

FOOTBALLS GIVEN FOR READERS' JOKES! (Turn to page 9.)

The **GEM** ^{2d}



RIVALS
on the **TREASURE TRAIL!**

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RIVALS *on the* TREASURE TRAIL!



No sooner had Knox knocked Tom Merry down than Blake sprang forward, and before the others could stop him he punched the prefect hard on the nose. Knox staggered back with a yell of pain and rage.

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy's Bright Idea!

"GWEAT SCOTT!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, uttered that exclamation. For several minutes he had been seated in Study No. 6, looking rather abstractedly into the fire. Jack Blake, Digby, and Herries, his study-mates, looked up from their prep.

"Well, what are you 'Gweat Scot-ting' about?" demanded Blake.

D'Arcy still stared into the fire.

"What's the matter with you, prize ass?" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus started.

"Bai Jove, Blake, did you address me?" he asked, turning.

"Yes, I did!"

"Gussy seems to know his proper name!" chuckled Digby.

The swell of the School House turned pink.

"Weally, Digby, that wemark was uttably uncalled for!" he protested stiffly. "I did not ansawah Blake because he addressed me as a pwize ass! I was brought out of a bwown study owin' to his uttably unnecessary woar!"

Herries looked up from his books.

"What are you jawing about, Gussy?" he demanded. "You couldn't have been brought out of the study because you're still in it. Besides, it isn't brown at all—the paint on the door may be brown, but the paper's—"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and gave the rather dense Herries a withering look.

"You uttash ass!" he exclaimed.

"Look here—"

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"You fwabjous doffah!" went on Arthur Augustus. "I said I was in a bwown study—"

"It isn't brown!" persisted Herries obstinately.

"Bai Jove, are you off your wockah, Hewwies?" shouted D'Arcy, rising to his feet. "When I say I'm in a bwown study, I mean I'm—"

"In a brown study!" grinned Blake.

"Nothin' of the sort!" shrieked D'Arcy excitedly. "I uttably wefuse to say I'm—or, wathah, I should say that a bwown study is a wevwie!"

Herries stared.

"A which?" he asked.

"A wevwie, you duffah!"

Herries looked at Arthur Augustus in amazement.

"What on earth's a wevwie?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Blessed if I can see anything funny in it!" growled Herries. "If Gussy chooses to go off his giddy rocker I don't see any reason why you should cackle. What's he mean by a wev—wew—"

"Wever we shall understand is a question," grinned Digby.

"Oh, murder him!" groaned Blake. "Digby, you ass, you're worse than Monty Lowther at puns."

Herries banged the table.

"What's the cackle about?" he shouted. "What does Gussy mean by that idiotic word?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Gussy means a reverie—an absent-minded study, you cuckoo!"

Herries glared.

"Absent-minded!" he growled. "I reckon Gussy's mind is absent—and gone for good, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Oh, Gussy, you'll be the death of me yet!" chuckled Blake. "But we haven't arrived at an explanation of the 'Gweat Scott' bizney yet. Did something bite you?"

"No, deah boy," said D'Arcy; "an idea stuwck me!"

"Well, it was just as painful, I expect!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to undahstand why you should tweek the mattah in this wibald spiwit," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "An ideah occuwved to me wespectin' the New House wottahs. Figgins & Co. have been wathah too much in evidence lately, and it stuwck me that it would be wathah a good ideah to take them down a peg or two."

"Of course," said Blake. "They could do with that."

"That's what I thought, deah boy."

"Have you got a suggestion, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" replied D'Arcy.

"My ideah chiefly concerns Wedfern & Co.," he said. "Still, as they are New

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD

House boundahs, the jape will be just as effective."

"Yes, if the idea's any good," said Jack Blake. "Your ideas, Gussy, don't always pan out howling successes, you know."

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle. "Pway wait until I have outlined my scheme, Blake," he said. "I wathah think you will be delighted with the wheeze. To-morrow is a half-holiday, deah boys, and as there is no Lowah School match on we have decided to cycle ovah to Ferncliffe and watch the first eleven playin'."

"Are you telling us news, you ass?" asked Blake. "We know all about the first eleven, and decided to go over to Ferncliffe yesterday."

"To-morrow," corrected Herries. "The match isn't until to-mor—"

"You chump!" roared Blake. "I mean, we decided yesterday to go over to Ferncliffe to-morrow."

"Well, that's clear," said Digby—"clear as mud."

"Besides," shouted Blake, "what's the good of talking about cycling over, Gussy, you ass? You know jolly well that we can't do that. Our jiggers are busted up!"

Blake was referring to an unfortunate accident which had happened the previous evening. Blake, Herries, and Digby had been cycling home from Wayland, and, as the road was clear, had ridden abreast, holding shoulders. When nearing Rylcombe the middle cyclist's front tyre had burst, throwing his steering out. The next second the three riders had collided, and had been pitched to the ground.

The damage was considerable, for two of the wheels were hopelessly buckled, and the other machine had suffered a smashed pedal. All three bicycles were put out of action for at least a week.

It was unfortunate, as they had arranged to go to see the first eleven play Ferncliffe School. The railway did not run to Ferncliffe, so the owners of the injured bicycles would be unable to see the match. But evidently Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had an idea in his head which would alter matters.

"I am well aware, Blake, that your jiggahs are out of action," said Arthur Augustus. "But my ideah is to pwevent Wedfern & Co. goin'—and go ourselves." "Your bike's all right," said Blake. "I suppose you're suggesting that we should bone Redfern & Co.'s machines?"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Well, not exactly that, deah boy," he said. "It is somethin' wathah deepah." "So jolly deep that we can't make head nor tail of it!" growled Herries.

"Pway wait until I explain," said D'Arcy calmly. "I wathah pwide myself on bein' a deep fellow, you know. This ideah of mine is weally wippin'."

"Let's hear it, then," said Blake.

"Vewy well, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus came to the point. At first his chums listened impatiently, then grew more attentive. A smile broke out on their faces, and finally they all three burst into a roar of laughter.

"Bai Jove, how does it stwike you, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared his chums.

"Don't you think it is wathah deep—"

Blake slapped his aristocratic chum on the back.

"Gussy, you're a genius!" he gasped. "My only hat, how did you think of such a ripping idea? I didn't think you had it in you!"

The swell of the School House beamed.

"I thought you would like the ideah, deah boys!" he said.

"It's gorgeous!" chuckled Digby.

"Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen will be properly left in the lurch!" grinned Herries. "Gussy, you deserve a giddy medal!"

"It only shows that there's a spark of intellect even in the most hopeless cases," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"We won't say a word to anyone," went on Blake thoughtfully. "My hat, if this jape doesn't turn out a complete success you can call me a prize idiot!"

CHAPTER 2.

Redfern & Co. Get Left!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood on the steps of the School House, looking out across the sunlit quadrangle.

It was the day following the little meeting in Study No. 6, and morning lessons were over. The March day was exceptionally fine, and the prospects for the afternoon were of the best.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "it's simply a wippin' day for the match this aftahnoon! I sincerely twist that Blake and the othahs will be successful in workin' out my wathah deep jape. I considah that it is a weally fine ideah, and will be a feahful smack for Wedfern & Co."

"Hallo, Gussy! What are you mumbling about?" asked Tom Merry, as he came out of the School House with Lowther and Manners.

"Thinking out a love-letter?" asked Monty Lowther genially.

"You uttah duffahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was not mumblin'. I was merely addressin' a few weinarks to myself. Are you chaps goin' to Ferncliffe this aftahnoon to see the first eleven match?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "We're biking over."

"You Study No. 6 kids are staying at home, aren't you?" said Manners.

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"But your bikes are jiggered up."

"We are using othahs," said D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "At least, we shall do if our awangements do not miscawwy."

The Terrible Three looked at D'Arcy curiously.

"What's the game?" asked Tom Merry. "Is it a jape?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Whose giddy idea?" asked Manners.

"Mine, deah boy," replied Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, then it's sure to miscarry!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Couldn't expect anything else. Sorry you kids won't be able to come along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The swell of the School House treated the Terrible Three to a stony glare.

"You uttah asses!" he exclaimed. "I might have realised that you would tweat the mattah in a wibald spiwit. I was just goin' to let you into the wheeze, but as you—"

"Oh, Gussy, don't be hard on us!" said Tom Merry gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye. "We were only joking, you know. As one gentleman to another, I apologise for myself and these two misguided youths."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thawed.

"As you put it in that way, Tom Mewwy, I can do nothin' but gwacefully accept your apology," he said, in all seriousness. "As one gentleman to another, it would be bad form if I wefused to cawwy out my owiginal intention and let you into the secwet."

The Terrible Three grinned.

