a nail without hitting your thumb, hold the hammer with both hands. "I should like to visit the planet Mars," writes Skimpole. We suggest you "planet" carefully, old chap! "How did Curly Gibson hurt his leg?" Jameson asked Wally D'Arcy. "You see that ladder over there?" replied Wally. "Well, Curly didn't!" "What, all twelve of you?"—as the judge remarked when the jury brought in a verdict of "insanity"! Skimpole presented himself in the editorial office with a long poem. "Is there any chance of getting this in 'Tom Merry's Weekly'?" asked Skimpole. "Possibly," answered Tom Merry. "I'm not going to live for ever!" Ever go to parties? If you do, remember the fag's advice: Never take a second piece of cake—take two pieces the first time! "My ancestors came over with William the Conqueror," said Lennox. "That's nothing!" retorted Gore. "My father came over on the same boat as Laurel and Hardy!" "We should all pull together," says Skimpole. Yes, that's the only way our study window shuts! Last shot—it's a football story: "Pass, you chump, pass!" yelled the spectator to the not-so-good centre-forward. "Pass?" echoed another spectator. "Why, that fellow couldn't pass a pond!" Keep 'em low, boys!

Frank Monk. They held the swell of St. Jim's in a horizontal position, kicking and struggling spasmodically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welease me, you wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his neck round to look up at the Grammarians. His silk hat had rolled off, and his eyeglass was dangling at the end of its cord. "You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, St. Jim's!" yelled D'Arcy, in the hope that some St. Jim's fellows might be in the village street. "Help! Wescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

The three youths who had come out of the railway station had crossed the road, and they were looking on at the peculiar scene with grins of amusement. They were three very quietly dressed lads. They stood looking on in great amusement till Arthur Augustus called for rescue. Then the trio exchanged quick glances.

"That's a St. Jim's chap. Reddy," said one of them, a fair-haired lad with a handsome face and very pleasant blue eyes.

"Looks like it, Lawrence."

"Let's lend him a hand, then," said the third.

"Right-ho!"

And the three lads ran towards the struggling Arthur Augustus.

Reddy collared Gordon Gay, and Lawrence seized upon Monk. The third fellow caught Arthur Augustus to keep him from falling as the Grammarians were wrenched away, and set him safely upon his feet.

"Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy, groping wildly for his eyeglass. "Bai Jove! Thank you, dear boys! I don't know you, but I regard you as fiwends. Pway, bump those boundahs!"

"Here, leggo!" roared Gordon Gay, struggling with Reddy. "Leggo! Who are you, you bounder?"

"Going to St. Jim's," said the stranger, with a cheerful grin. "Down you go!"

"Ow! Yow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and stood looking

CHAPTER 4.

Something Like a Jape!

on with great delight as his three rescuers proceeded to bump the Grammarians. Gordon Gay and Frank Monk had no chance against the three. They were bumped, and they were rolled on the pavement, and then they scrambled up and retreated. The odds were against them now, and they did not want any more ragging.

Gordon Gay and his chum dodged across the village street, and the three rescuers turned, grinning, to the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus had replaced his silk topper, but he now raised it with a most graceful bow.

"Thank you vewy much!" he exclaimed. "I'm awfully obliged to you fellows, you know. Did you say you were goin' to St. Jim's?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the trio with renewed interest. "Is it possible that you are the three new chaps who are comin' on giddy scholarships?"

"Just so!"

"Bai Jove! I'm weally pleased to meet you, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, holding out his hand. "Pway allow me to welcome you to St. Jim's, and to intwduce myself! I am D'Arcy of the Fourth."

The three New House fellows shook hands with D'Arcy in turn. The kindness and courtesy of the swell of St. Jim's evidently pleased them.

"We're going into the Fourth," Reddy explained. "My name's Redfern. This chap is Lawrence, and that's Owen."

"Jolly glad to make your acquaintance, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I welcome you to the coll. in the name of the Fourth."

"Thanks!" said Redfern. "It's jolly good of you! I had an idea that some of the chaps at the school didn't care about scholarship fellows from the County Council schools comin' there."

Arthur Augustus coloured a little. He remembered the meeting in Study No. 6, and the intended deputation to the Head upon that subject.

"Ahem!" he said slowly. "You see, the fellows don't quite gwasp it yet. Some of them may cut up wustly, but you may wely upon my standin' by you—especially aftah the wippin' way you came to the wescue when those Gwammah boundahs were waggin' me. If you chaps like to wait a bit while I go to my tailah's, I shall be vewy pleased to take you to the school and look aftah you. I shan't be more than an hour."

Redfern grinned. "You're very good," he said; "but, you see, we'd better get on to the school. We're expected there, too. Shall be glad to see you again."

"Bettah wait for me and let me see you through," said D'Arcy. "I can see that you are decent chaps. I'm a fellow of tact and judgment, you know; but the othah fellows haven't my expewience, and I'm afwaid there will be twouble for you. They have an ideah that you chaps will be awful waga-wuffins, or somethin' of that sort."

Redfern's eyes glimmered.

"Oh, have they?"

"So you will wealise that it will be bettah—"

"No; I think we'll go on, and chance it," said Redfern.

"Oh, vewy well! Just as you like! I shall see you latah!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy raised his silk hat very politely, and walked down the street in the direction of the tailor's.

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REDFERN, Lawrence, and Owen looked after the elegant figure of the swell of St. Jim's, and then looked at one another. Lawrence seemed somewhat serious; but Owen was grinning, and Redfern chuckling audibly.

"My only aunt!" said Redfern. "This is good!"

"Maybe rotten for us," said Lawrence. "Best thing going," said Redfern confidently. "Look here! The chaps at St. Jim's are expecting three awful bounders. You can see that."

"Looks like it," grinned Owen.

"It would be a pity to disappoint them. Are you chaps game for a jolly good rag?" demanded Redfern.

To which his two companions replied immediately:

"What-ho!"

"Well, then, I've got an idea. We've got all our traps here, but we can leave them to be sent on if we like."

Owen and Lawrence looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I can see what good that will do!" said Lawrence. "Where does the rag come in?"

"There's a second-hand clothes' shop in this street," said Redfern. "We can hire some things there, and leave our own to be sent on. Same chap who brings them can take back the hired togs when we've done with them."

"What are you driving at?" asked Owen.

Redfern, who was evidently the leading spirit of the trio, chuckled gleefully.

"It's a rag," he said—"a great and glorious rag! The St. Jim's fellows are expecting three frightful outsiders. Like their rotten cheek, of course, but there you are. Well, why should the little dears be disappointed? My idea is to dress ourselves in rags and tatters, or something like that, and go to the school as if we had come from a slum."

"My word!"

"Oh!"

"We can speak in Cockney dialect, you know, and they will think that's the way we generally talk," went on Redfern, grinning. "You can mention that your father's in prison for burglary, Owen—"

"What?" yelled Owen.

"Only for the jape, you ass! Lawrence can say that his father's a rag-picker—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Lawrence.

"And I'll let it be discovered that I haven't any parents at all, but was found in the gutter and brought up by a tripe merchant."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that doesn't give the aristocratic St. Jim's persons an electric shock, I'll eat my new toppler!" grinned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three new boys roared in chorus. Arthur Augustus had meant well by the little warning he had given them, but it had nettled the scholarship boys a little, all the same. The "rag" Redfern had thought of seemed a ripping way of outraging the aristocratic prejudices of the natives of St. Jim's, and it appealed to them very much.

"You see, we're sharper all along the line than these Public school chaps, and we shall take them in easily enough," said Redfern. "We've roped in scholarships that they couldn't take to save their lives. We've lived in a town where people are really alive, and they've vegetated in a sleepy hollow. I haven't the slightest doubt that if we stick together we shall be able to keep our end up at St. Jim's, and a little rag

of this kind to begin with will show them what we are made of. What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get the togs, then."

And the three chums walked down to the second-hand clothes dealer, and entered the musty, stuffy little shop.

Mr. Wigge had often supplied clothes and costumes of various sorts to the St. Jim's juniors, for use in their amateur theatricals, and he was not surprised by the order the strangers gave him. He rolled out his stock at once, and Redfern & Co. selected the most impossible kind of garments they could find.

Mr. Wigge allowed them to change in his little parlour.

Redfern dressed himself in a pair of men's trousers, many sizes too large for him, and pinned up the ends over a pair of big, thick boots. He donned the waistcoat that was three sizes too large, and a jacket that was a little too small. He put a greasy old cap on the back of his head, and ruffled up his brown hair.

"Ain't I orlright?" he demanded. "Carn't I speak as well as you young toffs—eh? 'Oo yer gettin' at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme any of yer lip, and I'll dot you on the smeller!" said Redfern, in the broadest of Cockney.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Git them togs on," said Redfern; "and you'd better begin to practice talkin', too. You've got to git inter the 'abit of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Orlright," grinned Lawrence.

"Ow's that?"

"Oh, that's orlright! Crikey, you do look a 'orrible sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The trio dressed themselves. Lawrence and Owen looking even more outrageous than Redfern. They surveyed each other and roared. Mr. Wigge surveyed them, too, and laughed.

"We'll do, I think," chuckled Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Send the clothes on presently, and you can have this stuff back," said Redfern to Mr. Wigge. "And here's the cash for the hire."

"Thank you, sir."

"Naw then, kummerlonger me," said Redfern. "We shall have to 'oppit to git to the school before D'Arcy gets there to give us away."

"Yes, rather—I mean wotto!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three japers quitted the shop, leaving Mr. Wigge chuckling. They walked down the street, practising a slouch ready for their arrival at St. Jim's. They strolled along the lane to the school, making their boots and trousers as dusty as they could.

"That's St. Jim's, I suppose," said Redfern, as a grey old tower rose into view behind the trees.

"Ere we are!" said Owen.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The big gates of St. Jim's rose before them. Taggles, the school porter, was standing in the gateway, looking out into the road. He did not condescend to take any notice of the three young tramps, as he naturally imagined them to be.

At the sight of the stately old buildings, and the imposing arch of the gateway, perhaps a momentary doubt fell upon the three practical jokers. But it was too late to retreat now. They marched up to the gates, and Taggles glared at them.

"You pass hon!" he said. "There ain't nothin' to be given away 'ere, and we don't admit tramps."

"Crikey!" ejaculated Owen.

"Go and eat coke, cocky!" said Lawrence.
 "Get yer 'air out!" said Redfern.
 Taggles gasped.
 "You cheeky young himps!" he roared. "I'll—"
 "You be civil, cocky, or we'll report yer," said Redfern, wagging a forefinger at the angry school porter.
 "We're the three new Board school boys for this 'ere school—"
 "Wot?"

Taggles staggered back. He knew about the three County Council school-boys who were to come to the school that afternoon, and Taggles had even greater aristocratic prejudices on the subject than the St. Jim's fellows had. But his worst anticipations had been nothing like the dreadful reality. He stared blankly at the trio, and they left him leaning against the gates and gasping, as they walked cheerfully on into the green old quadrangle of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

A Shock for St. Jim's!

TOM MERRY stood on the steps of the School House gently caressing his left eye. Figgins' fist had been planted there a short time before. Monty Lowther leaned against the porch, occasionally dabbing his nose with a handkerchief. Manners was the only one who felt inclined to talk, so he was doing all the talking. But Manners' voice died away all of a sudden as he caught sight of three disreputable figures crossing the quadrangle towards the House.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Manners. Tom Merry left off caressing his eye for a moment.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Look!" said Manners.

"Phew!"

"My only respected maternal aunt!" murmured Lowther.

The Terrible Three gazed at the strangers. How Taggles had allowed three such disreputable young ruffians to enter the precincts of St. Jim's puzzled them for a moment. Then they realised the truth.

"The three!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"The scholarship boys!"

"The County Council chaps!"

And the Terrible Three looked at one another.

They were deprived of the power of speech for some moments. They had had only a very hazy idea of what the scholarship boys would be like, but they had never dreamed in their wildest moments that they would be anything like this.

Redfern & Co. came up to the School House.

"Allo!" said Redfern.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"This 'ere is St. Jim's, ain't it?"

"Yes!" gasped Manners.

"Oo's that old bloke at the gate?" asked Owen.

"Eh? Oh, that's the porter!"

"Cheeky old cove!" said Lawrence solemnly. "I jolly near come to givin' 'im a welt on 'is tater-trap!"

"Oh!"

"Don't think much of this 'ere place," said Redfern, looking round disparagingly. "It must be very old, I think."

"It is very old," said Tom Merry. "Hundreds of years."

"Why don't they rebuild it, then?" asked Owen.

"What?"

"Our Board school in Angel Alley is built of noo red brick," said Redfern proudly. "None of yer old places for us! No fear!"



As Dibbs, furious with rage, hurled himself at Redfern, the new boy grasped him, swung him off his feet, and flung him over the other side of the bed. Dibbs crashed into Fatty Wynn, and both juniors bumped to the floor. "Yaroo!" roared Fatty. "Ow-ow!" gasped Dibbs.

"We wouldn't stand it!" said Lawrence.

"Not much!" said Owen. "I don't fink!"

"Wot standard are you blokes in?" asked Redfern.

"We don't have standards here," said Manners, somewhat haughtily. "We have Forms. We're in the Shell."

"Wot's that?"

"The Shell? Oh, it's the Form next above the Fourth!"

"Queer name for a standard, the Shell!" said Redfern meditatively. "I suppose you coves ain't pullin' our legs, hey?"

"No!" gasped Manners.

"We bin told you blokes would play tricks on us," said Redfern, shaking his head, and apparently regardless of the crowd of amazed fellows gathering around. "We ain't takin' any of yer old buck, you know."

"We ain't ashamed of bein' brort up in a Board school in Angel Alley," Lawrence declared, "and I don't mind heverbody knowin' that my father is a rag-picker."

"I wouldn't deny that my father was in prison for punchin' a bobby, not if I was talkin' to a dook," said Owen.

"My only chapeau!" ejaculated Kangaroo of the Shell, staring at the new boys. "So you are the County Council chaps, are you?"

"We is!" said Redfern gravely.

"We har!" said Owen.

"You chaps are going into the New House, I believe," said Lumley-Lumley.

He did not know, as a matter of fact, which House the trio were destined to enter, but he thought it was worth while making an attempt, at least, to plant the new boys upon Figgins & Co.

"Dunno," said Redfern. "Which is the Noo 'ouse?"

"Over the way!" said Blake. "Come on. I'll show you!"

"Thanks!"

They left the crowd of School House fellows in a buzz. Tom Merry forgot his eye, and Lowther his nose. They were thinking only of this latest and most astonishing addition to St. Jim's.

"It's amazing!" said Herries. "I can't understand such chaps being let in."

"Looks to me as if St. Jim's is let in for something," said Digby.

"Blessed if I can quite believe it!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "It's extraordinary that their people should let them come here in that state."

"I guess it's a puzzle," remarked Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh, what can you expect of Board school chaps?" said Levison of the Fourth, with his sneering laugh. "They don't know any better. We shall have to rag the cads and make them get out, that's all."

"If they don't know any better it wouldn't be cricket to rag them," said Tom Merry sharply.

Levison sneered.

"Oh, of course you would back them up!" he said. "I remember you stood up for young Frayne when he came into the Third. He was a chap of the same class."

"It's too thick!" said Glyn.

"Too thick entirely," said Reilly. "I wouldn't want to be a snob like Levison; but I think it's too thick entirely."

"Oh, rotten!" exclaimed Gore.

"There must be some mistake about it, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley. "Anyway, I hope they are going into the New House. It would be ripping to plant a crew of scarecrows like that on Figgins & Co."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the talk ran on in growing excitement. The amazing appearance of the new boys was a topic that was likely to last the School House for some time. Meanwhile, Jack Blake had guided the trio to the New House. Redfern & Co. appeared to be more pleased with the aspect of the New House than with that of the School House.

"This 'ere is somethin' like!" said Redfern. "This 'ere show is built properly of brick. It's noo."

Blake gave a sniff.

"Oh, it was run up the other day!" he said. "The New House is less than a hundred and fifty years old."