"Go ahead with the giddy secret, Gussy!" chuckled Tom Merry.

And Arthur Augustus went ahead. He rapidly told them of the scheme which he had thought out. The chums of the Shell were struck by it, and they roared.

"My hat, Gussy, you're going it!" said Manners, with a chuckle. "Where the dickens did you pinch that idea? You didn't think it out all by yourself, did you?"

"Yaas, wathah, Mannahs!"

"Well, it's jolly good!" said the captain of the Shell. "I suppose Blake and Herries and Digby are doing the deahly deed now?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

And while he stood discussing the matter with the Terrible Three, his own chums were busy in the cycle-shed. Until dinner was over the place was deserted, so the three plotters had it to themselves. Three bicycles—those belonging to Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen—were standing with all six tyres deflated.

Blake chuckled as he looked at them.

"They're finished now, my sons," he said, with satisfaction.

"Well, the giddy tyres are flat enough, anyhow," grinned Digby. "When Reddy & Co. see 'em they'll have about six fits."

"Rather!"

"I vote we clear out now," said Jack Blake. "No need to stop longer than necessary, you know, and—"

"By jingo," interrupted Herries, "there goes the giddy dinner-bell!"

"Good!" said Blake. "No chance of those New House bounders coming on the scene now! Let's buzz in and get our own dinners. We want to be here, or near by, when Redfern & Co. come to get their bikes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chuckling to themselves, Blake & Co. left the cycle-shed, and in a few minutes they were in the dining-hall with the rest of the juniors.

"Have you done the twick, Blake, deah boy?" whispered Arthur Augustus, as Blake sat down.

"What-ho!" replied Blake heartily. "It's all serene, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Lathom mildly, looking down the table.

The meal proceeded, and most of the juniors were thinking about the match which was to take place that afternoon. It was one of the most important football matches of the year, and always excited general interest. It was so important, in fact, that no junior match had been arranged, as most of the Lower School boys preferred to go over to Ferncliffe.

Dinner over, Blake & Co. lost no time in hurrying off to the cycle-shed. Most of the boys had stated their intention of starting off immediately, so as to arrive at Ferncliffe in good time. So it was quite likely that Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. would do the same.

The School House juniors took up their position behind the cycle-shed,

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and waited. Sure enough, in less than five minutes, six well-known forms emerged from the New House, and came across the quad. Redfern & Co. and Figgins & Co. were rivals, but on an occasion such as this all rivalry was temporarily at an end. The New House heroes had decided to cycle over to the football ground together.

"Bai Jove, here they come, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus suddenly. "Gussy's right!" exclaimed Herries. "Don't let the bounders see you, Gussy."

"Twist me, deah boy!"

The New House juniors entered the cycle-house. There were several boys there already, but they were busy with their own machines.

"Jolly good thing we got our jiggers in order before lessons this morning," said Figgins, the long-limbed leader of the New House.

"Rather!" agreed Redfern. "I'm not sure now that Fatty Wynn's tyres won't burst. The amount of dinner he's eaten is astounding. Blest if I know where he tucks it all to!"

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"Don't you worry about me," he said cheerfully. "I didn't have much of a dinner, after all. But I'm feeling pretty fit, because just before dinner I whetted my appetite by eating a meat pie, a few sausage-rolls, and about half a dozen jam tarts. Besides, I'm taking some sandwiches in my pockets, so—"

"Hallo!" said Kerr, the Scots junior, suddenly. "Look at your giddy tyres, Reddy!"

Redfern looked round quickly, and then gasped:

"They're—they're flat!" he shouted, in dismay.

"My hat, that means a delay!" said Lawrence. "I told you that you'd shov'd that patch on in a rotten style, Reddy!"

"But they're both flat, you chump!" howled Redfern.

"My only aunt, so they are!" said Lawrence. "Well, mine are all right—Great Christopher Columbus, my giddy tyres are flat, too!"

The New House juniors stared at one another.

"Look at mine!" roared Owen suddenly.

"Somebody's been having a rotten game, here!" declared Figgins grimly.

"All our tyres are flat!" gasped Redfern. "At least, mine and Lawrence's and Owen's are! Well, of all the caddish tricks—"

"By Jove, look here!" exclaimed Kerr suddenly.

He had moved forward, and was now bending over Redfern's machine.

"What's up?" asked Owen.

"Why, the tyres are full of pins!" exclaimed Kerr wrathfully. "Look at 'em! Stuck in right to their giddy heads!"

The juniors gathered round excitedly.

"This is simply a rotten trick!" said Owen angrily. "If those School House rotters call this a jape, I don't! It's a mean trick—rotten mean trick!"

"Rather!"

The New House juniors looked at the tyres. Protruding from the rubber treads were the heads of many pins. Apparently they had been pushed in with considerable force. Redfern & Co. gazed at one another in consternation.

"Somebody's going to pay for this!" exclaimed Redfern grimly.

"And pay for it hot, too!" said Owen.

"It's a beastly thing to do!" snorted Lawrence.

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"Caddish!"

"Rotten!"

"Horrid!" said Figgins.

Suddenly there was a splutter of suppressed laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared four or five voices.

Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three came into sight. They looked into the cycle-shed with grinning faces, and the New House juniors glared at them with wrathful eyes.

"Tyres all right?" inquired Blake

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Digby.

"No punctures, I hope?" asked Herries.

"I twist not," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be wathah wotten to have a wotten puncture just as you want to start!"

"You—you rotten cads!" shouted Redfern hotly. "Did you stick those beastly things in our tyres?"

Blake grinned.

"Well, you see," he explained blandly, "we wanted to prevent you using the bikes."

"And so you perpetrated this caddish trick!" exclaimed Figgins contemptuously. "My hat, I shouldn't have thought it of you! It's more in the line of Mellish or Levison!"

"And we'll make you answer for it!" said Owen angrily. "We—"

"You see, deah boys," said D'Arcy calmly, "our ideah was to pwerent you using the jiggahs, so that we could use them ourselves."

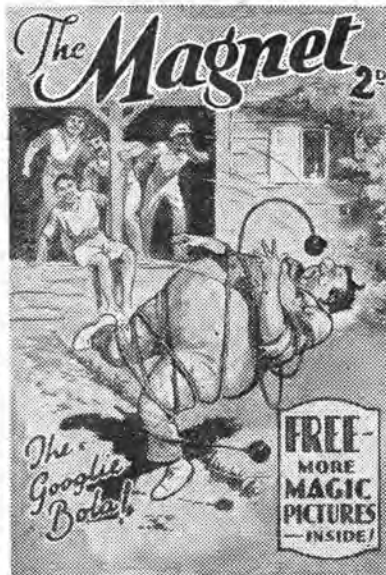
"That's it," agreed Blake. "Our own machines are in the giddy repair shop, so we thought we'd go over to Ferneliffe on your bikes."

Redfern & Co. simply glared.

"You—you chumps!" roared Lawrence wrathfully. "The machines are useless until the tyres are mended. You've spoilt our ride, and—and—How the dickens can you ride 'em with flat tyres, you burbling asses!" he concluded.

"We shouldn't do that," said Blake. "We should pump 'em up first."

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"But they're punctured!" howled Redfern.

"In about fifty places!" raved Owen. "And completely ruined!" finished Lawrence. "Besides, do you think we should let you have the bikes?"

"Look here," said Blake pacifically, "I'll bet I make those jiggers rideable in five minutes!"

"Don't talk piffle!" snapped Redfern. "It'll take hours to mend them!"

"Well, if we make the jiggers rideable within five minutes, can we use them to ride to Ferneliffe?" asked Blake. "I don't say we can do it; but mending punctures of this sort isn't such a difficult matter."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Redfern nearly choked.

"You silly asses!" he howled. "How can you mend six tyres in five minutes?"

"It's impossible!" declared Figgins.

"Can we have the bikes if we do make 'em rideable?" persisted Blake.

"Of course you can!" roared Lawrence angrily. "You're talking out of your hat, Blake!"

"Good!" said Blake genially. "You heard what he said, chaps? If we pump the tyres up so that we can ride the bikes we can have 'em!"

"You're off your rocker, Blake!" said Kerr.

"Not just yet, old son," chuckled Blake. "Get to work, chaps!"

"Right-ho!"

And Blake & Co. instantly took off the pumps from the bikes, and commenced pumping up the deflated tyres. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. stood looking on with angry faces. Suddenly Kerr started.

"I say," he exclaimed, "I wonder—My hat, I believe it's a jape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"A jape!" gasped Redfern. "Those giddy tyres seem to be coming up all right. But they're smothered with pins! How the dickens can they hold air?"

"That's the wub, deah boy!" grinned D'Arcy.