Blake marched the trio into the New House. Fellows gathered round in the passages to stare at them blankly, as he conducted them upstairs to the Fourth Form passages.

"What have you got there, Blake?" yelled Pratt of the Fourth.

"What are they?"

"Where did you dig them up?" demanded Dibbs.

Blake stopped with his charges outside Figgins' study. Figgins & Co. were there, attending to the damages they had received in the combat outside the Head's study. Blake knocked at the door and opened it. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked at him, and then their gaze became fixed, as it rested upon the three new boys.

"My hat!" breathed Kerr.

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins only stared.

"Here they are!" said Blake cheerfully. "Come in, you chaps. These are the new chaps, Figgy. I hear they're going into your study. You're welcome."

And Blake stepped out and closed the door, leaving Redfern & Co. in the study. He retreated from the New House chuckling.

CHAPTER 6.

Not Wanted!

FIGGINS, Kerr, and Wynn had not even risen. They could not. The three juniors of the New House seemed glued to their seats. The three new boys stood in the study, grinning, with very pronounced grins.

"You call this 'ere a study?" asked Redfern.

"Yes," gasped Figgins.

"Ow many fellers 'ave it?"

"Three, so far," said Figgins, recovering himself a little, "and there's not going to be any addition to the number, if I can help it."

"Wot standard are you in?"

"We belong to the Fourth."

Redfern nodded.

"That's our Form!" he said. "Mighty pleased to meet yer. That there bloke who brort us 'ere says we are to be in 'ere."

"That's 'ow it is," said Owen. "I think it will be a rotten crush if there are six of us 'ere."

"What-ho!" said Lawrence.

"Look here, you chaps," said Kerr. "I don't believe you're to be stuck in this study at all. It's some rotten joke of those School House bounders."

"There's a new study been opened at the end of the passage, partitioned off from the box-room," said Fatty Wynn. "If you're coming into the New House at all, it stands to reason that you will be put in there."

"Crikey!" said Redfern.

"Where do you come from?" demanded Kerr.

"Angel Alley," said Redfern innocently. "We've been to a Board school, you know. We've put on these 'ere togs 'specially to come 'ere. We thort we'd better be a bit decent."

"That's 'ow it is."

"Decent!" gasped Figgins. "Is that what you call decent?"

"What's the matter with our togs, cocky?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all!"

"If you coves are goin' to put on any side, there will be trouble," said Redfern. "We ain't goin' to be put on because we've come from Angel Alley."

"We can't 'elp our fathers bein' in prison," said Owen indignantly.

"Prison!" murmured Figgins. "Oh!"

"Blokes gets into trouble," said Redfern; "they puts 'em in chokey for

pinchin', you know. As if a bloke can't pinch a watch when he's 'ard up!"

"Not that we're goin' to pinch any of your tickers," said Lawrence generously. "We know 'ow to play the game."

"What-ho! All right among friends," pursued Redfern. "I say, wot kind of grub do you git to eat 'ere? Good bloaters, I 'ope?"

"And 'addicks?" asked Owen, with interest.

Figgins rose to his feet. He was almost overcome.

"There's a—a mistake about you chaps coming into this study," he gasped. "Have you seen the Head yet?"

"No; we ain't seen no blessed 'Ead!"

"You ought to see—to see—somebody," said Figgins haltingly. "Come with me. I'll show you where you are to go, if you're going to be in this House at all."

"Thanks!"

The three new boys, with great gravity, followed the unhappy Figgins out of the study. Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, met them in the passage. The big Sixth Former stopped to stare.

"What does this mean, Figgins?" he asked sharply. "How dare you bring fellows like this into the school?"

"I didn't bring them in!" groaned Figgins. "They're the new scholarship kids."

"Impossible!"

"Ask them."

The prefect glared at the newcomers.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Redfern," replied the owner of that name cheerfully. "This 'ere bloke is Lawrence. That there bloke is Owen."

"Do you mean to say that you are the scholarship boys from the County Council school?" yelled Monteith, unable to believe his eyes.

"Yus."

"It's—it's impossible."

"That's wot we are, cocky," said Redfern.

"Great heavens!"

Monteith staggered away.

Figgins led the trio downstairs again and out of the House.

"Ere, 'old on!" exclaimed Redfern, as they emerged into the quadrangle.

"Where are you a-takin' of us?"

"This 'ere is our 'ouse," said Owen.

"There's a—a mistake!" said Figgins.

"You don't belong to this House, you know. You are really going into the School House. That's how it is."

"Crikey!"

"What-ho!"

"My heye!"

And, with those ejaculations, the three newcomers followed Figgins across the quad.

Tom Merry & Co. were crowded in the doorway of the School House, and there was an addition to the crowd there in the shape of Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy, who had returned to St. Jim's by this time.

A shout greeted the appearance of the new boys. The juniors lined up in the doorway, evidently prepared to resist by force any attempt to introduce them into the School House. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded the trio with blank astonishment. He recognised the faces of the three fellows he had met in Rylcombe, but he did not recognise the clothes.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

Redfern made a grimace.

"There's that D'Arcy!" he murmured to his comrades. "The game's up!"

Lawrence and Owen chuckled.

"Never mind. It's been a lark."

"There you are, Gussy!" roared Blake.

"There's the family you were standing up for!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"How do you like 'em now you've seen 'em, you ass?" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't you dare to bring 'em in here, Figgins! We'll roll the lot of you out if you come in here!" shouted Kangaroo.

"Look here, they belong to this House, not to the New House!" shouted Figgins excitedly.

"Rats!"

"You can have 'em!"

"They're not coming in here!"

"Crikey!" said Redfern. "What's all the excitement about?"

"Reg'ler crew of 'ooligans, ain't they?" said Owen.

"Perky bounders, and no mistake!" said Lawrence.

"Bai Jove!"

"What do you think now, Gussy?" roared the incensed juniors.

To the surprise of the crowd, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy burst into a shout of laughter. As he had seen the heroes of the County Council school before, he knew, of course, that their present guise and present manner of speaking must be a "rag."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors stared at him, exasperated.

"You cackling ass!"

"Where's the joke?"

"What are you cackinnating at?"

D'Arcy's eyeglass dropped from his eye and his silk topper slid to the back of his head in the excess of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "You've been done! I've seen these chaps before, and they're all wight. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?"

"Hey?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled D'Arcy. "It's a wag! You've been taken in! They're pullin' your leg, deah boys! Ha, ha, ha!"

"The game's up!" said Redfern. "I didn't expect to see you 'ere, D'Arcy! You've been and gorn and spoiled a good joke, you hass!"

"Crikey!" said Lawrence. "Rather!"

"What a shame!" said Owen.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"What is this disturbance?" It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, as he came from his study towards the big doorway crowded with excited juniors. "What does this mean? Bless my soul! Who are these boys?"

CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Has the Laugh!

MR. RAILTON gazed at the three new boys in amazement, as well he might. Half St. Jim's was gathered round the steps of the School House now, but the angry voices had died away. The fellows felt that Mr. Railton would be able to deal with the situation. But he did not seem to be able to find his voice for a moment.

He stared blankly at Redfern & Co., and Reddy was the first to speak.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

The crowd stared blankly at him.

The change in his voice was astounding. There was no trace of the exaggerated Cockney accent now.

"We're sorry, sir!" said Redfern penitently. "It's only a joke, sir!"

"Just a little joke, sir," said Lawrence.

"No harm intended, sir," said Owen. The juniors were silent now with astonishment, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That elegant youth found it difficult to suppress his merriment at the way St. Jim's had been taken in.

"I do not understand this," said Mr. Railton at last. "Who are you?"

"I'm Redfern, sir, and these chaps are Lawrence and Owen."

"The new boys?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why have you come to the school in those ridiculous clothes?" asked Mr. Railton, with a stern look.

Redfern & Co. looked at one another. They realised that the joke was over now, and that they might have to pay dearly for it. They had plunged into it recklessly, without much thought as to the consequences; but now that the consequences had arrived, they were prepared to "face the music."

"If you please, sir—" faltered Redfern.

"Pawwaps you had better leave it to me to explain, dear boys," Arthur Augustus remarked. "It is weally partly my fault."

Mr. Railton looked at him sharply. "What do you mean, D'Arcy?" he asked. "Have you anything to do with this absurd jest?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! You see, I met those boundahs in Wylcombe—"

"These what?" rapped out Mr. Railton.

"These fellows, sir," said D'Arcy, a little abashed. "I met them in Wylcombe, sir," said D'Arcy, "and I wanted them to wait while I went into my tailah's, sir, so that I could bring them to St. Jim's undah my pwotection. I warned them that some of the chaps might wag them, sir. I suppose that put the ideah of this wag into their heads, and so it was weally my fault, sir."

"You see, sir," ventured Redfern, "we thought that if the fellows were getting ready to receive three frightful ragamuffins, sir, that—that it would be a pity to disappoint them, sir. It—it was only a joke, sir."

"And we're sorry, sir, if we've given offence!" said Lawrence penitently, but with a twinkle in his eye.

Mr. Railton smiled, in spite of himself.

"It was an absurd joke," he said. "You will go and change into something more respectable at once. Where are your clothes?"

"They're being sent down from Rylcombe, sir."

"Indeed! Then you had better go to the dormitory until your own clothes arrive."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton went back into his study. As soon as he was inside, with the door closed, he burst into a laugh. It occurred to the Housemaster that the three new fellows from the County Council school were likely to carry on the very best traditions of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

The crowd of fellows stared at the three heroes, still amazed.

"Well, my hat!" Tom Merry exclaimed at last. "I never heard of such a giddy rag in all my born days!"

D'Arcy chuckled.

"I knew they were all wight, deah boys!" he remarked.

"Oh, rats!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Then—then you're not hooligans at all, you chaps?" ejaculated Kangaroo. Redfern & Co. burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Not exactly."

"Awfully sorry, for your sakes, but we're quite respectable!" said Owen blandly. "It's not our fault, you know, but we were brought up quite respectable. But we've been trying to please you for the last half hour."

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha! I wegard it as a wippin' wag, and I told you fellows all along that they were all wight. They wesced me fwom the Gwammawians in Wylcombe, and I knew they were the wight stuff. And I twust they will be put into the School House."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Figgins shamefacedly. "You took me in, and so you can't blame me for treating you as I did."

"It's all serene," said Redfern.

"Come on, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The soonah you get out of those feahful clothes the better. I'll show you the way to the Fourth Form dorm."

"Thanks!"

The new boys followed Arthur Augustus into the House. D'Arcy chuckled to himself as he guided them to the Fourth Form dormitory. He took a personal pride in the exploits of the newcomers. He felt that he had stood up for them all along, and that he was the first to recognise their quality, and he reflected with considerable satisfaction upon the tact and judgment he had displayed. He looked upon Redfern & Co. as being under his wing, and he was so kind and considerate to Redfern, that Redfern did not give a hint he had no intention of being under anybody's wing.

While the new boys were changing their ridiculous attire in the junior dormitory, the discussion in the growing dusk at the door of the School House continued with much animation. The fellows were very much divided in opinion as to the new boys, but they could hardly help admitting that it had been a rag worthy of the best days of Tom Merry & Co. There was evidently something in the new chaps.

"As a matter of fact," said Tom Merry, in his casual candid way, "I'm afraid that Gussy was in the right, and—and our deputation to the Head wasn't in the best possible taste. And I'm glad it never came off."

"I've been thinking something of that sort myself," Blake remarked, with a nod. "Gussy said it was caddish, and—and I certainly didn't mean to be so, but I'm afraid that was really the right word. Gussy hits the right nail on the head sometimes."

"Anyway, I'm not up against them, for one," said Tom Merry. "They seem decent enough, and I vote for giving them a chance."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake.

CHAPTER 8.

Looking After the New Boys!

REDFERN and his comrades removed the garments they had hired in Rylcombe, and then they turned in in three of the junior beds to wait for their own garments to arrive. The latter were not long in coming; and Toby, the School House page, brought the messenger up to the dormitory. Toby was grinning

(Continued on next page.)



MAKE THE JESTER SMILE
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TRUTH.

The angler was bragging about his success.

"Why, the fish was as long as that," he said, extending his arms wide. "I never saw such a fish."

"Yes," said his friend, "I believe you!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Liddell, Cornelia, P.O. Clarens, via Bethlehem, Orange Free State, South Africa.

FRIENDLY FOOTER.

It was a friendly game, but the score was mounting up for one side. When the ball found the net again, the skipper of the losing team strolled across to the goalie, and gently remarked:

"I know it's a friendly game, old man, but there is no need to be too chummy!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Groves, 50, Wellsted Street, Hull.

TOMMY'S RETORT.

Tommy (holding his head): "I've just bumped my head, and it's ringing like a bell."

Ted: "That shows it's hollow."

Tommy: "Yours doesn't ring. I suppose?"

Ted: "No, it doesn't."

Tommy: "That shows it's cracked!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Bichnell, 7, Queen's Road, Caversham, Reading.

NOT A RUGGER RULE.

A footballer was explaining the rules of Rugby football to a Cockney boy.

"You know what a try is?" he said.

"Yus, sir," replied the Cockney.

"It's the fing wot muvver puts the tea-cups on."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Howe, 1, Ashling Road, Addiscombe, Surrey.

NAUGHTY LETTERS.

Monty Lowther: "I say, Gussy, why are 'I' and 'S' the naughtiest letters in the alphabet?"

Gussy: "Weally, deah boy, how should I know?"

Monty Lowther: "Because they are never out of mischief and always in disgrace."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss E. Chater, 43, Washington Street, Brighton, Sussex.

SHOCKING.

Electrician: "You remind me of William the Conqueror."

His Mate: "How's that? He knew nothing about electricity."

Electrician: "That's why!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Atkinson, 22, Barlow Avenue, Lower Bebington, Cheshire.

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very broadly as he ushered Mr. Wigge's boy in.

The parcel was delivered, and Mr. Wigge's property was dispatched, and then the three new boys dressed themselves. Arthur Augustus kept them company all the time—perhaps with the idea that otherwise some of the School House fellows might be tempted to "rag" them. But it was extremely probable that if anybody had attempted to rag Redfern & Co., the trio would have taken the best possible care of themselves.

"You don't know which House you are goin' into?" the swell of St. Jim's asked, as the three new boys—looking much nicer now—put the finishing touches to their attire.

Redfern shook his head.

"Of course, the School House is the principal House at St. Jim's," explained D'Arcy. "It is twice as big as the New House, and has twice as many fellows in it. The School House is also Cock House of the school. We beat Figgins & Co. hollow in everythin', you know. Of course, Figgins & Co. don't admit it. But that's how it is, you know."

"I see."

"I trust you are comin' into the School House," said D'Arcy cordially. "But it depends on the Head. You ought to go and report yourselves to the Head. I will show you the way, if you like."

"Thanks, very much!"

"Not at all. Follow me, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus showed the three boys to the Head's study.

"By the way, you haven't had your tea, I suppose?" he asked.

"Been too busy," grinned Owen.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yaas, that was a wippin' wag. Tea in Hall is ovah now," the swell of St. Jim's remarked. "Pew-waps you will do me the honah of havin' tea in my study—No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage. Come there as soon as you've finished with the Head. I don't suppose he will keep you long, as your Housemaster will make all the arrangements."

"Is that chap who slanged us the Housemaster here?" asked Redfern.

"Yaas, that's Mr. Wailton. The Housemaster of the New House is Mr. Watcliff, mastah of the Fifth Form. Watty is a wottah! I trust, for your own sake, that you will be put into this House."

"I hope so," said Redfern very cordially.

And the new boy tapped at the Head's door and entered, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked away to make preparations for a tea upon a somewhat more magnificent scale than usual in Study No. 6.

Tea was already being prepared there when the swell of St. Jim's came in. The fire was burning brightly, and Digby was making toast, and Herries was making the tea. Jack Blake was scraping out the remains of jam from a jar with great care into a nice clean soapdish.

"Hallo! You've come in at last!" growled Blake. "Where have you been?"

"Lookin' aftah the new kids, deah boys."

"Well, now you've come make yourself useful; cut some more bread for Dig."