The tyres were soon inflated, and Blake & Co. removed the pumps.

"Now for the pins!" grinned Blake. "Out with 'em!"

The School House juniors proceeded to remove the pins—their actions being watched by quite a crowd. Blake pulled the first one out, and there was a general gasp. The pin was only about a thirty-second of an inch long. It was, in fact, merely a head with a tiny piece of the pin left on.

The jape was seen in an instant. The tyres had simply been deflated by means of the valves, and the pin-heads inserted into the numerous little flint-cuts—doing no harm to the tyres whatever. Seeing all the pin-heads in the tyres, Redfern & Co. had instantly jumped to the conclusion that the rest of the pins were inside the tyres. In the circumstances they could scarcely have thought anything else.

"My—my only Aunt Selina!" gasped Redfern, aghast.

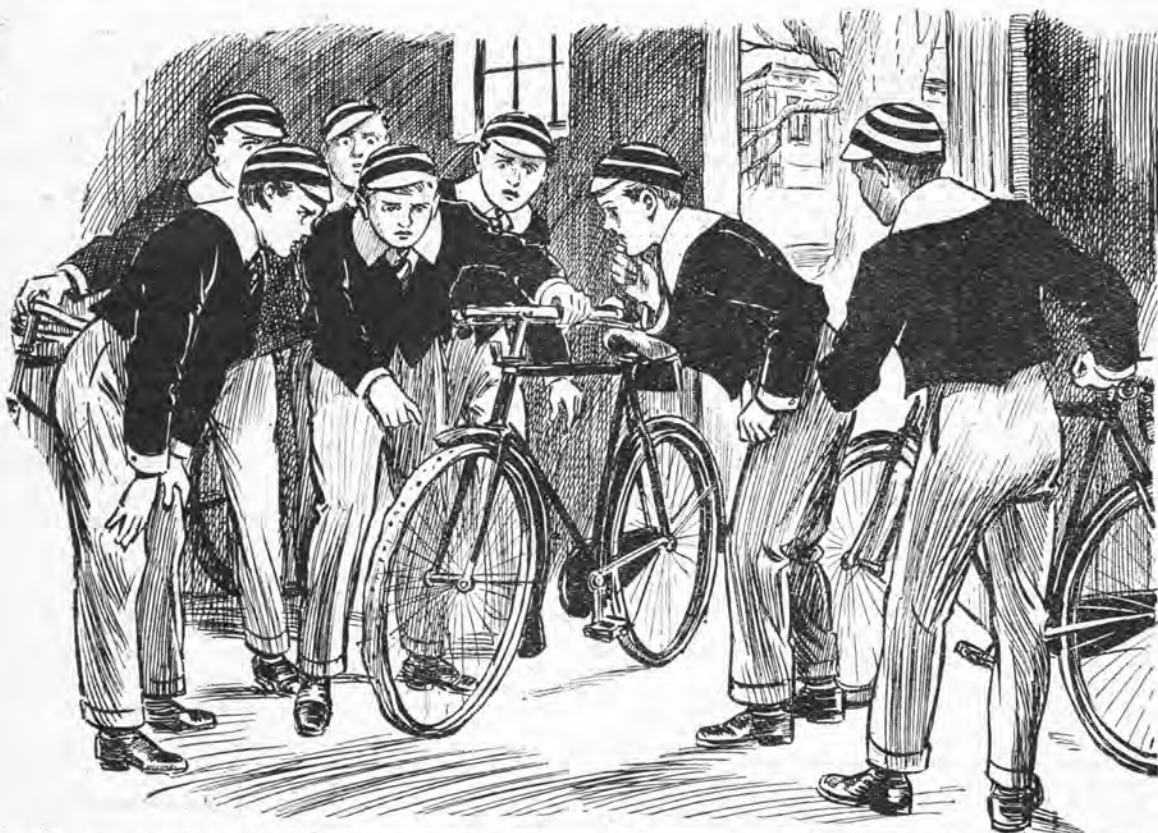
"The tyres are all right!" panted Owen.

"They weren't punctured at all," said Lawrence huskily.

"It's—it's all a giddy jape."

"And we've got full permission to use the jiggers!" chuckled Blake, grinning from ear to ear. "It's jolly decent of you chaps, you know. The bikes'll come in handy."

"My hat, rather!" grinned Herries. "Ready, kids?"



"By Jove, look here!" exclaimed Kerr, pointing to the tyre of Redfern's machine. "The tyre's full of pins—stuck in right to their giddy heads!" "This is a rotten trick," said Owen. "If those School House bounders jall this a jape, I don't!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Blake & Co., laughing like hyenas, mounted the machines—D'Arcy was using his own cycle—and rode towards the gates. Redfern & Co. looked round with sickly expressions, and a roar of laughter went up at their expense.

They had been completely, and literally, "left."

CHAPTER 3.

The Threat of Vengeance!

FIGGINS & CO. chuckled. In spite of the fact that the jape had been "up against" the New House, they chuckled. They couldn't help themselves, for the jape was so unexpected, and so complete.

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Redfern faintly.

"This—this, is simply rotten!" groaned Lawrence. "Our jiggers are gone, and we can't get to Ferncliffe. Those School House bounders have simply diddled us hollow!"

"Absolutely and completely!" said Owen blankly.

"You're left, Reddy!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth. "My hat, it's about the neatest thing I've seen! In addition to japing you, I guess Blake & Co. have got over their difficulty of not having bikes. The thing's acted two ways, and you've come off second best both times."

"It's great!" grinned Bernard Glyn of the Shell. "I say, whose idea was it?"

"Gussy's," chuckled Tom Merry. "Gussy's!" echoed Kangaroo. "Great Scott!"

"Yes, it is a bit steep," said Monty Lowther. "I very nearly fainted when I heard that Gussy had thought of such a ripping wheeze."

"Well, Gussy does have decent ideas now and again," said Tom Merry. "I reckon he ought to be feted for thinking of a wheeze like that. But, I say, we shall have to be shifting, or we shan't see the start of the Ferncliffe match."

And the crowd of juniors soon fetched their bicycles out and rode away. Figgins & Co. accompanied them, leaving their rivals of the New House to make the best of their misfortune. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were sorry for their chums, but they saw no reason why they themselves should miss the match on that account.

So Redfern & Co., fuming, rushed down to Rylcombe in order to hire bicycles. After considerable delay, they succeeded in hiring three "old irons," and were soon rattling away to Ferncliffe, grumbling at every turn of the pedals. When they finally arrived the match was nearly half over, and they themselves were tired out.

But the New House juniors did not go back on their word. They had given Blake & Co. permission to use their machines, so they could not appropriate them for the return journey. Consequently, Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence did not arrive at St. Jim's—after having taken their hired machines back to Rylcombe—until the rest of the juniors were in the middle of tea.

And their tempers were not improved by the fact that the first eleven had not been successful—having lost the match by one goal to two. It was quite an unusual event for them to lose; and

the juniors especially were sore on the subject.

Redfern & Co. prepared tea in their study with rather long faces.

"I call it a spoilt day!" growled Redfern.

"Oh, utterly ruined!" agreed Owen. "First there was that jape of Gussy's," said Lawrence savagely, "and then we had to go to Ferncliffe on jiggers that ought to have been scrapped years ago. If we had seen a ripping match with a glorious win for St. Jim's, it wouldn't have been so bad! But to go all that way to see the first eleven lose was simply rotten."

"The giddy junior eleven could have done better," said Owen.

"Oh, heaps!" agreed Redfern confidently. "Kildare played up well. But what was the good of him alone? The rest of the team seemed to be all anyhow. Blessed if I know what the seniors are coming to!"

"Blow the first eleven!" exclaimed Lawrence crossly. "I'm thinking of that jape. Between ourselves, you know, it was a jolly good wheeze of Gussy's."

"It was," said Redfern. "A first chop wheeze. We were let down thoroughly, and we've only got ourselves to blame for it."

"How's that?"

"Why, we ought to have seen through it," said Redfern. "We stood there, staring at the blessed bikes, and didn't even touch the pins. We deserved all we got."

"Yes, but—"

"But we mustn't let a jape like that go unpaid?" said Redfern questioningly.

"That's it."

"Well, we shan't, my sons. We've got to think out a real, first-class wheeze to work off on those School House bounders. We've got to revenge ourselves. Any ordinary jape won't do, and it's no good acting until we've got something really startling."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "You've got a wheeze, I suppose?"

"Of course he has," said Owen.

Redfern glared.

"You asses!" he exclaimed. "Didn't I say that we've got to think of a wheeze?"

"All right—think of it."

"We don't object."