"What have you got for tea, deah boys?"

"Toast," said Blake, "and one egg each."

"I'm afwaid that won't be much good,"

Blake. I have invited some fellows to tea."

"How many?"

"Thwee."

"You don't mean to say that you've invited those new bounders?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus nodded calmly.

"Yaas, waihah!" he replied. "That is pwecisely what I have done, deah boy."

"You ass!" growled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Ass! We don't know anything about the fellows, excepting that they came here in old rags and japed us."

"I know them vowy well."

"Oh, rot!"

"I made their acquaintance in Wylcombe," said D'Arcy calmly. "I was bein' bothahed by the Gwammar School boundahs, and they wescued me and gave Gordon Gay and Fwank Monk a good bumpin'. I wegarded that as playin' the game."

Blake grunted.

"Well, if you've asked them, I suppose they'd better come," he said.

"Yaas, waihah! I trust you are goin' to be civil to my visitahs, Blake," said Arthur Augustus somewhat severely. "I certainly should wefuse to wegard you as a fwienid if you cut up wusty to a chap whom I had invited to tea."

"Oh, rats!"

"Go and get in some more provender, then, you ass!" said Digby. "We can't ask three fellows to share four eggs and a few rounds of toast."

"Quite so, deah boy! I'll huvwry like anythin'!"

And Arthur Augustus departed, taking a cricket bag with him. He evidently intended doing some shopping on a large scale.

The three juniors looked at one another when he was gone.

"Just like Gussy!" growled Herries.

"Well, they won't hurt us," said Blake. "After all, we don't know anything about them yet, and that jape of theirs was really a good one and clever—and wanted some nerve, too. If it had been Ratty instead of Railton who interviewed them—"

Digby chuckled.

"They would have been sorry for themselves," he remarked.

"Shows they've got nerve, anyway. I'm not up against them," said Blake. "but I don't know that I want to fold them to my bosom and weep over them. But there's no stopping D'Arcy. I wonder which House they are going into."

Tap!

"Come in!" called out Blake.

Three cheerful-looking juniors entered the study.

The chums of the Fourth looked at them in surprise. The change that had taken place in Redfern & Co. was amazing. They looked as clean as new pins, very neatly dressed, and decidedly good-looking. Lawrence especially, with his blue eyes and curly fair hair, was a handsome lad.

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Well, here we are," said Redfern. "Where's D'Arcy?"

"He's gone to the tuckshop."

"This is his study, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right—Study No. 6."

"You fellows guests as well?"

Blake grinned.

"No; we belong to the place. You see, we're in pretty close quarters at St. Jim's; we usually go three or four to a study. This is rather large for a junior study, and there are four of us in it."

Redfern nodded thoughtfully.

"I see," he remarked. "I didn't know that when we accepted D'Arcy's invitation to tea. We are quite willing to slide out if you don't want us, and you won't hurt our feelings by saying so. Nothing like straight talk, is there?"

Blake laughed.

He began to think that Redfern was a fellow very much after his own heart. There was certainly no humbug about him.

"As a matter of fact, too, we've just



Tom Merry & Co. roared with laughter as Figgins dragged them to a heap of raw potatoes and a quantity of ashes for tea.
New Firm Headquarters

seen the Head, and he says that we're to belong to the New House," said Redfern cheerfully.

"New House—eh?" said Digby. "Then you'll belong to Figgins' flock."

"I don't think that I shall belong to anybody's flock."

"Figgins is leader of the juniors in the New House," Blake explained.

"I'm not looking for a leader at present."

"Better mind how you tell Figgins so," said Herries warningly. "Figgins won't allow two junior leaders in the House. You can bet on that. Figgy is always bragging that there's only one junior captain over there, and not a row between two of them, same as the School House."

"Oh, never mind Figgins!" said Redfern. "The question is—do you want us to stay to tea, or don't you? Don't mind talking plain English; we like it."

"We'll be glad to have you to tea," said Blake.

"Hear, hear!" said Digby and Herries, cordially enough.

"Good enough! We'll be glad to stay. I hear that tea in Hall is over, and I've got a prize appetite after my journey down."

"Same here," said Lawrence.

"Bai Jove, here you are, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus came in with a cricket bag filled almost to bursting. He seemed very pleased at finding the new boys on such good terms with his three chums.

"I twust you are goin' to belong to this House, deah boys?" he added.

Redfern shook his head.

"Sorry!" he said, sincerely enough. "The Head says we're to belong to the New House. It seems that there's a new study there, and we're going to have it."

"Bai Jove! I'm awfully sowwy!"

New boys at St. Jim's, in either House, were sometimes ragged, but no one wanted to rag Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen. The trio had given an impression that ragging would be a difficult business with them. Figgins & Co. hardly knew what to make of them so far. But the thought crossed their minds that their reign as leaders of the juniors in the New House was in danger of ending. And at that thought the three heroes of the Fourth felt themselves very much "up against" the new trio.

"They seem decent enough," said Figgins. "I'm the first chap to admit that. But we can't have any insubordination in this House."

Kerr and Wynn nodded with cordial assent.

"Just so!" said Fatty Wynn. "It's all very well in the School House. Tom Merry and Blake have never settled which is junior captain. But we can't have anything of that sort over here."

"Rather not!" said Kerr emphatically. "Figgy is junior skipper in the New House, and Figgy is going to remain junior skipper."

"Yes, rather!"

"I think we'll give 'em a plain talking to to-morrow on that subject," Figgins observed thoughtfully. "Of course, being new chaps, they don't know the ropes, and I wouldn't be rusty with a new chap. As soon as they understand how matters are here, I dare say they'll toe the line with the rest."

"They'd better."

"Yes; I shall point that out to them."

Redfern & Co. slept soundly enough their first night at St. Jim's.

In the morning, when the rising-bell clanged out, awaking School House and New House fellows to a new day's work, Redfern sat up in bed and blinked round him.

"Hallo!" called out Dibbs, from his bed. "I suppose this feels a bit strange to you new chaps, doesn't it?"

There was a hint of patronage in Dibbs' voice, but Redfern was never quick to take offence. He nodded cheerfully.

"Yes; it's a bit new."

"Yes; especially after what you're used to," Dibbs remarked.

Redfern looked at him.

"Yes; I've never woke up before to see a face like yours near me," he replied. "I've seen 'em in nightmares, of course, after having pie for supper, but—"

There was a chuckle from some of the juniors, and Dibbs glared.

"Look here, I don't want any of your slum cheek!" said Dibbs. "I don't like it!"

Redfern grinned.

"Well, I don't like your manners, if you come to that, or your features, either," he remarked. "We have to put up with these unpleasant things, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz!

Dibbs' pillow flew through the air straight at Redfern's head. Redfern put up his hands and caught it as it came.

In a flash it was huffed back straight at Dibbs. Dibbs wasn't expecting that smart return, and the pillow caught him upon the chest, and he rolled out of bed with a bump.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pratt. "Well caught!"

"Caught and bowled, Redfern!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

Dibbs jumped up in a rage and hurled himself upon the junior sitting up in bed.

Redfern did not roll over under the rush. He grasped Dibbs, swung him off his feet, and flung him over the other side of the bed. Dibbs crashed into Fatty Wynn, who was getting out of bed, and they rolled on the floor together.

"Yaroooh!" roared Wynn.

"Ow!" gasped Dibbs.

Figgins gave a low whistle.

"My hat! You must have been developing your muscles, Redfern!" he exclaimed.

Redfern laughed.

Fatty Wynn pushed Dibbs off and jumped up. Dibbs rose to his feet more slowly, gazing at Redfern in astonishment and dismay. He did not offer to come to close quarters again, but dressed himself very quietly indeed.

Redfern turned out cheerfully and calmly. The Fourth Formers regarded him with a new interest. They were beginning to realise that the new boy who had come to St. Jim's with a County Council scholarship was very "hot stuff" indeed!

Redfern & Co. were quite new to St. Jim's, but they did not seem at all abashed as they took their places at the breakfast-table with the Fourth Formers who belonged to the New House.

Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster, was at the head of the Fifth Form table in the dining-room, and he glanced at the new boys with a sour expression.

The trio had had a brief interview with their Housemaster before going to bed the previous night; but at that time Mr. Ratcliff had said only a few words. He had been absent from the school the previous evening, and had not heard of the peculiar manner of the new boys' arrival at St. Jim's. But his expression showed that he had heard it since, and that he did not take it good-humouredly as Mr. Railton had done.

Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, usually took the head of the Fourth Form table at meal times in the New House. After breakfast the prefect signed to the three new boys as they went out, and Redfern & Co. stopped.

"You are to go into Mr. Ratcliff's study after morning lessons, you three," said Monteith.

"Oh!" said Redfern. "Anything wrong?"

Monteith grinned.

"Yes; your silly jape yesterday."

"But it's all over, you know," said Owen.

"I dare say it would have been all over if you'd gone into the School House," said the prefect, "but we don't allow monkey tricks in this House. Mr. Ratcliff wants to see you about it, and you're to go to his study immediately after morning lessons, and wait for him there."

"Oh, all serene!" said Redfern.

The trio looked at one another in some dismay after Monteith had left them.

"Looks to me as if we've got into the wrong shop," said Redfern.

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The whole crust off the pie and the contents were disclosed. The gaze of the juniors! Figgins & Co. were done—the japers!

Howevah, we'll have a feed togethah, and then we'll see you ovah to your new quartahs," said D'Arcy.

And the contents of the cricket bag being disclosed, the seven juniors sat down to tea with good appetites, and they did full justice to the sumptuous fare provided by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

When the tea was over quite a crowd of School House fellows, cheery and friendly, escorted the three new boys over to the New House.

Redfern & Co. had certainly started well at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 9.

First Day at St. Jim's!

FIGGINS & CO. looked somewhat queerly at the new trio when they came into the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House at bed-time.

Owen nodded.

"Yes; I'd rather be in the School House," he said. "The Housemaster over there is an angel beside Ratty."

"I suppose it can't be helped," said Lawrence. "We shall have to stand it."

Redfern's eyes glimmered. "I suppose he's going to cane us for that jape," he said. "If he does, I think he ought to be made to feel sorry afterwards."

"Better not jape a Housemaster, Reddy, old man."

"I don't know; we shall see."

And Redfern was very thoughtful after that.

The three new boys took their places in the Fourth Form class-room for morning lessons, and there was a great deal of curiosity among the juniors as to how they would shape there. Mr. Lathom, the Fourth Form master, gave them some special attention, perhaps curious himself whether the scholarship boys would be able to keep their end up in the Form.

Redfern & Co. showed that they could work as well as play, and before the morning was out they were given good places in the Form, passing up above Levison and Mellish, and a dozen more fellows, much to the astonishment of the latter.

Levison was prepared to denounce them as dunces if they did not get on well; but as they showed up in such an unexpected manner, he decided to sneer at them as being "swots" instead.

"Just what you might expect of these County Council school bouncers," he whispered to Mellish. "Swotting half the night, of course, to get ahead."

"Just like them!" agreed Mellish. "Wouldn't catch me doing anything of the kind."

And certainly Mellish was right there. Nobody ever caught Mellish working if Mellish could help it.

"They don't seem to be duffers, either," Jack Blake remarked, as the Fourth Form were dismissed, and they crowded out into the Form-room passage. "We shall have to look out, or they'll pass us, you chaps."

"I should refuse to be passed, Blake, deah boy; but certainly they deserve great credit," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I am quite sorry that they are not in the School House."

Blake nodded cheerfully to Redfern in the passage.

"Getting on all right in the New House?" he asked.

"Yes, all serene," said Redfern. "We're just going in for our first licking, that's all."

"Bai Jove!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Blake.

"That little jape yesterday—Ratty's dragged that up," said Owen. "The old bouncer doesn't seem to know what's ancient history and what isn't."

Blake laughed.

"Well, it was rather thick," he said. "Railton would have passed it over, but Ratty wouldn't. You'll be caned, but you'll have to get used to that. Better give Ratty as wide a berth as you can."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Redfern's eyes gleamed.

"I don't see it," he replied. "If Ratty picks on us for nothing, or next to nothing, he will get as good as he gives."

Blake looked a little alarmed.

"You'd better be jolly careful how you jape a Housemaster," he said.

"We generally draw a line at that."

"Ever heard of putting birdlime on a cane?" Redfern asked.

Blake jumped.

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"No, I haven't," he replied.

"Then you'll hear of it to-day for the first time," grinned Redfern, and he walked away with his chums towards the New House.

The School House fellows looked at one another without speaking for a moment.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last.

"My word!" ejaculated Digby.

"They're hot stuff!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "If they go on as they've begun, Figgins & Co. will have to look out for their laurels. I rather think that those new kids will be difficult to handle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake was right. St. Jim's was destined to make the discovery that the three new fellows were very "hot stuff" indeed!

CHAPTER 10.

Facing the Music!

FIGGINS & CO. met the new trio in the New House, and stopped them.

"I want a few words with you chaps—" Figgins began.

"We'll come to the study later," said Redfern. "We're engaged now; got to take a licking, but we'll come up as soon as it's over."

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"Ratty's not in his study yet, is he?" asked Owen.

"No, he's with the Fifth, and they're not out yet."

"Good! We were told to wait for him in his study, and so I suppose we should get there before he does," Redfern remarked. "Ta-ta!"

Redfern & Co. made their way to the Housemaster's study and entered it. The room was empty. Mr. Ratcliff's chair was at the table, and across the blotter that lay there was a cane, ready to hand for the master. Mr. Ratcliff always kept a cane ready to his hand—he had very frequent use for it.

Redfern closed the door carefully.

"Now to bisney!" he said cheerfully.

Owen and Lawrence grinned.

"Good for you, Reddy! If he finds out that you've done it—"

"Well, if he does, it will be another licking," said Redfern, busily engaged in setting the birdlime upon the end of the cane. "But as we seem to be booked for lickings in any case, it doesn't matter so much."

"H'm!" said Lawrence dubiously.

Redfern was occupied only a few moments. Then the trio stood by the window and waited with very demure looks for the Housemaster to come in. There was nothing to indicate that they had been near the table where the cane lay.

And certainly their looks were demure enough.

They had to wait more than five minutes—Mr. Ratcliff was in no hurry to come.

But the Housemaster's steps were heard in the passage at last, and the three culprits braced themselves to face the ordeal.

"Here he comes!" murmured Redfern. "Look out!"

Like three statues of innocence the trio stood as the handle was turned and the study door flew open.

Mr. Ratcliff strode into his study with rustling gown.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence were standing in a row, and the Housemaster's eyes glistened as he caught sight of them. Their presence seemed to afford him peculiar satisfaction.

"I suppose you know why I have sent for you boys?" began Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir," said Redfern.

"Why, then?"

"To cane us, sir," said Redfern.

Mr. Ratcliff smiled grimly.

"Probably your penetration will carry you a little farther, Redfern," he said. "Perhaps you can tell me why I am going to cane you?"

"Because you are in a bad temper, sir!"

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"You dare to be impertinent—"

"I do not know of any other reason, sir," said Redfern simply. "We have not done anything so far as we know. That—"

"Silence, sir!" said the angry Housemaster. "You have been guilty of disorderly conduct. Your foolish travesty of humour on making your appearance at this school is altogether unpardonable. It is perfectly disgraceful—"

"Please, sir, it was only a joke," said Lawrence.

"Silence, sir!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff, looking round for his cane. "We do not permit such jokes at St. James'. I am sincerely glad that it has fallen to my lot to be the instrument of your correction, and if, in the future, you are tempted to repeat such folly, I shall deal more severely with you. Hold out your hands, all of you!"

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence looked at one another as Mr. Ratcliff turned to take up the cane. They knew their punishment would be severe. But the thought of what was to follow nerved them to bear it with a good grace.

"Now, sir!" snapped the New House master, advancing towards Redfern, cane in hand. "Your hand!"

Redfern held out his hand, looking the Housemaster firmly in the face the while.

Mr. Ratcliff smiled almost maliciously as he brought the cane down with a swish.

Redfern felt the sting keenly, but he did not even wince.