"You silly chumps!" exclaimed Redfern, in exasperation. "I can't think of a jape on the spur of the moment. It may be days, perhaps a week, before we get hold of something really good. There's no hurry."

"Not a bit," agreed Owen thoughtfully. "Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad dodge to allow things to slide for a few days—to let the School House bounders lull themselves into a sense of false security."

Redfern stared.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "That's a jolly good sentence, anyhow. Did you pinch it out of a book?"

"You ass!" said Owen witheringly. "All the novelists use that sentence. It's a stock one, you know, and comes in jolly handy now and again. We'll let the School House chaps lull themselves into a sense of false security, and then give them the surprise of their lives with our startling jape."

"Which hasn't been thought of yet," reminded Lawrence.

"Well, it will be thought of," said Redfern. "These things only take time. Perhaps one of you chaps will be struck with something good in the wheeze line; it's unlikely, I know, but you might. Stranger things have happened."

Lawrence and Owen looked warlike.

"Look here, Reddy, you ass—"

"Oh, dry up!" grinned Redfern. "We don't want to start a row amongst ourselves. The main thing is to score off Blake & Co. They've japed us, and we've got to avenge the deadly insult."

"Good! We'll utter a giddy threat of vengeance!" grinned Owen.

"We've already done that. The next thing is to think of the wheeze," said Redfern. "Suppose we drop into Piggy's study after tea and ask if he's got any suggestions?"

"Good idea!"

So Redfern & Co. settled down to tea, the threat of vengeance having made them feel a little more cheerful.

CHAPTER 4.

Redfern's Discovery!

REDFERN, Lawrence, and Owen, having finished tea, paid a visit to Figgins & Co. The famous New House firm were at home, and they extended a hearty welcome to their rivals.

"Have you chaps come about that beautiful jape?" inquired Figgins genially. "Generally speaking, it was up against the New House, but you must admit, Reddy, that you were properly diddled."

"I do admit it," said Redfern; "but there's no need for you to make a giddy song about it. We've come here to see if you kids have any ripping suggestions to offer. We've got to pay the School House back—and pay 'em well."

"It's your shout, my son—"

"We know that," interrupted Owen.

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"But you're New House chaps, aren't you? It's no good working off a rotten second-hand jape. We want to combine, and think of something that'll absolutely knock the School House into a cocked hat."

Figgins scratched his head.

"That's all very well," he said, "but we're not simply bursting with ideas, you know. To tell the truth, Reddy, I've been worrying about that jape. There's the prestige of the New House to think of—"

"The what of the New House?" asked Lawrence.

"Prestige, you chump!" said Figgins. "We've got to keep our end up, you know. And, as we're New House chaps, we take an interest in it. I'm bothered if I can suggest a jape on the spur of the moment, though. We shall have to let matters rest for a bit, and then give the School House chaps a giddy surprise."

Owen nodded.

"My idea exactly," he said. "We'll let Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three lull themselves into a sense of false security, and—"

Redfern grinned.

"You're jolly fond of that sentence, aren't you?" he asked.

"Well, it's a good sentence," said Owen.

"Jolly good!" agreed Kerr. "It puts the thing in a nutshell, my sons. So I vote we lie low for a bit and let things simmer down. Blake and his lot will think that we don't intend to retaliate, and will laugh at us. But we shall do the laughing bisney afterwards, you can bet."

"Then it's agreed we let things rest until we think of a first-class jape?" said Figgins.

"That's it," said Redfern.

"Good! You chaps can buzz off now. We want to get on with our prep."

So Redfern & Co. took their leave.

Over in the School House all the juniors were chuckling at the success of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's wheeze. It was not often that the swell of the Fourth had a really ripping idea; but nobody could deny that this one was not first-class.

Blake & Co. expected that their New House rivals would retaliate; but several days passed without a sign of hostilities, except for a scrimmage now and then in the quad.

The result was that the School House juniors took it for granted that Redfern & Co. were not going to attempt to avenge the jape which had been played upon them so successfully.

To enhance this belief, Redfern & Co. were quite genial in their bearing towards the School House fellows. In the minds of Redfern & Co. it was still very much to the fore.

But, try as they would, they could not think of a jape sufficiently novel or daring to avenge the great wrong. When finally the jape was settled upon, its inception came about quite by accident.

It happened that Redfern & Co. had a rather heated argument on the subject of Greek mythology. Owen persisted that Perseus had never become King of Argos, while Lawrence was equally as certain that there never was a kingdom of that name. Redfern, in his superior knowledge, scoffed at his chums, and said that Perseus had grown tired of the Kingdom of Argos, and had exchanged it for Tirynus.

"Bosh!" said Lawrence warmly.

"Piffle!" agreed Owen. "There never was such a beastly kingdom!"

"Of course not!" agreed Redfern. "It's all mythology!"

"But you said—"

"Of course I said it!" exclaimed Redfern. "What I've told you chaps is just what it's got in all the Greek books. You're jolly ignorant!"

"It's you who's ignorant!" said Owen. "You've got it all backwards!"

Redfern snorted.

"You burbling duffer!" he roared.

"I tell you I'm right!"

"Prove it then!" said Lawrence, grinning.

"I will!"

"How?"

"By going to the school library this very minute, and showing you the giddy facts!" declared Redfern heatedly. "If you chaps like to show your ignorance, you can! If you come with me, I'll proceed to take you down a peg or two!"

"You mean we'll take you down a peg," said Lawrence. "Lead the way!"

"Right-ho!"

And Redfern & Co. hurried off to the school library. Each one of them was quite certain that he was right, and all ordinary matters were forgotten. They were soon in the library, and found it to be deserted.

"Now to prove I'm right!" said Redfern grimly.

He went over to one of the bookcases, and soon found the volume of Greek mythology he required. For several minutes the three chums turned over the pages interestedly. And in five minutes Redfern had proved to his chums that he was practically right in his statements.

"There you are!" said Redfern triumphantly. "Now what have you got to say?"

"Well, it's all rot, anyhow!" growled Owen.

"Of course it is!" said Lawrence.

"You don't believe that piffle, Reddy?"

"Piffle be hanged!" said Redfern wrathfully. "Besides, you're trying to get out of it! You distinctly said—"

"Oh, dry up! I'm fed-up with the stuff!"

"So am I!" said Owen. "Let's buzz off!"

Redfern's expression changed, and he grinned. His two chums, finding themselves wrong, did not wish to remain in the library further. He had proved his point, and that was all he cared about.

"Well," he said with satisfaction, "I've made you chaps sing small!"

"Rats!"

"And many of 'em!"

Redfern crossed over to the bookcase, chuckling at his chums' discomfiture. He was about to replace the book in its place when he noticed something protruding from behind the other books. Rather curious, he moved the books, and pulled the object out. It was a piece of old parchment, yellow with age, and the genuine thing. Probably it had been manufactured two or three centuries ago.

"What the dickens are you doing there?" demanded Lawrence.

"Come and have a squint at this," said Redfern. "There's a piece of parchment here as old as Adam."

His chums joined him, and examined the parchment.

"Well, what of it?" said Owen impatiently. "It's only a rotten piece of paper! It's yellow and brown with age. Rather queer there isn't any writing on it, though."

"Yes, it's absolutely blank," agreed Redfern. "I wonder how it came to be here? I wouldn't mind betting it was made by the monks who lived in the old monastery that used to stand on the site of the School House."

"Well, suppose it was?" asked Lawrence.

"It's rather curious, that's all," said Redfern, turning the blank piece of parchment over and over. "It's absolutely yellow with age."

"Looks like the key to a giddy treasure," said Owen, becoming interested. "If there was writing on that, and—"

Redfern's eyes became bright, and he drew his breath in quickly.

"My only Aunt Josephine!" he ejaculated.

Lawrence and Owen stared at their leader.

"Well, what's up?"

"What's the matter, ass?"

Redfern gazed at the parchment with excited eyes.

"I say, you chaps, I—I've thought of a wheeze!" he gasped. "It's—it's—Oh, my hat, it's gorgeous! The jape of the century! You'll simply yell yourselves hoarse when you hear it! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Jape of the Year!

"JOLLY funny!" exclaimed Lawrence sarcastically. "I'm simply roaring with merriment! Stop me, somebody, or I shall have a fit!"

"Where does the grin come in?" asked Owen.

Redfern wiped his eyes.

"Oh, you wait, kids!" he gurgled. "You just wait!"

"Of course, we're not waiting now, are we?" demanded Lawrence.

Redfern carefully folded the piece of old parchment, and placed it in his pocket.

"Come on!" he said, chuckling.

"Are you going to bone that parchment?" asked Owen.

"Bone it be jiggered!" said Redfern. "Nobody wants it, and it's been lying about here for years, I expect. Might have been behind that bookcase since—"

"Since the Flood?" suggested Lawrence.

"Well, it looks old enough, anyhow," grinned Redfern. "Come on, kids! I'll explain the wheeze in our own study, or, rather, with Figgins & Co."

"Oh, there is a wheeze, then?" asked Owen.

"There is, my son, and it's the biggest thing that was ever thought of! You follow your uncle and you'll be holding your sides jolly soon!"

And Redfern walked out of the library, his two doubtful chums following him. In a few minutes the three juniors were back in the New House. It was a half-holiday, and as rain was falling, football had been declared "off."

Redfern & Co. marched into Figgins' study. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were at home, taking things easy. The leader of the New House looked up from a story-book and yawned.

"Hallo, you kids!" he exclaimed.

"Come to listen us up?"

"Rather!" said Redfern, grinning.

"Chuck that book aside, Figgy!"

"Why?"

"Because I'm going to do some giddy chinwagging."

"You generally are doing that," said Fatty Wynn. "Loo! here, you chaps, you'd better clear out. I'm going to make some ripping toffee in a few minutes, and if you stop here I shall go and shove the wrong ingredients in."

"That won't matter."

"I've got a wheeze," said Redfern.

"A jape against the School House."

"Oh!"

Figgins & Co. were all attention at

once. Anything in the nature of a jape was always acceptable, and other matters were instantly put aside.

Even Fatty Wynn forgot his precious toffee.

"What's the idea?" he asked eagerly.

"It's this," said Redfern, and he produced the piece of parchment and placed it on the table. Figgins & Co. gazed at it curiously.

"That?" asked Figgins. "Do you call that an idea?"

"Looks more like a piece of dirty paper," said Kerr.

"It's a chunk of real parchment, and it's going to assist in one of the finest japes that's ever been perpetrated," said Redfern. "To begin with, we've got to manufacture some ink."

"What for, you cuckoo?" asked Kerr.

"There's plenty of ink here."

"But not the sort we want, my son. We want some ink that's got a kind of brown, washed-out look—ink that looks as though it's hundreds of years old when it's put on paper."

The juniors stared at one another.

"Oh, he's clean dotty!"

"Absolutely gone!"

"Poor old Reddy!"

Redfern banged the table.

"Blow your 'Poor old Reddy!' " he exclaimed. "I'm explaining the wheeze. We want some ink so that we can write on this parchment with it. My idea is to write on the thing that there's a treasure—hidden by the old monks—in the castle ruins. Being written on this parchment, everybody will think it's genuine. The chief thing is to plant it somewhere."

Figgins & Co. gasped.

"It's a jape?" asked Figgins quickly.

"You—you mean—"

"I mean that the School House chaps will find the parchment," grinned Redfern. "Of course, we shan't know anything about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"They'll—they'll— Great Scott!"

"It's gorgeous!"

"They'll find the parchment and think there's a real treasure."

"Exactly!" grinned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The idea, in brief, is to jape Tom Merry & Co. in a colossal manner," went on Redfern. "We must take hours to think the thing out, and arrange every little detail so that there's no possibility of a single hitch. If the bounders had any suspicion that it was a jape they'd jump to it in a tick and our wheeze would fall to the ground. No, my sons; we must put our heads together and plan the thing from beginning to end; and while we're making preparations we must let the School House think that we've given up all idea of paying them out for Cussy's little wheeze the other day."

"Well, that's a long speech, anyhow," said Figgins. "For once, though, you've talked sense, Reddy. You've shown more genius than I gave you credit for. As you say, the only thing to do is to combine and plan the jape from beginning to end."

"Exactly."

"Well, let's start the planning hisney."

"All serene."

And the Co.'s put their heads together. For over an hour nothing could be heard in Figgins' study but a steady hum of voices. The New House juniors were determined to jape their rivals of the School House in such a manner that they would be the laughing-stock of the whole school.

After a talk of over an hour and a quarter the six juniors looked at one another with keen satisfaction.

"Well, we've planned everything," said Redfern.

"Every little detail," agreed Figgins.

"And there's nothing to do now but to work off the wheeze."

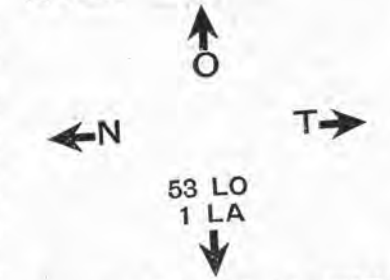
"That's it."

"First thing," said Kerr, "is to make the giddy ink. I propose we get that done right away. You and I, Figgy, had better go up to the lab. There'll be nobody there now, and we'll be able to experiment."

"Good!" said Figgins.

"While you're gone," said Redfern,

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"we'll draft out the wording of the giddy parchment. If you're able to make any improvements when you come back we'll consider 'em."

"Thanks!" grinned Figgins.

He and Kerr left the study, and Redfern drew his chair to the table and picked up a pen. He gnawed the end of it for a few moments, gazing hard at the ceiling for inspiration.

"How shall we begin the giddy thing?" he asked, at last.

"Dear finder of this parchment," suggested Lawrence.

"You ass!" said Redfern. "That won't do!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's—it's rotten!"

"How about 'ye discoverer of ye old parchment'?" began Wynn.

Redfern snorted.

"It wasn't written in the Middle Ages, you frabjous idiot!" he roared.

"No, it's not written at all yet," grinned Owen.

"Can't you understand that it's got to be in the language of about two hundred years ago?" asked Redfern, in exasperation.

"Look here——"

"I've got it!" ejaculated Redfern, and he commenced writing on the piece of exercise-paper. For a few minutes there was silence in the study.

"How's this?" asked Redfern, looking up.

"Ripping!" said Fatty Wynn promptly.

"Ass!"

Redfern picked up the piece of paper. "Listen to this," he said. "The wording of this parchment is of undreamt-of significance. I, Jasper Townsend, a monk of this noble establishment, am penning these words in order to set down certain facts which are necessary to the finding of untold wealth. I am in sore fear that the soldiers of his Majesty will swoop down upon us, and I am therefore setting down knowledge of the gold and silver which I and my worthy colleagues have placed safely in the grounds of the castle, lest it should be taken from us. How's that for a start?" asked Redfern, looking up.

"My hat, it's top-hole!" exclaimed Owen enthusiastically.

"Sounds like the genuine thing!" said Lawrence.

"Might make it better by altering that bit about gold and silver," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"How?"

"Well, wouldn't it be better to put doubloons, or—or groats——"

"Or pieces of eight?" suggested Owen.

Redfern glared.

"You fatheads!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "If I shoved that rot down, the School House chaps would twig it in a tick. Gold and silver's best, and I'm not going to alter it!"

"All right," grinned Wynn, "keep your giddy wool on!"

"Get on with the washing," said Lawrence.

Redfern looked at the paper again. "I haven't finished it yet," he said, "but I reckon this isn't bad—the money is contained in an oaken chest, and it represents wealth untold. In faith, it is indeed a goodly sum. I verily envy the finder of this scrap of paper, which I am concealing beneath the floor of the chapel crypt."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "I like the bit about the goodly sum. It sounds like the real thing."

"You've put 'untold wealth' twice," said Owen critically.

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"I haven't. I've reversed it the second time."

"Well, that's all the same," said Owen.

"That's a detail that can be easily altered when it's written down on the real parchment," said Redfern. "Besides, it wouldn't do to be too exact; we want to make it look as though the thing's been written in a hurry."

"How about the oaken box?" asked Fatty Wynn. "If we're going to hide a spoof treasure, we shall have to——"

"Oh, you're too jolly particular!" exclaimed Redfern crossly. "After all, this is only a rough draft. We've got to draw a rough plan of the castle ruins, and mark the exact place where the treasure is supposed to be buried. I tell you chaps, there's a lot of work attached to this jape."

"It'll be worth it, though," chuckled Owen. "My hat, to think of those kids being spoofed up to their giddy ears!"

The juniors grinned in anticipation, and continued their task. They proceeded to draw a rough plan of the castle ruins from memory, and while they were doing this, Kerr and Figgins came into the study.

"Got the ink?" said Redfern, looking up.

"We have, my son," said Figgins. "Ripping ink it is, too. Bernard Glyn

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of the School House couldn't have made it better, though he is a giddy inventor."

"Let's have a squint at it," said Lawrence.

Kerr placed a small bottle on the table, and Redfern took the cork out. Then he dipped a clean pen into the fluid and commenced writing on a scrap of paper. Fatty Wynn craned his neck over Redfern's shoulder.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's rotten!"

"Rotten!" ejaculated Kerr. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"It's faint—faint and brown," sniffed Wynn.