"Now the other, sir!"

Swish!

Four times Mr. Ratcliff repeated this performance. But his heaviest cut failed to bring a murmur from Redfern. Then he turned to Owen.

Owen stood his punishment bravely. Mr. Ratcliff exerted himself a little more with Lawrence. But Lawrence did not fail where his friends had succeeded. The Housemaster's hardest cuts failed to wring a murmur from him, though he, like Redfern and Owen, tried to assuage the ache in his hands by doubling himself up once the process was over.

"Go!" said Mr. Ratcliff, angry at not raising a single cry from any of the three. "Now you may go!"

Redfern & Co. lost no time in quitting the Housemaster's presence. In a moment they were in the passage outside. Once out of Mr. Ratcliff's sight their contortions assumed greater proportions. Figgins & Co. were there, and they came up to express sympathy at once.

Any fellow who came under the ban of Mr. Ratcliff's displeasure was sure of sympathy from the whole House.

"Hard cheese, old kid!" said Figgins, as he came up. "Ratty is a bit of a coughdrop, you know."

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn.

Redfern tried to grin, but it was a failure. He could bear it, but it was hard to grin.

"It's all right, Figgins!" he said, nodding towards the Housemaster's study. "It's not all over yet!"

"What's up?" asked Figgins, puzzled.
 "You'll see!" said Redfern.
 "But look here!" exclaimed Figgins abruptly. "Have you been ass enough to jape old Ratty?"
 "Ever heard of birdlime on a cane?" inquired Redfern.
 Figgins & Co. stared.
 "Birdlime!" ejaculated Figgins.
 There was a sudden sharp exclamation from within Mr. Ratcliff's study.
 "Time to travel!" said Redfern.
 And they travelled.

CHAPTER 11. Sticking To It!

MONTEITH paused.
 He was passing Mr. Ratcliff's study, from which strange sounds were issuing.
 With a start Monteith recognised that they were hardly expressions to be expected of a Housemaster.
 He stood, irresolute, outside the door for a moment.
 "Confound the thing!" came a subdued roar from inside.
 Monteith knocked.
 "Go away! I mean, who are you? Come in!" came a shout from the other side of the door.
 "Mr. Ratcliff!" exclaimed Monteith, opening the door.
 "Oh, Monteith—"
 "Yes, sir. Are you ill?"
 "No, I'm not!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.
 "What makes you ask such a ridiculous question?"
 Monteith hesitated. Mr. Ratcliff was in a bad temper. And well he might be! The cane which he had lately used on Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence was apparently glued to his hand. He seemed to have been engaged in trying to release it for some minutes. It refused to budge. As Monteith entered the study he was wrenching at it.
 "You did not seem like yourself when I passed the door, sir," said Monteith politely. "That is all. Pray what is the matter with your hand, sir?"
 Mr. Ratcliff made an impatient gesture.

"I have been punishing three boys, Monteith," he said, "and apparently there is some trick played with the cane I have used. I cannot get it away from my hand."

Monteith tried not to grin. He did not feel very sorry for Mr. Ratcliff.

"Can I assist you, sir?" he said, after a pause.

"Yes, Monteith. Be careful. My fingers are apparently glued together round the cane."

"Just so, sir," said Monteith. "It—it looks like it, too."

And, taking hold of the cane, Monteith tried to prise it out of the Housemaster's hand.

Mr. Ratcliff roared.

"Monteith, you are very clumsy to—"

"Really, sir—"

"Cannot you take it more gently?" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

The head prefect tried his best to release Mr. Ratcliff's hand, but his touch was not particularly gentle, in spite of the Housemaster's exhortations. Mr. Ratcliff was perspiring, and his eyes gleamed with rage and pain.

"What is it, Monteith?" he gasped.
 "What is it? It cannot be glue, I suppose?"

"I don't know what it is, sir," said the prefect tartly; and he added to himself: "And I don't jolly well care, either!"

But he did not allow Mr. Ratcliff to hear that.

"Take care, Monteith! You are hurting my hand!"

"I am taking care, sir," said the prefect, giving another jerk at the cane.

"Did that hurt you, sir?"

"Yow-ow!" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

It seemed that it had hurt.

"Sorry, sir—"

"Ow! Let go! You are clumsy! I believe you are hurting my fingers on purpose, Monteith!" howled the New House master.

"Perhaps you could manage better without my assistance, sir?" said Monteith stiffly.

"Ow! You can go, Monteith! I will manage this matter without your assistance!" growled the Housemaster.

Which was ungrateful, to say the least. But Monteith was glad enough to go. He walked out of the study, closing the door behind him with an audible slam.

As he walked down the passage he could still hear peculiar ejaculations proceeding from the Housemaster's study.

There was a sound of chuckling round the corner as Monteith came down the passage. He came suddenly upon Figgins & Co.

They tried to restore gravity to their features as the prefect came upon them. Figgins seemed upon the point of choking.

Monteith eyed the juniors sternly.

"Did you play that trick upon Mr. Ratcliff?" he demanded.

Figgins giggled joyously.

"Oh, no, Monteith! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You had better not let Mr. Ratcliff hear you laughing, you young rascals!" said the prefect.

And he walked on. As a matter of fact, he was laughing himself.

Figgins & Co. grinned at one another.

"Somebody said those new kids were hot stuff," murmured Figgins. "I really think they are. The whole school will yell over this. Only"—Figgins' face became more serious—"if they get their ears up about it there will be trouble. We can't have a new study running the whole show. It wouldn't do!"

And Kerr and Wynn agreed that it wouldn't.

How long it took Mr. Ratcliff to get rid of that cane no one ever knew, or whether he guessed how it had become attached to his hand in such a mysterious way. Perhaps the Housemaster felt that he had made himself look absurd enough already; at all events, nothing more was heard upon the subject—somewhat to the relief of Redfern & Co.

CHAPTER 12. A Little Pie Plot!

TOM MERRY & CO. met the New Firm, as

Redfern & Co. were referred to, in the Form-room passage as the juniors of St. Jim's were going in to afternoon school.

"How are you getting on with the mighty Figgins?" Tom asked.

"Is he making you toe the line?"

"He's made it clear what we are supposed to do," said Redfern—"follow Figgins & Co.'s lead. But we aren't taking any notice of that!"

"Better go slow," said Tom Merry warningly. "Figgins is leader of the New House juniors, you know, and you will have to toe the line."

Redfern shook his head.

"Thanks for the warning!" he said airily. "But I'm not used to toeing lines. I'm sorry if I ruffle his Majesty King Figgins, but we've decided to start an independent republic in the new study."

"My hat!" said Monty Lowther, with a whistle. "You'll have a war of independence, then, like most giddy republics!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, chiming in.

"Upon the whole, though, I wathah think it's a good idea. Of course, you new chaps mustn't forget that School House is Cock House of St. Jim's."

Redfern grinned.

"We're going to make the New House Cock House of St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

"What!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're the New Firm," said Redfern cheerfully. "You seem to have a set of names for one another at this giddy college, so we're following the fashion!"

"Of course," said Lawrence, "we're going to give Figgins & Co. a chance to come into line, if they like."

"They can back us up," said Owen.

Tom Merry laughed.

"They're more likely to knock you down," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, we shall be there when the knocking down begins," said Redfern.

And he went into the Form-room and took his place.

The chums of the Shell went on to their own Form-room. They were of the opinion that there were stormy times ahead for Figgins & Co.

In the Fourth Form Room Figgins & Co. looked rather grimly at the New Firm, and then took no further notice of them. But Figgins was thinking very seriously during afternoon lessons. He had already told Redfern & Co. that they were expected to toe the line. But the new boys had scoffed at the idea. So Figgins was thinking that unless he put his foot down very heavy, his position as junior leader of the New House was endangered. And Figgins resolved to put his foot down, though exactly how and where it was to be put down did not seem quite clear to him so far. He was thinking more about the New Firm than about his work that afternoon, and Mr. Latham came down rather heavily upon him
 (Continued on next page.)

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several times, and when the Fourth were dismissed, Figgins was the richer by a hundred and fifty lines. But he gave the lines hardly a thought as he walked away with his chums after lessons.

"Those kids have got to be put in their place," Figgins announced.

"Let's go and talk it over in the tuckshop," suggested Fatty Wynn. He made a start in that direction, but Figgins jerked him back.

"Blow the tuckshop," said Figgins.

"Look here—"

"But I say, I'm hungry, you know!"

"Rats!"

"Hallo!" said Kerr. "There go the new chaps."

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had just turned into the tuckshop.

"Come on!" urged Fatty Wynn. "Let's see what they're up to, you know. Besides, Mrs. Taggles has got in her new steak-and-kidney pies."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Figgins.

The famous Co. looked into the tuckshop. Redfern was negotiating with Dame Taggles for one of the steak-and-kidney pies for which Dame Taggles was famous. The pie stood on the counter, and it was a really tempting-looking pie, very large, and with a handsome, browned crust, the sight of which made Fatty Wynn's mouth water. Redfern looked round at them with a cheerful grin.

"Just laid in something for tea," he remarked. "I hear that you chaps are allowed to have your tea in your studies here."

"Yes," growled Figgins.

"These are ripping pies," said Lawrence. "We never had pies like these in Angel Alley."

And the three new juniors roared.

Figgins & Co. turned red. It had dawned upon them more and more clearly how hopelessly they had been taken in by the New Firm upon the latter's arrival at St. Jim's.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins.

"I'm jolly well going to have one of those pies," said Fatty Wynn. "Hand out another one just like that, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Certainly, Master Wynn!"

"Send that up to our study, won't you, ma'am?" said Redfern.

"Yes, Master Redfern."

Redfern & Co. strolled out of the shop. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn drew up to the counter, while Mrs. Taggles was gone into the rear regions for another steak-and-kidney pie. A gleam of fun had darted into Kerr's eye.

"Quick!" he muttered. "We'll take a rise out of those bounders. Lend me your knife, Figgy. Mrs. Taggles will be some minutes after that pie."

Figgins handed over the knife. Kerr opened it quickly, and made an incision round the dish, so that the large pie-crust came off whole in his hands. A most luscious pie was disclosed. Fatty Wynn's eyes gleamed.

"My word!" he murmured. "I'll begin on that—"

"No, you won't," said Kerr quickly. "Shove it into the ash-bin! Empty the giddy dish, quick!"

Fatty Wynn stared.

"Waste that lovely pie!" he gasped. "You must be off your dot, Kerr. Why, it would haunt me if I wasted a pie like that."

"Quick, fathead!"

Figgins took up the big piedish and obeyed Kerr's direction. The contents of the piedish disappeared into the receptacle for rubbish, and Figgins replaced the dish on the counter.

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"Ashes and raw potatoes, quick!" murmured Kerr, still holding the crust of the pie carefully in his hands.

Figgins burst into a chuckle. Even Fatty Wynn had to grin, though his eye was following sorrowfully the wasted pie.

Raw potatoes from a sack beside the counter, and handfuls of ashes from the rubbish receptacle, were quickly jammed into the piedish till it was as full as it had been before, though the contents now were hardly so tempting.

Then Kerr replaced the crust. Dame Taggles had not yet returned and Kerr had time to take a tube of secotine from his pocket and stick down the edges of the crust upon the piedish, so that it was quite as firmly fixed as before, probably a little more firmly.

The pie presented exactly its former appearance, and the three juniors were looking the picture of innocence when Mrs. Taggles came back from her kitchen with a tray in her hands, upon which reposed a pie exactly the same in appearance as the one upon the counter. The interior, naturally, was very different.

Fatty Wynn looked at the new pie with glistening eyes.

"Oh, ripping!" he said. "I say, you chaps, we'll take it with us; I can manage to carry it all right."

"I will send my son with it, if you like, Master Wynn," said Dame Taggles. "He can take both the pies to the House in his basket, and deliver yours to you and Master Redfern's into his study."

"Yes, come on," said Kerr, dragging Fatty Wynn away. "We don't want to get mixed up with pies, Fatty. The less we're supposed to have to do with them, the better now."

"But suppose they get mixed—"

"By Jove, yes!" said Figgins.

"I'll mark ours," said Kerr, and he scribbled upon a piece of paper "No. 3 Study," and stuck it in the round hole in the top of the pie-crust. "Don't let that be moved, Mrs. Taggles, will you? We're very particular about having that pie."

"Certainly, Master Kerr. This one perhaps is a little more done."

"We like 'em well done, Mrs. Taggles," said Figgins.

"Very well. I will send them up to the House at once."

"Thanks!"

And the three juniors quitted the tuckshop, chuckling. Outside, Figgins & Co. burst into a roar.

"We'll ask Tom Merry and the rest over to that pie," said Figgins. "There's enough to go round. And we want them to be on the spot to see that we know how to put our foot down on those new bounders."

"Oh, good!" said Kerr.

And the three chums walked away in the direction of the School House, to bid the chums of the Shell to the feast.

CHAPTER 13.

A Change for the Better!

REDFERN cooked his eye in a peculiar, thoughtful way he had, as he stood at his study window in the New House.

He was looking out of the window, and between the trees he had a view of the school tuckshop. Lawrence and Owen were laying the study table. The new fellows had succeeded in raising a loan of a tablecloth, and some crockery and cutlery, from below stairs, by the simple process of tipping the House

page. They had had no time, as yet, to lay in supplies of their own.

"Ahem!" said Redfern.

Lawrence looked round inquiringly. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"You remember Figgins & Co. saw us buy that pie—"

"What about it?"

"They've just come out of the tuckshop, grinning like a set of pantomime demons," said Redfern. "They've gone off towards the School House."

"Well?" said Lawrence, puzzled.

"Oh, nothing; but I've got my suspicions about the pie."

"Oh!"

Redfern remained in thought. A few minutes later there was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and the youthful scion of the house of Taggles knocked at the door. Redfern opened it.

"Got the pie?" he asked.

"Yessir; both of 'em," said Charles Sidney Taggles. "Yours and Master Figgins', sir. This 'ere one is Master Figgins', but they're both the same."

Redfern cocked his eye at the two pies.

He noted the paper stuck in the crust of Figgins' pie, and he drew his own conclusions from it.

"Right-ho! Wait a minute, and I'll give you the basket," he said.

"Yessir."

Redfern took the basket into the study, and placed it on the table. He put his hands into it to lift out the pie, and, unseen by the suspicious Charles Sidney Taggles, he changed Kerr's label from one pie to the other.

Then he lifted out the pie that Kerr had so carefully marked for himself and handed the basket back to the youth at the door.

"Thank you!" he said. "There's your basket."

Master Taggles took the basket and walked along the passage to Figgins' study and knocked at the door. There was no reply. Figgins & Co. were not yet in their quarters.

The boy opened the door, lifted the pie out of the basket, and placed it upon the table.

As he came out of the study Redfern called to him along the passage.

"Will you go over to the School House and ask Master D'Arcy and Master Blake, and Herries and Digby, if you can see them together, to come over here. Tell 'em I shall be pleased if they'll come to tea."

He tossed a sixpence along to Master Taggles.

"Thank 'ee, sir," said Taggles junior, catching it. "I'll go at once."

And he departed.

Redfern stepped back into his study and raised the crust of the pie a trifle, to look into it. A most appetising smell came forth, and it made the juniors feel hungrier.

"The pie's all right," said Lawrence.

"This one is," Redfern assented.

"What about the other?"

Redfern chuckled.

"Well, if both pies are exactly the same, I don't see what they wanted to mark that other one specially for," he observed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it's all right, it's all right," said Redfern oracularly; "and if it isn't all right they can have the benefit of it. I don't think they'll find us easy chaps to jape when they try it."

And Lawrence and Owen roared. The three juniors continued their preparations for tea, putting the pie in the fender to keep warm. There was a sudden tramping of feet on the stairs and a knock at the door, and it was thrown open. A crowd of juniors looked in.

Taggles junior, on taking Redfern's message to Blake & Co., had found the heroes of Study No. 6 about to get tea in their study in the School House, and they had willingly come over to see Redfern instead.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were coming over with Figgins

"Oh, this pie's all right," said Redfern easily. "If there's anything wrong I expect it will be with Figgins' pie. Look here!"

He cut the pie and lifted a portion of the crust. The pie certainly was all right; and in a minute more the juniors were very busy round the tea-table.



Swish, swish! Wild exclamations filled the study as the purple stream squirted over the six juniors in turn. They were trapped and at the mercy of the New Firm! "Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar of laughter from Redfern & Co. on the other side of the wall. "Hear us grin!"

& Co. at the same time, and they came up the stairs of the New House in a crowd.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Redfern. "Come right in, my sons! You've got a tea-party on, as well, Figgins?"

"Yes," said Figgins, with a chuckle. "These Shell chaps have come over to have a steak-and-kidney pie with me."

"What a giddy coincidence!" said Redfern, looking astonished. "These chaps have come over to have a steak-and-kidney pie with me!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I'm sure I hope you'll enjoy it," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fatty Wynn.

Blake and Herries, and Digby and D'Arcy looked in astonishment at the fat Fourth Former. They could not make out the cause of Fatty Wynn's merriment.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "Nothing at all! I only hope you'll enjoy the pie, that's all. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come on, Fatty!" exclaimed Figgins.

And Figgins & Co. marched the Terrible Three off to Figgins' study. The four chums of Study No. 6 gathered round the tea-table of the New Firm. Redfern lifted the pie out of the fender.

"Bai Jove! That looks all wight," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Fatty Wynn seemed to think there was something wrong with the pie," Digby observed, looking at the pie rather suspiciously.

"Some blessed jape, perhaps," said Herries.

CHAPTER 14. The Japers Japed!

FIGGINS ushered the Terrible Three into his study, and lifted the pie from the table and placed it in the grate before the study fire.

Fatty Wynn put the kettle upon the spirit-stove to boil for tea. Tom Merry & Co., as became distinguished guests, sat down and looked on.

The chums of the New House were chuckling as they laid the table. Tom Merry & Co. were considerably puzzled.

"Look here," exclaimed Monty Lowther at last, "what's the giddy joke? Why do you keep going off like a set of giddy squibs?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn in a chorus.

"Look here, you asses!"

"It's a giddy jape!" Figgins explained breathlessly. "We've got a pie just the same outside as those new chaps, but inside—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr and Wynn.

"Inside it's a bit different. You see, we've pitched out the inside of that pie, and put in raw potatoes and ashes!" grinned Figgins.

"My hat!"

"There will be a howl up the passage when they find it out!" chuckled Fatty Wynn. "It was Kerr's idea; Kerr always thinks of these things."

The Terrible Three roared.

"They'll be heating up the pie, and making it nice and warm for their visitors," said Figgins, with a yell of

laughter. "I wish I could see Gussy's face when they open it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Made the tea, Fatty?"

"Yes; just done."

"The pie looks ripping!" said Figgins, regarding it as it warmed before the study fire. "It is warm, you know; but better let it get quite hot."

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry.

"I say, you'll have a row with the New Firm over this giddy jape."

Figgins chuckled gleefully.

"Well, I've explained to Redfern already that he's got to toe the line," he said. "If he sets himself up against the study, he's going to be japed and japed, you see, till he climbs down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is only a beginning," said Kerr. "We shall give 'em something of this sort every day till they come to reason."

"That's the programme!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I think this is warm enough now," said Figgins. "You fellows ready?"

"Quite!" said Tom Merry.

"Hungry as a giddy hunter!" said Monty Lowther.

And Manners lent a hand in helping Figgins lift the big pie safely from the fender to the table. Figgins took up a knife, and stood over the pie in an attitude of an experienced carver with a really good thing before him.

He plunged the knife into the crust, but there was no flow of juice and savoury steam following the blade as he drew it out, as he had expected there

would be. Figgins looked a little puzzled.

"Must have dried up," he remarked; "and the kidneys inside seem to be rather hard, judging by the way the knife biffed. But it's a jolly good pie!"

"Oh, jolly good!" said the Terrible Three together, very politely.

"Got the plates ready, Wynn?"

Fatty Wynn pushed the plates forward in a warm and shining pile.

"Here you are, Figgy!"

"Good!"

Figgins plunged the knife in again, but it turned in his hand as it encountered something very hard in the interior of the pie. Figgins jabbed a little viciously, and drew out the knife, with something hard and round adhering to the point.

There was a gasp from all the juniors at once.

It was a raw potato, coated with ashes, that Figgins had drawn out of the steak-and-kidney pie!

Figgins gaped at it. Kerr gazed at it. Fatty Wynn gazed at it. The Terrible Three gazed at it, and broke into an irresistible chuckle.

"My-my hat!" said Figgins faintly.

"S-something's gone wrong!" muttered Fatty Wynn. "You put the label on the wrong pie, Kerr, you ass!"

"I didn't!" shouted Kerr. "You both saw me do it!"

"Then—then the label's been changed since!"

"Look here!" roared Figgins.

He dragged the whole crust off the pie. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther burst into a roar as the contents of the piedish were disclosed. A heap of potatoes, raw, and in their skins, and a quantity of ashes met the astounded gaze of the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. gazed at the pie, and then gazed at one another with sickly expressions.

"The pie's been changed!" murmured Figgins.

"Redfern must have tumbled!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"That lovely pie! Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you Shell bounders are cackling at!" growled Figgins.

"There's nothing funny in a chap having his pie spoiled!"

"You thought there was a few minutes ago!" shrieked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nicely warmed up for the visitors, too!" murmured Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn gave a yell.

"They've got the real pie. They'll have about finished it by this time! Come on!"

Fatty Wynn threw the study door open and raced along the passage.

Figgins and Kerr dashed after him.

Tom Merry staggered against the study wall, doubled up with laughter.

"Come on!" gasped Lowther. "We want to see the fun! Didn't I tell you that Redfern & Co. were hot stuff?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three dashed after Figgins & Co. Fatty Wynn was the first to reach the new study, and he burst open the door without waiting to knock.

Seven juniors were seated round the tea-table, eating tarts. In the centre of the table stood an empty piedish. Justice had evidently been done to that steak-and-kidney pie. There was hardly a trace of it remaining.

Redfern looked up innocently.

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"Hallo, Wynn!"

"Where's our pie?" bawled Fatty Wynn.

Redfern looked surprised.

"Your pie? In your study, I suppose, unless you've eaten it."

"You've scoffed our pie!" yelled Wynn. "That idiot, Kerr, put potatoes and ashes in your pie! He's always thinking of those rotten wheezes, and that's what we've found in our study! You've got our pie!"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake burst into a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha! That was why you said you hoped we should enjoy the pie, Fatty!" he exclaimed. "Well, it's all right. We have enjoyed it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's our pie?" roared Figgins.

"We've eaten our pie," said Redfern.

"You can have a jam tart, if you like!"

"You—you—"

"Bai Jove! I vegard this as awfully funny, you know! Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. raved. The seven juniors in the study were yelling with laughter, and the Terrible Three in the passage were laughing like hyenas.

Figgins & Co. had been hoisted with their own petard with a vengeance, and they had seldom been so utterly, completely, and thoroughly "done."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Blake. "It's only a case of the bitter bit. You'd better let this study alone, Figgy. It's a bit above your weight!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, Figgy, you can take a joke!" urged Tom Merry. "You must admit that it's jolly funny."

Figgins gave a ghastly grin.

"Oh, yes, it's horribly funny!" he said. "Extraordinarily funny, by George! But I'll make these new bounders look funnier yet before I've done with them!"

And Figgins & Co. departed, to hide their diminished heads in their own study. From the new study in the Fourth Form passage came incessant yells of laughter. There was no doubt that Redfern & Co. had scored.

CHAPTER 15.

Trapped!

"AHEM!" said Tom Merry.

"H'm!" said Manners.

"H'm!" remarked Monty Lowther.

And the Terrible Three looked very thoughtful.

It was the next day, and the chums of the Shell were standing by the footer ground talking to Figgins & Co. The New House juniors were looking very serious.

"The bounders are running the blessed place as if it belonged to them!" said Figgins. "It's as much up against you as up against us."

"Exactly!" said Kerr.

"Of course, when they come into line I shall back them up against the School House every time," said Figgins. "But we really represent the old firm, you know, against the giddy new firm, and we ought to put the stopper on them."

Tom Merry nodded.

"It won't be so jolly easy," he remarked. "What do Blake and the rest say about it?"

Figgins snorted.

"Oh, they only grin," he said, "and Gussy backed up those new bounders all along the line. He says they're under his protection."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"They don't seem to me to need much protecting!" he remarked.

"They don't!" said Kerr. "They need sitting on, and if you like to join forces with us to do it, we'll sit upon them in good style! When they've been properly sat upon they'll know their place, and then it will be plain sailing!"

"Well, I agree with you chaps that the new bounders want showing that they don't own the whole school!" said Tom Merry. "We'll sit on them with pleasure, only I can't help thinking that it won't do them much good!"

"We can try," said Monty Lowther.

"After all, kids in the Fourth ought to be made to be civil to the Shell!"

Figgins glared.

"What's that?" he demanded belligerently. "Look here, if Lowther is going to talk rot—"

"Shut up, Monty!" said Tom Merry.

"Now look here. Suppose we go over to the New House and look in on the New Firm, as the bounders call themselves, and explain to them peacefully that they've got to bow down to the old firm—that's us! If they don't see the point—well, try to impress it upon their minds by giving them the frogs-march up and down the passage. I've often noticed that the frogs-march is a convincing sort of thing."

"It's not a bad idea," said Kerr.

"Come on, then!"

From the window of the new study a pair of keen eyes watched the half-dozen juniors as they strolled towards the New House. Redfern grinned, and turned to Lawrence and Owen, who were working at the table. The three heroes of the Fourth had already won the kindly attention of their Housemaster in the shape of lines.

"I rather fancy that Figgins is on the warpath," Redfern remarked.

Lawrence grunted.

"Oh, blow Figgins!" he said. "I've got these lines to do! Lock the door, Owen!"

"Hold on!" said Redfern.

"Now look here, Reddy—"

Redfern chuckled softly.

"I've been expecting a study ragging from Figgins & Co. for some time," he remarked. "That is why I have bored a hole through the wall into the box-room, and laid in a garden syringe and a supply of violet ink. If they're going to oblige us by coming to the study, we are not going to disappoint them."

"But about the lines—"

"Blow the lines!"

"Ratty will be ratty!"

"Let him!"

Lawrence rose and put his papers away. Redfern changed the key to the outside of the lock, and the three juniors stepped out of the study, closing the door behind them, and passed into the adjoining box-room.

Most of the studies had been full up on Redfern & Co.'s arrival at St. Jim's, and the new study which had been assigned to them had been partitioned off from the box-room at the end of the passage.

The wall between the box-room and the study was made of wooden boards, and it had been quite easy for Redfern to bore a good-sized hole through the centre of it. The hole was covered with paper, which could be poked through at a moment's notice. Redfern locked the door of the box-room, and from a cupboard took a small pail, which was half full of a weird-looking liquid. It was water and purple marking-ink, with a slight mixture of soot. From the same cupboard he drew a small garden syringe. He had hardly done so when there was a trampling of feet in the passage.

Redfern broke the patch of paper that

(Continued on page 22.)

YOUR EDITOR AWAITS YOU WITH MORE NEWS FROM—



Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! How do you like the new GEM? I say new because not only does this number contain the first grand yarn of Frank Richards' wonderful Wild West series, and the opening chapters of the great St. Frank's serial, but because, as you have noticed, there is a big difference in the appearance of the pages. I am fully confident that the two-inch-wide columns will be very popular with all readers. As I have said, they make for easier reading, and, also, it is possible to get more story matter into the pages. Drop me a line some time and let me know your opinion of this change in the GEM, and of our ripping new programme.

Next Wednesday there is another magnificent issue, containing a feast of fiction that is even better than this week's. First, Martin Clifford has written for us one of those exciting stories of a school rebellion. It is entitled:

"FIGGINS HOLDS THE FORT!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the irascible New House master of St. Jim's, has always been a tyrant. He is no believer in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. But in next week's great story he goes beyond the limit. His needless punishing of New House juniors for trivial offences starts murmurings of a rebellion among Figgins & Co. Too late, he then discovers that to rule his boys with a rod of iron is a method that doesn't pay, for the New House proves a "rod in pickle" for the tyrant master. You'll simply

revel in this hundred per cent exciting school story.

"THE HOLD-UP AT PACKSADDLE!"

How do you like the Packsaddle bunch? Lively guys, aren't they? Meet 'em again next Wednesday in another thrilling school yarn. This story of the further adventures of these Texas school-boys is packed with fun and excitement. Read what happens when a gunman holds up the headmaster of Packsaddle. It has a thrilling outcome for Dick Carr, the tenderfoot of the school.

Next on the programme comes the second instalment of our super St. Frank's serial, "The Secret World." The boys of St. Frank's are now northward bound for the Arctic and the adventures of a lifetime. Keep travelling with them and be thrilled.

Lastly, all our other popular features will be up to their usual high standard, completing another tiptop number of the Old Paper. Watch out for it, chums!

A QUEER CATCH.

This is the story of the boy who went fishing for the first time and made a catch that probably no angler has ever made before. Tommy Stammers, a twelve-year-old Deal boy, was fishing

from the pier when he suddenly had a "bite." Tommy thought it was an outsize in fish, for the weight on his line indicated as much. He started hauling in, and a queer-looking object came out of the water—not a large wriggling fish. It was not until he landed his "catch" that he discovered what it was, for the thing was covered with barnacles. It was a ship's compass, and in quite good condition.

BIRD SCARERS.

The starlings that always nest in the tall trees around the White House, the official residence of the President of the United States, began to become a nuisance. The noise they made disturbed the men who plan the destiny of that country. So it was decided to get rid of them, but how to do so was a problem. Then someone hit on the idea of killing two birds with one stone, so to speak—scaring away the starlings, and employing a few of America's jobless men. Fifty men were employed, and every night they wander about the grounds of the Government buildings rattling stones in tins. It is hoped that the starlings will get fed-up with all the noise, and depart for new quarters.

SAFE LANDING.

Only quick thinking saved a French military pilot from what would probably have been death when he came down to land on the aerodrome at Tours the other day. As the landing wheels of his plane touched the ground, he heard a crash, and was horrified to find that the undercarriage had crumpled up. He couldn't complete his landing or the plane would have turned over. So he opened up the throttle quickly and took the air again. Rising to a good height, and with the machine over an open space, he jumped clear with his parachute, and let the plane crash to the ground. The pilot afterwards made a safe landing.

TAILPIECE.

Mother: "Reginald, what is this I hear about your being engaged in a fight with our new neighbour's son?"

Tommy: "Yes, ma, I was."

Mother: "Well, I want you to promise that you will never do it again. Will you promise?"

Tommy: "Yes, ma; he can wallop me easily!"

PEN PALS COUPON

19-1-35

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Arthur Frank, 5826, Park Avenue, Montreal, Pro. Quebec, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Miss Coral Smith, Nairne, South Australia, wants girl correspondents in the North of England, Canada, U.S.A., and Germany; age 14-16; art work, film stars.

John Mallinson, 7, Alfred Street, West Gorton, Manchester, wants correspondents, especially members of the Boys' Brigade; drawing, painting, films, cycling, snaps and books.

Russell Lewis, 62, New Street, Brighton Beach, S.5, Victoria, Australia, wants pen pals; age 15-16; stamps, cigarette cards, match brands, swimming, cricket, football, cycling.

Miss Elsie Duckett, 56, Queen Mary Street, Palfrey, Walsall, Staffs, wants a girl correspondent in South Africa; age 11-13.

A. E. S. Southall, Wickepin, Western Australia, wants a correspondent in England; age 20-26.

Jack Hudson, 560, Englehardt Street, Albury, N.S.W.,

Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors; U.S.A., Canada, France, New Zealand.

Otto F. Schattenberg, 34, Queen's Road, Woodstock, Cape Province., South Africa, wants pen pals in the Empire and on the Continent.