"Awful!" added Owen.

"You—you bright specimens of idiots!" roared Figgins. "We've made it like that on purpose. When that's on the parchment everybody will think it was written hundreds of years ago. It will look as though it's faded and brown with age."

"Of course," agreed Redfern. "I think it's fine, Figgys—just the right stuff. These kids here haven't got a grain of sense amongst 'em. The parchment would look nice, wouldn't it, with blue-black writing on it?"

"Perhaps it's best a bit faint," admitted Fatty Wynn. "Talking about faintness, though, I feel rather peckish. It'll be tea-time——"

"Tea can wait."

"But I can't!" declared Fatty Wynn.

"While you chaps are messing about with that ink, I'll——"

"While we're what?" asked Redfern.

"Using that ink, if you like," said Fatty Wynn pleasantly. "I'll get the kettle on and make some giddy toast."

"All serene!" said Figgins. "You might as well be doing that as looking on. Come to think of it, it is getting rather later than I thought."

And while Fatty Wynn busied himself with preparing the tea, Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern & Co. gathered round the table. Kerr was elected to write the "ancient" parchment, and very soon he was slowly and laboriously writing out an amended edition of Redfern's first effort.

CHAPTER 6.

Setting the Bait!

"**D**ONE!" said Kerr, laying his pen down.

For nearly an hour he had been sitting at the table. There were only a few sentences, comparatively, on the parchment, but Kerr had written them thoroughly. His own handwriting was quite disguised. The cramped, closely-written words on the parchment had every appearance of having been written centuries before.

The writing on the parchment looked faded and slightly brown, as though it had been exposed to damp and decay. Nobody, except a trained expert, would have suspected that the thing was a fake.

Figgins examined it with enthusiasm. "My hat! It's great!" he exclaimed.

"Rather!" agreed Lawrence, chuckling. "Why, if I didn't know what it really was, I should go off my head myself with excitement."

"Impossible!" said Figgins.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, it isn't possible for a chap to go off his rocker twice," said Figgins blandly.

"You long-legged bounder!" shouted Lawrence wrathfully. "I'll——"

"You'll just sit down, ass!" said Redfern.

"Of course, you're our guest," grinned Figgins. "Now you're here, you'd better stop to tea. There's enough toast on that plate for all of us!"

"What plate?" asked Fatty Wynn, turning from the fire.

"That one on the table."

"You chump!" said Fatty Wynn, glaring. "I've made that lot for myself. I'm toasting yours now."

Fatty Wynn's face was red, as though he had been doing his best to toast that as well.

"Are you going to eat that lot?" asked Owen, nodding to the huge pile of toast on the table. "Why, you giddy porpoise!"

"You don't know Fatty!" chuckled Figgins. "That toast's only an appetiser. When he's made that disappear he'll start on the cakes and tarts."

And with the famous parchment occupying the place of honour in the centre of the table, the New House juniors sat down to tea. It was a merry meal, for the juniors were in high good humour. Practically all their plans were made, and they could already see the downfall of Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

Tea was over at last, and the minds of the juniors went back to the parchment.

"Are we going to work the jape to-night?" asked Owen eagerly.

"It all depends, my son," replied Redfern thoughtfully. "If Manners decides to develop some of his so-called photographs to-night, we shall be able to do

the trick; if he doesn't—well, we shall have to wait."

"He's sure to be busy before long," said Figgins. "I know that he was taking snapshots yesterday, and the films are still in his camera; so if he doesn't develop 'em to-night, he's bound to do it soon."

"Come to think of it," said Redfern, "we want to finish the preparations to-night. In my opinion, we'd better be content with setting the bait."

"In the chapel crypt, you mean?"

"Of course."

"Suppose Manners is there?" asked Kerr.

"We shall have to make certain that he's not going to be there, my son," replied Redfern firmly. "We're not going to spoil the whole jape for the sake of a little forethought. I vote one or two of us go out scouting now to see what Manners is going to do."

"Good wheeze," said Figgins interestedly. "As you say, Reddy, we'd better not attempt to work off the jape to-night. In fact, we want Manners to keep away from the chapel altogether."

"Exactly."

"Who's coming?" asked Figgins. Owen and Kerr complied, and a moment later the three juniors left the study on their expedition.

"We shall have to go jolly easy," said Figgins, as they descended the stairs.

"We mustn't let Blake and his lot have the slightest suspicion that there's anything in the air, as it were. They must think that we're good little boys, and haven't a single naughty thought."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Owen. "We're giddy models of goodness!"

They emerged into the quad. The dusk was thick, and it was scarcely possible to see across to the gates. The lights of the School House stood out brightly, and reflected themselves in the pools and puddles of the quad. Rain was not falling now, and the sky was comparatively clear.

"Hullo!" said Kerr softly. "Who's that?"

"Who's which?"

"Those chaps over there."

Three forms loomed up from the direction of the School House.

"Hullo! What are you New House bounders doing out here?" asked Tom Merry's voice genially. "We're just having a breath of fresh air after the wetness. I say, it's pax, you know—we don't want to roll you kids in the quad just now."

"You're quite welcome to try!" said Figgins, as the two parties met. "I wouldn't mind betting—"

"Wicked youth!" interrupted Monty Lowther gravely. "No betting allowed."

"All right, we'll bet silently," grinned Owen.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Lowther. "Kill him!"

"If you indulge in chestnuts like that, Owen, you'll get ragged!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "But I say, you've got mixed, haven't you?"

"Mixed?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, mixed up," said Monty Lowther. "I was thinking the same thing. Have you been doing the swopping bisney in the New House, Figgy? I admit it's time there was a change, but I didn't think you'd do it just yet."

"Mixed up? Swopping?" asked Figgins. "Are you dotty?"

"No, my son; we're just wondering why you changed Fatty Wynn for Owen," said Monty Lowther. "Owen's a member of Redfern & Co."

"Perhaps they found that Fatty was getting too expensive," grinned Tom Merry. "If so, Redfern and Lawrence are in for it."

Figgins snorted. "Do you think we'd swop Fatty Wynn—the one and only Fatty—for Owen?" he asked indignantly.

"Look here," began Owen hotly, realising that the comparison was not exactly complimentary to himself—"look here, Figgins, I'm as good as Fatty Wynn any day!"

"Rats!" put in Kerr.

"Like your blessed cheek!" growled Figgins.

"Well, you rotters!" ejaculated Owen. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Owin' to our interference there's going to be a row with Owen!" said Monty Lowther blandly. "I expect Figgy and Kerr are owin' Owen a good many bumps—"

"Oh, my hat, gag him!" howled Figgins.

"His puns are horrible!"

"Ghastly!"

"Come on, Tommy!" said Manners, grasping Tom Merry's arm. "Monty will let himself go if we stop any longer. We're going to the gym, you chaps, to do an hour's giddy exercise."

"You need it, too!" said Figgins grimly. "I feel faint myself after listening to Monty Lowther's funniness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Terrible Three linked arms and strolled away. Figgins, Kerr, and Owen looked at one another. Their slight difference was forgotten, and they all looked eager.

"No need for any more scouting," said Figgins quickly. "What a bit of luck!"

"Rather!" exclaimed Kerr. "They said they're going to the gym, so Manners will be nicely out of the way."

"We'll buzz back and tell the others," said Owen.

"All serene!"

And the three juniors hurried back into the New House. Redfern, Lawrence, and Fatty Wynn looked at them in surprise as they entered.

"Well, you've done a fat lot of scouting!" exclaimed Redfern.

"Quite enough, my son," chuckled Figgins. "Manners is in the gym with Tom Merry and Lowther. The coast's clear. Manners won't do any developing to-night. Collar hold of the parchment and follow me."

But Redfern hesitated.

"We'd better not all go," he said thoughtfully. "If we were spotted the chaps might suspect things. You and I had better go alone, Figgy. It wouldn't do to take any unnecessary risks in a big job like this."

"All right," said Kerr. "Buzz off!"

"And don't get collared," added Lawrence.

"Trust us!"

And Figgins and Redfern departed. They quickly made their way to the chapel. For a period of twenty minutes they were down in the old crypt, then they emerged into the quad once again.

They looked at one another with grinning faces.

"Well, it's done," said Redfern.

"It is—it are," agreed Figgins gleefully. "And now we've got to wait and see what happens. There's no possibility of a hitch. Reddy, my son, and we'll soon have those School House bounders on toast."

CHAPTER 7.

Spooling Manners!

MANNERS looked up from his camera at Tom Merry and Lowther.

"I'm going to develop these snapshots," he announced. "I should



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PLAIN SPEAKING.

Boss (furiously): "Why hasn't this job been done? It's nearly a month since I told you to do it."