H. Thomas, 71, Railway Street, Mayfair, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants a pen pal in South Wales (Swansea preferred) who is interested in fretwork, cigarette cards, and cricket; age 11-13.

Maurice Dison, Caledon Street, Standerton, Transvaal, South Africa, wants pen pals; age 11-13; Britain, America, Australia; sports, cigarette cards.

Miss Mavis Buddell, 18, Long Street, Mowbray, Cape Town, South Africa, wants girl correspondents; age 13-15; cycling, films, tennis.

Miss Jessie Kelly, 24, Clyde Road, Red Hill, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants girl correspondents; age 20-22; hiking, dancing.

Dick Rowe, P.O. Helions, Bumpstead, near Haverhill, Suffolk, wants pen pals in the British Empire; age 13-16; sports, stamps.

Eric G. Laker, 8, Selborne Road, Littlehampton, Sussex, wants a correspondent; age 12-16; autographs, cigarette cards, football, cricket.

John C. Morris, 16, Badger Street, Lye, near Stourbridge, Wores, wants pen pals anywhere—Continent, Dominions, etc. cycling, wrestling, singing, dancing, ju-jitsu.

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covered the aperture in the wall, and looked through into the study. He had a full view of the interior—of the table and chairs, and the blazing fire, and the coal-scuttle. The new study contained very little else, so far.

But it contained a good deal more in the space of another minute. Six juniors tramped in, and stared round the study.

"Not here!" exclaimed Figgins.

"They were here a quarter of an hour ago," said Kerr. "They were doing lines. Ratty has been rather heavy on them with lines. I think he has an idea who is responsible for the birdlime jape, though he let the matter drop."

Tom Merry closed the door softly.

"Looks as if they've only just gone out," he remarked. "We'll ambush the bounders, and collar them as they come in."

"Good egg!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Every word was perfectly audible to the three juniors in the box-room. Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen grinned at one another. Redfern gently inserted the nozzle of the syringe into the purple pail, and drew it full of liquid. The slight gurgling sound it made penetrated into the study, and the juniors there looked round in surprise.

"What the dickens was that?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I know!" said Figgins.

Monty Lowther yawned.

"If they don't soon come—" he began.

"Oh, stick it out, Monty—a compact is a compact," said Tom Merry. "We've agreed with Figgins to put these cheeky young bounders in their place—"

"Yes, but—yarooop!"

Swish!

From somewhere unknown a stream of violet liquid shot through the air, and it caught Monty Lowther full in the ear. It splashed and spurted over his face, and in a second he was transformed into a most startling-looking personage. He put his hands up to his face in amazement, and they came away dyed purple, and he gave a yell.

"Ow! Who threw that stuff at me?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Swish!

Figgins gave a roar.

The purple stream caught him on the nose, and his face was purple from chin to forehead in a moment, and the stream ran down over his collar, tie, and waistcoat.

Click!

Tom Merry sprang to the door.

But it was too late!

The key had been turned in the lock outside.

The six juniors gazed at one another in dismay. They were locked in the study, and they knew that Redfern & Co. must have been on the watch for them, with the key in the outside of the lock ready. They realised instinctively what was going to happen, and even as they realised it, it happened.

Swish, swish!

The purple stream smote Tom Merry on the side of the head, and then caught Manners on the neck. They roared.

"Ow, ow! Groogh!"

"What is it?"

"Where is it coming from?" Fatty yelled. "Where—ogogogogog!"

It caught him over the mouth as he was speaking. Kerr was the only one who had escaped so far, and he glared round the study wildly in search of the hidden assailant.

He caught sight of the nozzle of a syringe sticking through the end wall.

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and gave a shout as he rushed towards it.

"It's a trap! There are the—yow—yow!"

Swish!

Kerr reeled back as he received the stream fairly in the neck.

Wild exclamations filled the study.

"Ow! Oh! Yow! Groo!"

From the box-room came a soft chuckle.

Swish!

Another stream of purple fluid traversed the study. There was a wild rush of the imprisoned juniors to escape it. The chairs were knocked over, and the table hurled aside. But the stream followed them and found them out.

"Ow! Oh!" roared Tom Merry.

"Stop it, you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Redfern & Co.

"Hear us grin!"

"Yow! Stop it!"

Swish, swish!

The juniors dashed round the study like rats in a trap.

Tom Merry wrenched at the door, but it refused to budge. Lowther rushed at the orifice in the wall in a valiant attempt to stop it up with a book. Streams of purple caught him in the face, and he staggered back.

"Do you surrender?" asked Redfern, with cheerful calmness, from the other side of the wall. "Do you give in to the New Firm?"

"No!" roared Figgins.

"Never!" yelled Tom Merry.

"All serene! I've got quarts left," said Redfern.

Lawrence and Owen yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow!" gasped Tom Merry. "It will take hours to get this stuff off! Ow! We shall have to be washing all the afternoon instead of playing footer—yow!"

"We've got to get at 'em, somehow!" roared Lowther.

"Groogh! We're locked in—yow!"

"Bung the table against the wall!"

yelled Figgins. "It's only boards, anyway; it hasn't been put up a week! Go it!"

"Look out!" yelled Redfern. He had not quite expected such desperate measures as that. "Look out—you'll smash the wall!"

"We'll smash you, too!" roared Figgins.

The juniors, streaming purple, gripped the table, and rushed it against the wooden partition.

Crash!

The boards split to right and left, and a gaping aperture appeared in the wall, and there was a startled yell from Redfern & Co.

With vengeful shouts the half-dozen juniors scrambled in through the broken boards.

"Collar 'em!" roared Tom Merry.

"Line up!" yelled Redfern.

The New Firm lined up. But it was not much use lining up against six furious juniors. They were bowled over in a moment, and the whole crowd went

rolling wildly on the floor of the box-room.

Tom Merry staggered to his feet. He caught sight of the pail, still half-full of the dreadful compound manufactured by Redfern.

"Hold 'em!" roared Tom Merry. "There's enough for them, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Figgins breathlessly. "Sock it to 'em!"

"Here, hold on! Stop that!" shrieked Redfern. "Stop it! Oh!

Ow! Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish! Slish!

There was quite enough of the compound. It drenched Redfern, it drenched Lawrence, it drenched Owen. In the twinkling of an eye they were as empurpled as their victims.

There was a crash as the box-room door was flung open. Monteith and Baker of the Sixth strode into the room, cane in hand. The terrific uproar had brought the prefects to the spot, and they had hurried up to the Fourth-Form passage, but not in such a hurry as to forget to bring their canes with them.

They started back in amazement at the sight of the empurpled juniors.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Monteith.

"What the—how—"

Redfern gasped.

"Ow! This—is this quite accidental. Monteith, you know! We didn't intend to get this stuff over ourselves—ow!—only over those bounders—yow!"

"You've done it pretty well, I think!" said Monteith, grinning in spite of himself. "You'd better go and wash—and as washing is cold work, we'll warm you up a little first. You take one side of the door, Baker, and I'll take the other. Now get out and get yourselves cleaned, you young sweeps!"

There was no help for it. The juniors had to get out, and they had to run the gauntlet of the ready canes as they went.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Ow, ow!"

"Yowp!"

"Yah!"

"Oh!"

From the crowd of juniors in the passage yells of laughter greeted the purple heroes as they fled. But the purple heroes did not laugh, as they rubbed and scrubbed away in the bath-rooms to clean themselves.

Which of the combatants could be considered to have scored was a question—but certainly there had been ample damage done on both sides.

In the School House Tom Merry rubbed and scraped at his face under the steaming taps in the bath-room, and gasped with his exertions.

"A compact's a compact—blow this stuff—and I don't mind lending Figg a hand—ow!—this will never come off—but in future—groogh!—I think we'll leave Figgins & Co. to handle the New Firm by themselves—ow!"

"Groogh!" said Monty Lowther. "I think we will! Ow!"

And they did.

THE END.

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By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Lord Dorrimore's Little Surprise!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE of the Ancient House at St. Frank's spun gracefully round on his skates, gazing skywards in astonishment.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "I mean to say, what the—"

"Hi!" came a thunderous voice.

"Out of it, ass!"

"Look out, Archie!"

The genial ass of the Remove was so fascinated by what he saw over the tree-tops that he did not even hear the warning shouts. And the next second Handforth crashed into him at full speed, and they both went flying.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other skaters were highly amused, for Archie was sailing on the ice on his back, his legs kicking wildly. And Handforth skidded full tilt into a heap of swept snow on his stomach, and half-buried himself.

As he emerged a number of St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls skated round, laughing merrily.

"I didn't see it, Ted!" remarked Willy Handforth of the Third. "You might do it again, old man, just to oblige me!"

Handforth sat up and shook the snow from himself.

"Who—who knocked me over?" he panted thickly. "By George! Tell me who it was, and I'll push him through the ice—"

"You silly ass, it was your own fault!" interrupted Church. "Archie was harmlessly looking into the sky, and instead of steering past him you tried to knock him into the middle of next week. This is what comes of showing off before Irene!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Oswald Handforth turned red, for Church had scored a bullseye. It was a fact that Handforth had been

When Lord Dorrimore took the Chums of St. Frank's aboard his super airship they thought they were going for a short flight. But it was a flight that was to lead them into many amazing adventures in the Arctic!

indulging in some "speed skating," on purpose to impress Irene Manners.

"All right, Walter Church," he muttered fiercely. "Just wait, my lad! I'll make you sit up for—"

"Instead of uttering threats, old man, wouldn't it be better to dash over and pick up Archie's remains?" interrupted Reggie Pitt gently. "After that collision it'll be a wonder if he's still alive."

This, of course, was pure banter, for the elegant Archie was already on his feet, attempting to recover some of his lost dignity. A tumble of that sort wasn't calculated to do much damage to anything, except his composure.

"I don't wish to be too caustic," he said stiffly, "but I must be allowed to remark that this sort of thing is frightfully near the old edge. I mean, a chappie can't stand at rest, as it were, without another cove ramming him like a dashed rhinoceros, dash it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie was not likely to get much sympathy. It was a glorious morning and the party of St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls were thoroughly enjoying themselves on the lake. Snow lay everywhere, and the Norfolk air was crisp and frosty. It was a perfect winter's day, with a cloudless sky and scarcely a breath of wind.

They were the guests of General Gregory Bartholomew Handforth, D.S.O.—Handy's distinguished uncle. They had all enjoyed themselves to the full over the Christmas holidays. From the moment of their arrival the guests had had one long round of pleasure under the general's hospitable roof.

And now the last few days of the visit were at hand. The party would soon be breaking up to go to their various homes—and, after that, to St. Frank's again, for the new term.

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"It was your own fault, Archie," laughed Marjorie Temple, as she helped brush some of the snow off the elegant junior's person. "Why did you stop like that—stargazing at eleven o'clock in the morning?"

"Eh!" said Archie, with a start. "I mean, what? Absolutely nothing of the kind, old cheddar! I mean to say, old girl! The fact is, I was watching the dashed Leviathan of the sky, as it were."

"The which?" asked half a dozen voices.

"Absolutely!" declared Archie firmly. "A whacking great—What-ho! Observe, old darlings! There she sails!" he added, pointing. "Ods pictures and visions. A somewhat priceless sight—what?"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Oh! An airship!"

"Look—look!"

Now that the general attention had been drawn to the upper air, skating was completely forgotten. Until Archie had pointed skywards nobody had noticed that great, shining monster overhead. She was an airship of the rigid type, with three gondolas—two in the rear and a large one in front. And in the nose of the airship was another compartment, which was obviously the navigating cabin. She was gracefully drifting overhead. Her engines were silent, and she was two or three thousand feet high.

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth. "I'll bet she's one of those enormous dirigibles which have been built to fly to Australia!"

"Wrong, Handy!" said a cheery voice. "She's mine!"

They all turned and stared at Lord Dorrmore, who had glided noiselessly up on his skates behind them.

"Yours, sir?" gasped everybody.

"Well, in a way," smiled the sporting peer. "Even if I don't actually own her, I've hired her. She's mine for the next month, at least. What's more, I shall be sailing within three days. This is her final trial. On Wednesday I'm off."

"Off?" shouted Handforth excitedly. "Where to, sir?"

His lordship was bombarded with questions.

"I thought so!" he said dryly. "I thought you would all go half off your nuts with excitement. That's why I kept this little affair to myself—for fear of spoiling your quiet enjoyment under General Handforth's roof. It only proves that I'm getting wise in my old age!"

"You needn't look so envious," grinned his lordship. "I'm not planning to sail to any very delectable spot. If you must know, it's the North Pole!"

"What?"

"The North Pole, sir?"

Lord Dorrmore's announcement had only increased the excitement, and the famous sportsman was rather enjoying the little sensation. Dorrie was a very old friend, and he was celebrated for his unexpected dashes into various queer corners of the globe. This sudden airship trip was a bigger surprise than usual, however, for he generally sailed on his beloved steam yacht, the Wanderer.

Before any of the boys and girls could question him further, a low, powerful hum came from overhead. The airship's engines were being started again, and they all watched as she circled gracefully round Handforth Towers, and then set off in a southerly direction.

"I expect she's goin' back to Pulham," remarked Lord Dorrmore.

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"That's where she's stationed, you know. If the weather keeps fine she'll hitch on to the moorin'-mast, and won't go back into her hangar again."

"And you've had this trip planned all the time you've been here, Dorrie?" asked Nipper. "And you—didn't breathe a word to us?"

"Guilty, my lord!" chuckled Dorrie.

"Then it's too bad!" said Nipper.

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, I've just thought of something else!" said Nipper. "Pulham isn't much more than thirty miles away from here. I suppose you came to stay at the Towers so that you could be near Pulham? You weren't just here for the Christmas vac at all?"

"Both, Nipper, old man!" replied his lordship. "But I must confess that the Towers' close proximity to Pulham had a big effect. I've been over there two or three times durin' the past day or two, and you never suspected a thing! I was there yesterday, and arranged for this trial trip—"

"And you're making an airship flight to the North Pole?" said Irene Manners, looking at him with sparkling eyes. "Oh, how thrilling! Wouldn't I just love to go with you, Dorrie!"

His lordship's expression changed, and he became grave. All the young people were on the most intimate terms with him, and he was a man who detested any kind of formality. He was "Dorrie" to everybody.

"Don't make the mistake of thinkin' that this is goin' to be a pleasure trip," he said quietly, glancing at the airship as she vanished from view over the roof of the Towers. "No, it's a bit more serious than that. Surely you've seen the accounts in the papers—you've heard of the anxiety concernin' Dr. Hammerton Powell?"

"By Jove, yes, sir!" said Reggie Pitt. "Didn't he try to fly to the North Pole about ten days ago—in a big four-engined aeroplane?"

Lord Dorrmore nodded.

"Yes; and he's one of my best pals," replied Dorrie. "A dare-devil explorer. He's been up Everest, he's twice tried to get to the South Pole, and now he's started off to the North Pole in the middle of the Arctic night! I suppose he thought it would be a bit of an achievement. Nobody questions the sincerity of his attempt, but it was simply askin' for trouble."

"He's lost, isn't he, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Yes; he's been missin' for some days," replied Dorrie quietly. "I found this airship practically ready for sailin' over a week ago, and I got a few hundred people busy on her. If I start off on Wednesday there may still be a chance—a slim one, but while there's life there's hope."

— —

An Extra Holiday!

HANDFORTH was looking very concerned as he gave a last glimpse at the spot where the airship had departed.

"But how can there be any hope now, sir?" he asked. "Dr. Powell must be dead—or he will be before you can hope to reach him."

"As I said before, there is a slim chance," replied Lord Dorrmore. "Dr. Powell's aeroplane was a huge one—in fact, the biggest machine of its type that has ever been constructed. Even if two of the engines failed the others would still be capable of bringin' her home. We all believe that Dr. Powell must have been caught in an Arctic

blizzard, and forced down. If he crashed fatally my own trip will be fruitless—but he may have wrecked the machine and still be alive."

"But how could he live in that cold without food?" asked Nipper.