Office-boy: "I forgot, sir."

Boss: "Forgot! Suppose I forgot to pay you. What would you say?"

Office-boy: "I should come and tell you at once—not wait a month and then kick up a fuss."

A football has been awarded to B. Court, 134, Slewins Lane, Hornchurch, Essex.

THAT STUMPED HIM.

A school inspector was examining a very dull class. He asked one boy to give him a number, and when he was given twenty-three he wrote thirty-two on the blackboard. It was not noticed that the inspector had reversed the numbers, and he carried on right round the class, asking for numbers and reversing them.

Eventually he came to the last boy, a little Cockney, and he asked him for a number.

"Firty-free," replied the boy. "Now muck abaht wiv that!"

A football has been awarded to A. Copcutt, 196, Bentry Road, Becontree, Essex.

TOO FAR!

The applicant for the post of messenger-boy was being given a general knowledge test.

"How far is the earth from the moon?" asked the examiner.

"I say, guv'nor," said the boy, "if I'm going to be put on that route I don't want the job!"

A special prize has been awarded to R. Dyer, 33, Jenkins Street, Crow's Nest, N.S.W., Australia.

THRIFT.

Richard kept writing home from school for money, but at last his father made a final refusal, saying that he did not wish his son to become a spend-thrift.

"Dear Dad," Richard replied,—"Will you kindly lend me five shillings, as I want to start saving up?"

A football has been awarded to A. Lewis, Patcham, Oxshott, Surrey.

A KNOTTY PROBLEM.

Johnnie: "Tell me, Billy, why do they use knots, instead of miles, at sea?"

Billy: "Because they've got to have the ocean tied (tide)."

A football has been awarded to P. Glassman, 2, Mount Street, Bethnal Green Road, London, E.2.

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have done it yesterday, only somehow I didn't get time!"

"Well, it doesn't matter," said Lowther.

"Doesn't matter?"

"Of course not," replied Monty Lowther. "They'll do just as well next year as this. Who wants to see the old photographs, anyhow?"

Manners glared.

"I do!" he retorted. "They're ripping snapshots!"

The Terrible Three were in their study in the Shell passage. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther had not finished tea, but Manners had hurried over his.

It was the day following Redfern and Figgins' visit to the chapel, and the great New House jape had not yet been perpetrated.

Manners looked at his chums rather warily.

"They're ripping snapshots!" he repeated.

"All right!" said Lowther. "Let 'em rip, my son!"

"You funny fathead!" sneered Manners. "I suppose you think you're humorous? Just because you don't take an interest in the best hobby going, you think I'm wasting my time. You're a couple of beauties!"

"You're very complimentary," said Tom Merry. "I know I'm gifted with rare beauty, but I didn't expect to be told about it. As for taking an interest in photography—why, we simply delight to see you amusing yourself like a good little boy!"

"Ass!" said Manners witheringly.

And he passed out of the study, leaving his chums chuckling.

"Photography's all right," said Tom Merry, as the door closed, "but I reckon I should draw the line at going down to that musty old crypt under the chapel and using it for a dark-room."

"It makes a ripping dark-room, and that's all Manners cares," said Monty Lowther. "He'd go anywhere for the sake of his beastly photographs. Pass those tarts."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther went on with their tea; and, meanwhile, Manners, with his camera under his arm, walked down the Shell passage and descended the stairs to the entrance hall.

He paused for a moment on the School House steps, looking out into the quad.

It was a beautiful evening, very different from the previous drizzling one. The sun had set, and the sky was red-and-gold with its evening light.

"By Jove!" murmured Manners. "It's a jolly evening!"

He descended the steps and began to cross the quad. When he had covered half the distance, Bernard Glyn of the Shell appeared at the School House door.

"Hallo, Manners, going snapshotting now?" he called. "Not enough light, is there?"

Manners turned.

"No, I'm going to the chapel crypt to develop some films."

Bernard Glyn crossed over to Manners, and the two Shell fellows were soon talking about photography, Glyn having a certain amount of interest in the subject.

Meanwhile, a form, which had been lounging near the old elms, carelessly strolled over to the New House. It was Lawrence, and the moment he was in the New House hall he simply darted up the stairs.

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"By jingo!" he muttered excitedly. "The very opportunity!"

He burst into Redfern's study excitedly.

"What the—who the—" gasped Redfern, starting up from the table. "What the dickens do you mean by hurtling yourself into the room like this, you ass?"

"It's Manners!" panted Lawrence quickly. "He's in the quad, and he's going to the chapel crypt to develop some films."

"How do you know?" demanded Redfern excitedly.

"Because I heard him telling Glyn," said Lawrence quickly. "They're talking in the quad, and if you buzz off now you'll be able to work the trick a treat."

"My hat, Lawrence is right!" exclaimed Owen from the window. "Manners is out in the quad right enough. Buck up, Reddy!"

Redfern jammed his cap on.

"I'm going now," he said. "Rush into Figgy's study and tell him to come along at the right moment. Our arrangements are all made, and we know exactly what we've got to do."

"Of course," said Lawrence impatiently. "Buzz off! We may not get another opportunity like this for days!"

Redfern turned with his hand on the door.

"The jape's just going to commence, kids," he said, with a grin. "It's up to us to see that there's no hitch in the giddy proceedings."

And Redfern hurried out. In a few moments he was in the quad, strolling quietly in the direction of the chapel. Manners and Bernard Glyn were still talking, so there was no need for Redfern to hurry now.

He had been waiting for an opportunity to catch Manners on his way to the chapel—now the opportunity had come at last. Much depended on what would happen in the next few minutes; the success of the whole jape rested on Manners allowing Redfern to accompany him to the crypt, and Redfern would have to go without allowing Manners to have the slightest suspicion.

Redfern was feeling quite confident as he glanced in a sidelong direction at the amateur photographer of the School House.

"It'll work," he murmured. "It jolly well can't fail!"

For another two minutes Manners remained talking with Glyn, then he continued his interrupted walk across the quad. Just as he was approaching the old chapel Redfern appeared from the direction of the gym.

"Hallo, Manners!" he said casually.

"Pax!" exclaimed Manners. "I'm in a hurry."

"Rats!" said Redfern calmly. "Is that your camera?"

"What does it look like?" asked Manners sarcastically, prepared for a string of humorous remarks. "A tin of sardines?"

Redfern grinned.

"By Jove—no!" he exclaimed. "Blessed if I don't envy you, Manners! I'm rather interested in photography myself, and that ripping camera of yours makes me wish I'd got one."

Manners looked at Redfern suspiciously.

"It's a jolly good camera!" he said proudly.

"Rather!" agreed Redfern interestedly. "Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to the old vault under

the chapel—I'm using the place as a dark-room."

"Jolly good place, too, I should say!"

"Yes," said Manners, turning to go.

"You've got more sense than I gave you credit for, Reddy. The old crypt's all right for my job, except for the cold. I admit it's pretty chilly down there."

"And creepy, too."

"Oh, hang that! I'm not a little kid," said Manners. "It makes a jolly fine dark-room, and that's all I care."

Manners walked on, but Redfern followed.

"I'll come with you," he announced coolly.

Manners stopped.

"You'll come with me?"

"Yes."

"You jolly well won't!" said Manners firmly. "I'm not going to have a beastly New House bouncer down there! I want the films to develop properly, my son. If you come with me you'll stick your nose in everything and mess things up."

"Oh rats!" said Redfern warmly. "I'll be jolly careful, Manners, old man!"

"You can be as careful as you like," said Manners, "but I'm not going to have you down in the vault with me."

"But—"

"Look here, Reddy, I don't want to be rude," said Manners firmly, "but I'd rather have your room than your company in a job like this."

"Oh, that's not rude!" said Redfern. "Don't mention it."

"I want to be by myself, and that's flat."

"Don't be an ass! I reckon you ought to be delighted to have me," said Redfern in an injured tone. "It's not often I ask to see you developing your films, and you ought to take it as a compliment."

"Bosh!"

"Look here—"

"Buzz off!" said Manners crossly.

"I'm in a hurry!"

"You beastly School House bouncer, I'll—"

"Hallo! What's the rumpus?" inquired a cheerful voice. "Blessed if it isn't Redfern having a row with old Manners! I say, Reddy, old man, what's up?"

Figgins & Co. and Owen and Lawrence strolled up.

"Why," said Redfern indignantly, "I offered to go with Manners to see him develop his rotten photographs, and he told me to buzz off!"

Lawrence and Owen stepped forward.

"What's that?" said Owen. "You offered to go with Manners?"

"Of course."

"You ass, Reddy!" exclaimed Lawrence. "What the dickens do you want to go with that School House bouncer for?"