"The machine was provisioned for a month or five weeks," replied Dorrie. "Indeed, with starvation rations, Dr. Powell carried sufficient food supplies to last him and his pilot and engineer six or seven weeks. So, you see, I'm not settin' out on a really hopeless quest. My idea is to cruise round the Arctic region and make a thorough search."

"I say, what a wonderful trip, sir!" exclaimed Handforth eagerly. "Wouldn't I just give a year's pocket-money to go with you?"

"Same here, sir!"

"I suppose there's no chance, Dorrie?" asked Nipper.

"Not the slightest, old man," said his lordship, shaking his head. "Why, you young bounders, what about St. Frank's? You're due back in a fortnight, aren't you? An' this search of mine will take at least a month. I'm establishin' a base up North, and I shall make quick dashes into the Arctic wastes, and in different directions, day by day."

Everybody was thrilled at the thought of Lord Dorrmore's generous and humane rescue trip. This adventure was probably costing him a fortune, but it didn't worry him in the least. After all, he was a multi-millionaire, and his only thought was to hurry off to the succour of his old friend. An airship trip was the only possible method.

Skating was completely forgotten, and the juniors and the girls stood in groups, excitedly discussing the whole subject. But not for long. For they saw a motor-car drive up along the wide terrace facing the Towers. And an enormous figure emerged.

"Somebody just arrived," said Handforth, shading his eyes and staring. "Great Scott! Who the dickens can that chap be? He's more like a living mountain than a human being!"

Lord Dorrmore glanced round, and chuckled.

"It's nobody," he smiled. "At least, nobody strange. Don't you recognise our cheery old pal, he of the Murderous Spear?"

"My stars!" gasped Church. "You—you mean Umlosi?"

"The one and only," nodded his lordship.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Fancy old Umlosi being here—in midwinter, too!"

"Let's go and welcome him!"

There was a scramble to remove skates, and a few minutes later the whole crowd ran off the lake and surged over the snow-covered lawns towards the terrace. They advanced upon Umlosi like an army.

"Wau!" shouted the gigantic African chief, as he recognised them. "Greetings, young masters! Greetings, O maidens of my great white fathers!"

"Jolly pleased to see you, Umlosi!" roared Nipper, thumping him on the back. "This is a surprise—Great Scott! What the dickens are you wearing? You feel like a bale of cotton-wool!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Umlosi was Lord Dorrmore's faithful companion, and he had come now to accompany his beloved "N'Kose" into the unknown wilds of ice and snow. Much as it appalled him to leave his native tropics, he had not been able to resist the call of adventure. Incidentally Dorrie had assured him that

the airship was as safe as a bullock-cart, and that the living quarters were electrically heated to such an extent that he, Umlosi, would only need to wear his scanty African costume. So Umlosi was chancing it—not, however, without many inward qualms.

Motoring over the frost-bound English countryside was a different thing entirely—and Umlosi was looking more like a circus freak than an ordinary human being. He seemed to have grown enormously stout.

"Come on, Umlosi—off with that fur coat!"

"We want to see you properly, old man!"

"Nay, young masters, do thou cease this banter!" protested Umlosi. "These snows and cold winds are not for me.

Didn't know—didn't know! Egad, it doesn't matter, does it?"

The famous detective laughed.

"Well, it's not vital, of course," he said dryly. "I wasn't going to tell the boys until Tuesday—when, I think, they are arranging to leave this hospitable roof. But there's no harm done."

"What's the news, sir?" chorused the juniors eagerly.

"Well, I don't altogether agree with the general," replied Nelson Lee, with a serious expression on his face. "At least, I do not think you will call it good news to hear that two of the East House boys are down with diphtheria."

"Oh, I say, sir!"

"Hard lines!"

"They are boys who stayed at school for the vacation," continued Nelson Lee.

"Young rascals—young scallawags!" he thundered, in that voice of his, which sounded like a blast of dynamite. "What did I tell you, Lee? I knew they'd be pleased to hear the news."

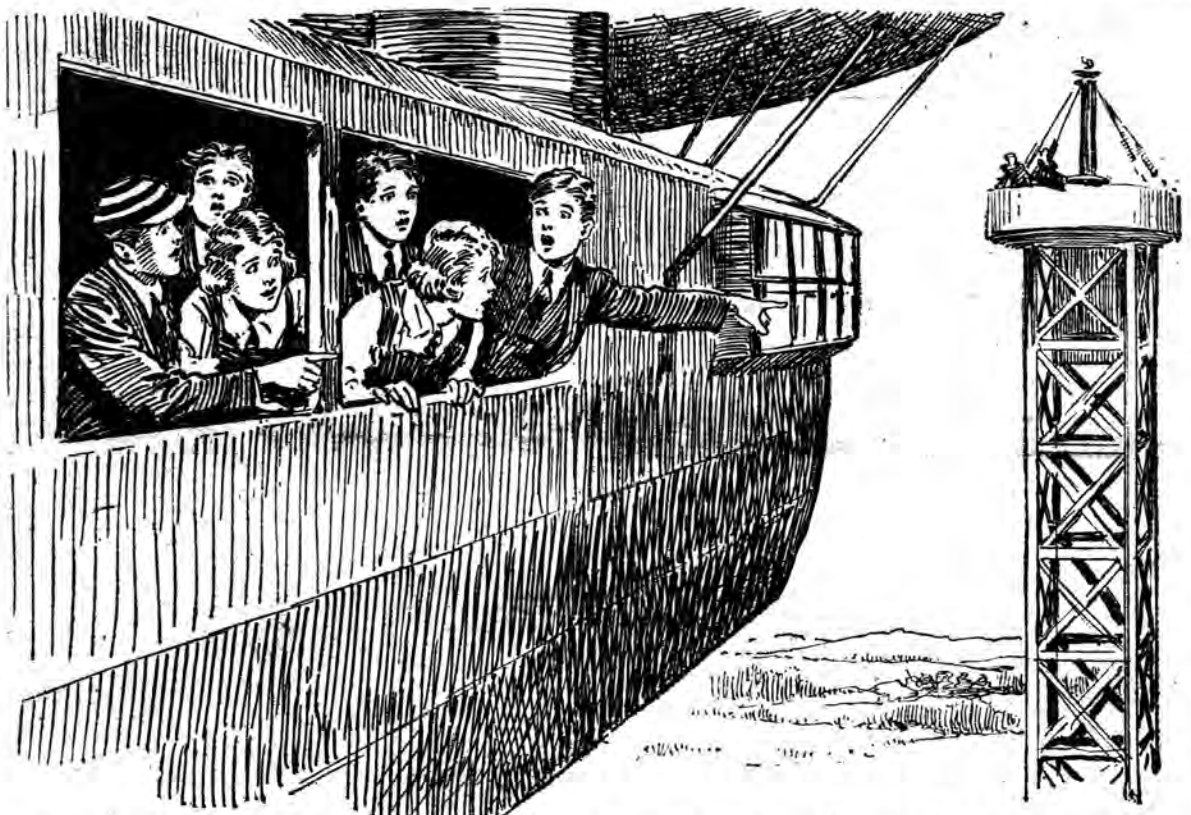
"But what about us?" asked Doris Berkeley indignantly. "The boys get all the fun!"

"No luck for us!" said Irene, with a toss of her head.

But Nelson Lee was smiling again.

"It seems that one of these affected boys was incautious enough to attend a Christmas party at the Moor View School," he explained. "So Miss Bond has reluctantly decided that her girls shall have the extra fortnight, too—"

He couldn't get any further, for the girls were cheering and laughing with as



As a low droning came to the ears of the St. Frank's boys and Moor View girls, they rushed to the window of the Titan. "Oh!" exclaimed Fullwood, pointing to the receding mooring-mast. "Lord Dorrimore is taking us for a trip!" They little knew they were bound for the North Pole!

I am from the hot forests of Africa, and—"

"Well, come indoors and peel!" interrupted Nipper briskly.

The whole crowd went indoors, and there was much amusement when Umlosi "peeled," for it was found that he had been wearing about eight or nine woollen overcoats, with an enormous fur over the top of them all. Further banter was stopped by the sounding of the luncheon gong, and everybody crowded into the stately dining-hall.

"Good news for you, boys!" thundered General Handforth genially. "Splendid news! Another fortnight of freedom, egad!"

"I wasn't going to tell them, general," smiled Mr. Nelson Lee.

"Eh? What?" roared the host. "Upon my soul!" Sorry, Mr. Lee!

"You'll be glad to learn that both cases are mild, and that there is no danger. However, the Head takes a serious view of the outbreak, and the East House drains are being thoroughly overhauled, and it has been decided that a delay must occur."

"A delay, sir?"

"Under the circumstances, Dr. Stafford is anxious that the whole school shall be safe from any possible contagion," continued Nelson Lee dryly. "Therefore, St. Frank's will not re-assemble until two weeks later than the usual date. I am sure you will be grieved to hear this unhappy news—"

"Hurrah!" yelled the St. Frank's fellows enthusiastically.

"That's a rum way of showin' grief!" said Lord Dorrimore, with a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

General Handforth laughed heartily with his guests.

much gaiety and joy as any of their schoolboy chums.

Handforth's Latest!

THIS was indeed a morning of surprises.

First, the news that Lord Dorrimore was setting off on an expedition into the Arctic wastes which would later be famous as an epic of heroism and daring. Next, Umlosi had arrived—and now came the news that there would be no school for a whole month!

"By George!" said Handforth breathlessly. "No school for a month—and Dorrie distinctly said that this airship dash into the Arctic would only take a single month! What a chance—what a glorious opportunity!"

"I beg your pardon, Ted?" asked Irene.

Handforth started violently. He had been speaking to himself without realising it. And he found the girl's blue eyes upon him with mild surprise.

"Oh, nun-nothing!" he gasped. "I—I was thinking!"

He was glad that she asked him no more. But as luncheon proceeded, Edward Oswald's expression became more and more flushed—his eyes were eloquent of inward excitement. Naturally, most of the talk at table concerned Lord Dorrimore's forthcoming trip into the wilds of the Arctic.

"Under the circumstances," explained Dorrie, "I have persuaded Mr. Lee to come with me. He'll be free for a month, so there's nothin' to stop him."

"Oh, I say, sir!" burst out Nipper. "What about me?"

"This is no adventure for boys!" frowned Dorrie.

"But isn't the airship safe, sir?" asked De Valerie.

"As airships go, I should say she's the safest thing that's ever been built—in the dirigible line, at all events," replied his lordship. "She's absolutely the last word, an' her liftin' capacity is astoundin'. Her makers guarantee that she can withstand the hardest storm that blows, an' when it comes to accommodation—well, wait till you see her yourselves!"

"Oh! Shall we be able to see her, sir?"

"Of course," replied Dorrie, nodding. "Even if you can't come on this trip, there's no reason why you shouldn't come to the aerodrome, an' give her the once over, so to speak. You'll be interested."

And Dorrie went on to describe the many wonders of this latest giant of the air. The living quarters, it seemed, extended right along the keel—saloons, cabins, kitchens, and even a bath-room! It was a true liner of the air.

The navigation-room was separated from the passenger section by a long passage, for the pilot and his assistants were accommodated in the very front of the great vessel. And there were all sorts of other wonders in connection with this craft, too.

"For example," said Dorrie. "I'm takin' no less than four whippet aeroplanes. Did you notice them? They're hooked on underneath, an' can be dropped off at any moment. An' the airship can pick them up again, too, by means of this hookin' arrangement."

"But who's going to fly them, sir?" asked Pitt.

"Well, I'm a bit of a pilot myself," admitted Dorrie modestly. "You see, while the airship can do her eighty miles an hour with ease, these little planes are really fast beggars—capable of two hundred, without full throttle. My idea is to unhook from the airship in favourable weather, an' make a few extra dashes, as it were."

"Oh, we'd give anything to be able to go, sir," said De Valerie enviously.

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"It may sound very romantic, boys, but there will be many perils," he declared. "I have perfect faith in the airship, and under ordinary circumstances you would be allowed to go on this trip. But the Arctic regions, at this time of the year, are treacherous. We cannot let you run into any dangers."

"How many people are going, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Only the officers and crew, and Dorrie and myself—"

"Good!" broke in Handforth excitedly. "And how many will the airship carry, sir? I don't mean including the officers and crew. How many is she

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built to carry in the passenger quarters?"

Dorrie chuckled.

"An artful question, you young bouncer!" he grinned. "As a matter of fact, this airship has been built for passenger service—one of the fleet which has been mapped out for Empire work. She's the biggest craft of her kind that's ever been constructed. And her cabins and saloons have been designed to accommodate fifty passengers, in addition to the crew."

"Fifty!" breathed Handforth. "By George!"

"However, as we shan't be takin' fifty passengers, I'm makin' other plans to level up the weight," continued Dorrie calmly. "But you'll know all about it when you come along to Pulham, an' examine the airship for yourselves."

Handforth said no more, but his companions could easily see that he was inwardly excited. And as soon as the meal was over, Church and McClure dragged him to a quiet corner of the lounge hall.

"Now, you ass!" said Church grimly. "What crazy idea have you got hold of? Out with it, Handy!"

"Come on, old man—you can't spoof us!" added McClure.

Handforth looked at them coldly.

"Crazy idea, eh?" he snapped. "You fatheads, I've a brain-wave—the greatest idea that'll be thought of in a century! Do you realise that we've got a month to waste?"

"We know that!"

"And this rescue trip of Dorrie's will only take a month."

"Yes, but—"

"Therefore, why not go with Dorrie?" asked Handforth triumphantly.

"Who—we three?"

"No—all of us!" replied Handforth. "Nipper and Pitt and the girls and everybody! We shall be back within the month, and everything will be all serene! Isn't that a terrific idea? Why not go with Dorrie?"

His chums were not madly excited.

"I can think of a hundred reasons, but one's good enough," retorted McClure tartly. "Dorrie won't take us!"

"Then we've got to make him!" snapped Handforth aggressively.

"Think of it! Accommodation for fifty passengers, and hardly anybody to go! All those cabins empty! Why, it's a shame!"

"But Dorrie told us we couldn't go—"

"That was before he heard the news about the extra fortnight's vac," argued Handforth. "That'll make all the difference. I'm going to put it to the chaps and the girls, and we'll hear what they say."

The chaps and the girls were easily found—out in the winter sunshine, in a large group on the terrace. To Handforth's dismay, he found that they had all thought of that brain-wave, quite independently.

"That's stale, old man," said Nipper gently, as Handforth blurted out his great scheme. "We've been talking about it for ten minutes. Why shouldn't we go? Both the guv'nor and Dorrie have the utmost faith in the airship, they reckon to be back in a month, and there's plenty of room for all of us."

"We're only just over twenty, including us girls," said Irene, nodding.

"Exactly!" said Handforth breathlessly. "That means there'll still be plenty of room to spare. It's an absolute crime to let those cabins remain empty! My idea is to put it to Dorrie in such a way that he can't possibly refuse."

"It's a bright notion, old man, but it's late in the day," sighed Reggie Pitt. "We've just been talking to Dorrie, and he can only talk about the dangers of the Arctic, and the peril of the air!"

"Disgusting!" said Tommy Watson indignantly.

"Of course, he doesn't mean a word of it!" said Dorrie. "It was only a game to put us off!"

"I'm going to speak to him!" declared Handforth grimly.

He went indoors, and found Lord Dorrimore talking with Nelson Lee.

"I agree with everythin', old man!" said his lordship, before Handforth could utter a word. "You can prove why you should all come, eh? You know exactly why I should agree to it? Absolutely! But it'll save a lot of trouble, an' a lot of breath, if I put my foot down at once, an' say it's impossible."

"But—but—" began Handforth helplessly.

"As things stand at present, I've fixed Wednesday as sailin' day," continued Dorrie calmly. "But you'll all come over to Pulham early on Tuesday mornin', an' I'll escort you over the ship, an' show you all the gadgets. Isn't that kind an' generous of me?"

But Edward Oswald Handforth was too disappointed to make any comment. He wandered away with a wild, set expression in his eyes. Lord Dorrimore's tone had been final—but the obstinate Handforth had never been known to take "no" for an answer—and he wasn't going to take it now!

On Board the Titan!

CHURCH dashed out of bed, raced to the window, and pulled up the blind with frantic energy. He took one look out at the early morning, and yelled.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "Sunshine—and not a cloud!"

"Good egg!" ejaculated McClure delightedly.

Very seldom, indeed, had they torn themselves out of bed with such alacrity on a winter's morning, when there was no rising-bell or no compulsion. But this was Tuesday morning—and only a little after dawn. They were to motor over to the great airship station at Pulham, and see Lord Dorrimore's wonderful airship at close quarters. On the morrow she would be sailing—but the majority of the boys and girls had got over their first excitement by now.

The week-end had given them a chance to simmer down. It would be something, at all events, to be allowed the honour of going over the Titan—as she was called—before she sailed.

Nipper was grievously disappointed, and he had said a few strong things to his "guv'nor." However, Nelson Lee had survived them, and had advised Nipper to remember that it would be most unfair to all the others if he alone were permitted to go. And Nipper, being a sensible fellow, had realised the truth of this statement.

But Handforth was as determined as ever.

Some of the others had noticed a subtle difference in him during the week-end. There was that strange glint in his eye—and a certain mysterious alteration in his manner. But they knew him of old, and took no notice.

This morning he took his chums into the secret.

"What on earth's the matter with you, Handy?" demanded Church, as he dressed. "When are you going to drop

this mysterious attitude of yours? You remind me of a giddy conspirator—like Guy Fawkes, and his gunpowder plot!"

Handforth frowned. "This isn't a gunpowder plot—it's something a bit more important than that, I should hope!" he said scornfully. "The other chaps have resigned themselves to being left behind, haven't they? Well, they can do as they please—but I shall have something to say to-day!"

"Will that be something new?" asked Mac tartly. "I'm going on this trip, you ass!" snapped Handforth. "Yes, you can stare! I'm going—and if you've got any sense, you'll back me up!"

"My poor, hopeless, lunatic!" said Church tenderly. "Is this what you've been looking so soppy about?"

"Soppy!" roared Handforth. "Yes, soppy!" snapped Church indignantly. "So you've made up your mind to go to the North Pole, have you?"

"What does it matter which pole?" put in McClure. "And why does he want to go to it? He's there all the time—at the very top!"

Handforth started. "Are you suggesting that I'm up the pole?" he demanded grimly.

"It wasn't a suggestion—it was a statement!" replied McClure deliberately. "Handy, you're mad! If Dorrie says that we can't go on this trip, we can't! There's an end of it! Why can't you accept—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Handforth icily. "Not so fast, my lad! Have you ever heard of such a thing as French leave?"

"Eh?" "Dorrie may forbid us to go on this trip—but what about taking French leave?" went on Handforth breathlessly. "There you are, my sons—that's my idea! We'll go as stowaways! How's that?"

"Stowaways?" gurgled Church. "Yes!" "You—you don't mean— Ha, ha, ha!"

His chums found further conversation impossible. They sank back upon their beds, and yelled with laughter. And Handforth, after gazing at them with cold anger for a moment or two, rushed to the attack. They recovered with remarkable speed, and dodged into safety.

"Oh, Handy!" breathed Church at last. "What a scream you are, old man! Fancy stowing away on an airship! How big do you think it is—about twice the size of the Wanderer?"

"The Wanderer's a midget compared to the Titan!" retorted Handforth.

"Very likely—in bulk," said Church. "But one's a steam yacht and the other's an airship. It would be difficult enough to sneak on a ship as a stow-away—but do you realise that the passenger accommodation on a dirigible is necessarily cramped? And do you realise that in order to sneak on board you've got to climb to the top of the mooring-mast, pass all sorts of sentries, and then get into the airship through a passage in the nose, and—"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth, turning pale. "I—I'd forgotten that!"

"Then it's a good thing I reminded you," said Church tartly. "You can't steal aboard an airship over a gangway, or creep through a porthole! She's swinging on that mooring-mast, hundreds of feet from the ground."

Handforth took a deep breath. "There's another way!" he said suddenly. "We're going over the airship to-day, aren't we? Well, when the time comes for us to come off, we'll stop

Eastwood League.

TOM MERRY ORDERED OFF. HIGHCLIFFE MATCH MARRED.

By Harry Manners.

Ordered off the field for foul play! That was Tom Merry's fate in the League Match with Highcliffe, following close on our cuptie with the same team. In attempting a solo run, Merry was tackled by two defenders, and as he fell he appeared to put his knee into the ribs of one of the defenders. In a stunned silence, the rest of us watched Tom Merry walk off the field. Badly "rattled" by the incident, St. Jim's were two down at the interval, De Courcy and Courtenay notching good goals. At Courtenay's instigation, a full inquiry was held during the interval. Several Highcliffe fellows attested that Merry was entirely blameless in what had been a pure accident. The referee held a consultation with the linesmen, who corroborated. Admitting his mistake, the ref. took the unusual procedure of permitting Tom Merry to play in the second half—and Tom gave a great display, too! He scored two goals, one from twenty-five yards and the other close in. A draw, 2-2, was a fair result

REPLIES TO READERS

"I think 1,200 words enough for any language," writes "Scholar."—Yes, but how can you give advice to your favourite football team in a mere 1,200 words?

"There was no end to the different types of cats at the cat show I went to," writes "Cat-Lover."—Particularly true of the Manx cats, we should imagine!

"Is it true," asks "Shakespeare Fan," "that Shakespeare was a bit of a speculator?"—Well, his works are full of "stock" quotations!

behind—under the saloon table, or somewhere like that." McClure looked excited.

"By Jupiter!" he said. "That's a brainy idea!"

"Wonderful!" agreed Church, staring. "You've hit it, Handy!"

And Edward Oswald beamed. He hadn't noticed an exchange of winks between his two chums. And they did not point out that they were liable to be missed after the visiting party had got to the ground. It saved quite a lot of argument to let him retain his dreams.

But there was no doubt that he actually meant it—and his sole thoughts, now, were centred upon going on the trip. To this end he stuffed his pockets with spare collars and ties, and even concealed two clean shirts and a set of underwear beneath his waistcoat, wrapped round him like bandages. One or two fellows noticed his bulky appearance when he came down, but he made some vague remark about the sharp frost, and the necessity of wrapping up well.

And so they started off. General Handforth maintained quite a fleet of cars at the Towers, and four of them were sufficient to carry the whole party. They went into North Walsham, and on through Coltishall to Norwich, en route for Pulham. The journey would not take them much more than an hour.

"Let's hope it's as fine as this to-morrow, Dorrie," said Nipper, who was in the leading car with Lord Dormore and Nelson Lee. "There couldn't be better weather for the start."

"I think we shall be lucky," said the sporting peer. "The glass is set, and there's every indication of a continu-

ST. FRANK'S BEAT 'FRIARS.

By Clarence Fellowe (The Rhyming Reporter).

The gallant 'Friars were much upset, and found to their extreme regret, St. Frank's a fast and forceful side to whom the net yawned open wide! At half-time three goals up, St. Frank's could thank Pitt for his merry pranks, and Nipper, and Tregellis-West—the 'Friars found him quite a pest! Though off their form, Greyfriars stood, nobly at bay, as 'Friars should. With courage fierce, they level drew—three all. But then St. Frank's went through! A brace of goals by Nipper shot made victory sure—yes, that's the lot!

FULL RESULTS

HIGHCLIFFE..	2	ST. JIM'S ..	2
Courtenay,		Merry (2).	
De Courcy.			
ST. FRANK'S..	5	GREYFRIARS	3
Pitt, Nipper (3)		Wharton (2)	
Tregellis-West		Hurree Singh.	
ABBOTSFORD	1	BAGSHOT ..	1
ROOKWOOD ..	7	RIVER HOUSE	4
RYLCOMBE	2	ST. JUDE'S ..	0
GRAMMAR S.			

LEAGUE TABLE.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
St. Frank's ..	14	10	2	2	57	32	22
Greyfriars ..	14	9	3	2	61	26	21
St. Jim's ..	14	9	3	2	72	32	21
Rylecombe G. S. ..	14	9	3	2	44	30	21
Highcliffe ..	14	7	3	4	43	25	17
Rookwood ..	14	7	3	4	49	40	17
River House ..	13	5	4	4	35	30	14
Abbotsford ..	13	4	1	8	18	43	9
Bagshot ..	14	2	4	8	16	32	8
Redcliffe ..	13	2	2	9	19	56	6
Claremont ..	13	2	1	10	22	53	5
St. Jude's ..	14	0	3	11	11	48	3

tion of this cloudless weather. To my mind, it's a good augury, Lee, old man."

"Yes, it seems so," agreed Nelson Lee.

Pulham was reached without incident, and there were many necks craned from the windows of the cars as the visitors stared up at the great bulk of the Titan as she swung easily and gracefully from the tower-like mooring-mast.

The airship was wonderfully designed, with most of the passenger quarters incorporated in the long, cylindrical body. So, too, was the navigation-room. The engines were housed in isolated gondolas.

The young people felt rather a pang of disappointment, however, when they saw only one or two men about. There were no active preparations for departure. It would probably be very different on the morrow, when the actual start was made.

"We shall have to come, of course," said Irene Manners firmly. "We're not going to let Dorrie go off without waving him good-bye! I almost wish he had planned to go to-day, and then it would be all over."

"Yes!" growled Reggie Pitt. "This is only prolonging the agony."

"Oh, look!" put in Doris. "Isn't that Browne over there?"

"The one and only Napoleon!" grinned Willy Handforth, nodding. "I spotted him a second ago. Stevens, too! And I'm jiggered if Boots and Christine of the Fourth aren't with 'em!"

The Towers guests crowded round the quartette. William Napoleon Browne of the Fifth was smiling with all his usual benevolence.

"Peace, brothers—peace, sisters!" he beamed. "I can well understand the overwhelming delight which fills you at unexpectedly encountering me. But let me urge you to keep calm."

"Who said we're delighted?" demanded Handforth tartly.

"There are some things," replied Browne gracefully, "which one takes for granted. Need I look twice at the eager grins of these brothers of the Remove? Need I take a second glance into the merry, dancing eyes of these sweet young ladies? I think I need!" he added. "For, when it comes to a matter of merry, dancing eyes, I must frankly confess I am susceptible."

"I think you're a bit touched," said Handforth coldly.

But Browne was only indulging in his usual banter, and the Remove fellows and the girls were glad to see him. It appeared that he and the other three were staying near Norwich, and they had come over, at Dorrie's invitation, to go over the airship, too. They had met him on the Sunday, or earlier, while he had been motoring through to the aerodrome.

"You must remember, brothers, that this is an auspicious occasion," said Browne. "We cannot allow the Fifth to be unrepresented."

"Or the Fourth, either," said Buster Boots, nodding. "Well, they seem to be getting ready round that mooring-mast. I suppose we shall go up in batches—eh? Let's dash there, and be in the first lot."

It was soon learned, however, that they were all to go on at once, for Lord Dorrimore had no fear of the passenger quarters being overcrowded. This airship had been built to carry over fifty—with comfort. So all the visitors could easily do their sightseeing at once. Besides, Dorrie had a little surprise in store—one which necessitated them all being on board at once.

"The fact is," he beamed, "I'm giving a little early luncheon in the dining-saloon. I want you to see how rosin' everything is. We'll pretend that we're really goin', and the stewards will take you to your cabins, as though you had just come on board for a real trip. Let's have a bit of a lark."

And the visitors entered wholeheartedly into the scheme.

It was quite an exciting adventure, going up the inside of the mooring-mast, so many feet from the ground. They had imagined that it would be necessary to walk up endless steps, but there was a lift. And, at the top, a platform from which they could see far across the snow-bound countryside. And there was the airship—now looking startlingly big at such close quarters. A gangway was in position, leading from the platform into a neat doorway in the vessel's nose. And, above, the great attachment by which she was secured to the mast. There was scarcely a movement on the airship, for the breeze was very light.

And so they went in, just as though they were starting off on a real voyage. They went down a long corridor, near the end of which was a stairway, leading down into the navigation-room. But this was not their domain. They went straight on into the body of the ship.

And there was a fresh thrill at every moment. For they came upon an imposing staircase—almost like that of a sea-going liner. And then they were in one of the lounges, with the saloon leading off, the tables already set for a meal. Farther along were the cabins—neat, compact little state-rooms, exquisitely furnished, with the lightest possible fixtures, but sturdy enough for all ordinary purposes. There were windows which looked directly out over the ground. Overhead was the enormous body of the vessel, but it in no way obstructed the view.

"It's amazing!" declared Irene Manners breathlessly.

"And we're not going!" groaned Mary Summers.

"Listen!" shouted Fullwood suddenly. A low droning came to their ears.

And the floor upon which they stood began to quiver slightly. They rushed to the window, and Fullwood pointed to the mooring-mast.

"Oh, Lord Dorrimore is taking us for a trip!" he cried.

Dorrie Springs a Surprise!

LORD DORRIMORE was chuckling when a crowd of fellows came running up to him in the dining-saloon. The great airship was swinging round now; and she had risen so far that the mooring-mast could be seen far below, looking almost ridiculous from such an angle. The gigantic airship sheds had become strangely dwarfed, too.

"You old spoofer!" shouted Nipper, giving Dorrie a thump in the chest.

"Hi, steady!" gasped his lordship. "Just one of my little surprises!"

"Yes, I know!" said Reggie Pitt. "You're giving us a trip round, sir? I say, are you going to take us to Handforth Towers? It'll be fine to circle round, and—"

"Yes, I think we shall go right over the Towers," nodded Lord Dorrimore. "But we shan't do any circlin' round, young 'uns. The idea is to continue northwards, have a look at Scotland, as we go, an' then carry on into the bleak an' frozen North!"

"You're only kidding, sir!" shouted somebody.

Dorrie sighed.

"That's all the reward I get!" he said sadly. "I planned this little surprise packet, an' nobody believes me!"

"But you're not sailing until to-morrow, sir!" protested Fullwood.

"That's rummy!" said Lord Dorrimore. "I thought we'd sailed already!"

He chuckled, and looked round. "Fact, all of you!" he added dryly. "This isn't just a joy-ride over Norfolk, but the actual start of the real trip!"

"And—and you're taking us with you?" shouted Nipper.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grinned Dorrie.

"Oh, guv'nor!" said Nipper, glancing at Nelson Lee. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Strict orders from Dorrie," smiled Lee. "He wouldn't let me!"

"Of course not," said his lordship. "When I plan a little surprise, I like to do it thoroughly. I'll bet this has taken some of the breath out of you—eh?"

Irene found her voice.

"But—but are we really going?" she cried, in alarm.

"Absolutely!" nodded Dorrie. "You all pressed me so eagerly on Saturday that I thought you'd be pleased. An' I know that any kind of pleasure is the sweeter if it's unexpected. So here we are!"

Irene and the other girls were looking thoroughly startled.

"Oh, but—but it's too bad!" gasped Irene, in dismay.

"It's terrible!" said Doris, with equal alarm.

The juniors were so wild with delight that they could do nothing else but talk all at once. The fact which had knocked the girls almost sideways had not even occurred to the boys.

"You don't look particularly pleased," smiled Lord Dorrimore.

"But—but what about our things?" asked Doris, aghast.

"Things?"

"We've got nothing but the clothes we're standing in," burst out Irene.

"We didn't bring anything—not even an evening frock or another pair of shoes! What ever shall we do?"

"Surely you can manage for a month?" asked Dorrie mischievously.

"A month!" shrieked the girls.

"Well, say three weeks," amended Dorrie. "It won't be much longer."

But they were still filled with utter consternation. The joys of the airship trip meant nothing to them in this awful moment. Being girls, they had promptly allowed their thoughts to flash to the one fact that they had come unprepared—without a stitch of clothing except that which they stood in.

"There's another thing!" said Irene. "Our people will nearly die of shock when they hear that we've been carried off."

(Northward ho for the Arctic! It's a pleasant surprise for the boys and girls, and many amazing adventures lie ahead of them. Don't miss next week's thrilling chapters, chums. Keep travelling with the airship party.)



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