"To see him develop photographs!" said Redfern.

"Rats! Come with us!"

"Not now!" said Redfern doggedly. "I'm going with Manners, if he'll have me."

"Then you're a giddy traitor!" said Owen warmly. "If you'd rather go with Manners than with us, Reddy—"

"I would rather."

"All right, go!" said Figgins, with a frown. "We'll get our own back, though, when you come into the New House again."

"Silly ass!" said Redfern loftily. "If Manners will let me go with him I'll go."

Manners stood looking on with a rather surprised expression on his face.

Seeing that Redfern had quarrelled with his chums on his account, he felt compelled, somehow, to accede to his request. It would be very bad form to refuse after Redfern's very emphatic requests to accompany him. Besides, Manners felt somewhat warmed to Redfern for showing such a sensible interest in photography.

Never for a second did it enter Manners' head that the whole thing was acted—that the New House juniors had arranged the affair beforehand, and that the "quarrel" was merely a put-up job. The School House junior was completely spoofed, as Figgins & Co. had intended him to be, and he fell into the trap with never a suspicion of a jape.

For the whole success of the hidden-treasure joke depended upon Manners' action, and upon his allowing Redfern to accompany him without suspicion into the chapel vault. And the New House juniors were certainly successful in their object, for Manners was totally unconscious of the fact that Figgins & Co. had each been playing a pre-arranged part.

"Oh, well," he said condescendingly, "if you'd really like to come, Redfern, you—"

"I should!" said Redfern eagerly.

"Right-ho, then! Only I shall expect you to take an interest in what I do and not play the goat!"

"My dear chap, I'm simply longing to see how you turn out such ripping photographs," said Redfern sweetly.

Manners beamed.

"Good!" he exclaimed heartily.

"You've got sense, Reddy!"

And Manners and Redfern walked away.

"Yah, traitor!" yelled Owen wrathfully.

Redfern turned just before he and Manners disappeared round the corner.

"Rats!" he shouted. "And many of 'em!"

But as he turned his head his chums observed a pronounced lowering of his left eyelid. The next moment the two juniors had disappeared, and Figgins & Co. and Lawrence and Owen looked at one another with grinning faces.

"It's worked!" chuckled Figgins gleefully. "My hat, kids, Manners was spoofed as neatly as we could have wished. The great jape's started, and I'll bet my boots it turns out to be the biggest thing that's ever happened at St. Jim's!"

CHAPTER 8.

Developing!

"COME on!"

Manners led the way over the rough stones and, through the shattered portal of the old ruined chapel. In the evening light the place looked dreary and dismal; but neither of the juniors had eyes for the old ruins. They had both been there many a time before, and at present their thoughts were centred upon their separate missions, for Redfern was bent on very different work from that which Manners suspected. The New House junior was not so interested in photography as he wanted Manners to believe.

The old parchment was concealed down in the crypt, and it was Redfern's duty to bring about its "accidental" discovery.

"I'll go first," said Manners.

"All serene! Lead on, MacDuff!" said Redfern cheerfully.

Manners led the way across the ruins to the entrance of the crypt. The two juniors passed down the old stone stairway until they reached the bottom. A series of arches opened out before them as Manners switched on an electric-lamp he used for developing. They passed between the heavy stone pillars to the spot where Manners' photographic materials were placed.

Redfern shivered.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "It's beastly chilly down here!"

"Well, I didn't ask you to come."

"I know that, ass! Don't you think it's chilly?"

Manners busied himself with the preparations for developing.

"Blessed if I've ever thought about it," he said. "When I come down here I come down to work, not to think about it being chilly."

Redfern grinned to himself.

"Don't you ever think of the old story about this crypt?" he asked cheerfully.

"I've often wondered if there was anything in it. You know, there was an old monk buried alive here by robbers, and his shrieks and moans—"

Manners snorted.

"You burbling chump!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I believe that tosh? If you're funky, you can buzz off! I

As Manners flashed his light into the cavity he caught a glimpse of yellow amongst the sandy earth, as though a piece of old parchment was buried there. "My hat!" he exclaimed. "What's this?"



thought you'd be bothering me all the time."

"Don't get your rag out, old man," said Redfern penitently. "I'll be as quiet as a little lamb, and look at everything you do with huge interest. My hat, that's a ripping lamp you've got! Pity the light's red, though."

"Red!" exclaimed Manners. "How the dickens do you think I'm going to develop photographs without a red light? Be quiet, for goodness' sake!"

Redfern grinned to himself again, and subsided. For well over twenty minutes he stood beside Manners, watching the School House junior busy with his developing, only speaking now and again to ask a question. He glanced at his watch in the red light.

"Soon be done now, won't you?" he asked.

"In about ten minutes," replied Manners abstractedly. "My hat, Redfern, these photos have developed rippingly! How do you like 'em?"

"Oh, first chop!" said Redfern, without looking.

But Manners was too occupied to notice such a small detail. Redfern was thinking, and in a moment he strolled away from the table and passed over to one of the pillars. For a moment he pretended to examine it, then he turned.

"I say," he said casually, "got a pen-knife there?"

"Yes," replied Manners absently. "What do you want it for?"

"Only to scrape some of this funny stuff off the wall," said Redfern, crossing over to the photographer's table. "Looks like moss, or something. I'm rather curious to see what it is."

He picked up the knife and crossed over to the wall again. Manners still remained bending over his beloved photographic accessories and did not observe that Redfern was watching him closely, although he was whistling carelessly all the time.

Suddenly Redfern pretended to trip, and clattered over the rough stones. Then he straightened up.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he ejaculated blankly.

Manners turned.

"What's up with you, ass?" he asked impatiently. "Blessed if you're not playing about all the time, instead of looking at me!"

"I slipped," exclaimed Redfern. "I—I say, old man—"

"Well?"

"I've dropped your giddy knife."

"Well, pick it up!" said Manners crossly. "What do you mean by distracting my attention over a silly thing like that?"

"The blessed thing's gone between two of these stones," said Redfern anxiously, bending down and gazing at the floor. "It dropped, and then went down this chink!"

"Can't you see it?"

"No."

Manners left his little table and crossed over to the spot where Redfern was standing.

"Well, you are a burbling ass!" he said wrathfully. "That knife was a ripping one—three blades, a corkscrew, and lots of other things. It cost about half-a-quid."

"I'm sorry," said Redfern, with a grin into the darkness.

"Sorry be blowed!" growled Manners. "Why, this chink's as wide as your fist! That giddy knife's gone for good, you ass!"

Redfern snorted.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "Look here, got your giddy electric-lamp and

we'll try and prise this stone up. It doesn't seem to be extra firmly fixed, and we shall want the lamp to see by."

"How about my photographs, you chump?" said Manners excitedly. "Look here, leave the thing until I've finished."

"All right," said Redfern readily, "it's your knife."

So Manners went back to his table and completed his task, Redfern looking on, meanwhile, with a gleeful twinkle in his eyes. At last Manners had finished, and then he lifted up the slide of the red lamp so that it gleamed white.

"That's better," said Redfern. "We can see now."

Manners carried the lamp across to the chink in the floor.

Redfern picked up a broken rod of iron which was lying against the wall, and the next moment the two juniors were prising up the heavy stone. The New House juniors had done their work well, for there was not a sign that the slab had been removed previously. At last, with a heave, it came back, and crashed down on the other stones.

"Got it!" said Redfern breathlessly. "My hat, I wonder how long it is since this stone was raised!"

"It's never been raised before. I should imagine," said Manners. "It's been down hundreds of years."

"I don't think!" thought Redfern, with an inward chuckle.

Manners flashed his lamp into the cavity. His knife was lying there, and he picked it up and examined it.

"It's all right," he said. "Jolly lucky we were able to lever up this stone, though."

"Good!" said Redfern. "Well, as you've got your knife back, Manners, and as you've done the photographic bisney, I'll buzz off!"

And Redfern moved across to the exit. Had Manners been less preoccupied in his thoughts, he would have wondered at Redfern's sudden departure. But he was thinking about his photographs again, and carried the lamp back to the table, where he commenced tidying up.

Meanwhile, Redfern was making his way out of the ruined chapel.

"Will he find it?" he thought rather anxiously. "Will the silly chump have sense enough to look in the hole again? I thought he'd have spotted the parchment at first. But if he finds it now, after I've gone, it'll be all the more effective!"

Down in the old crypt Manners was finishing up his work. He tidied up, and then took up his dark-room lamp to illuminate his way to the exit. Then he uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Oh, hang! That silly ass has left that stone out of place!" he murmured. "If I don't put it back, somebody'll come down here and break his giddy leg. Just like Redfern to go and leave me to do it!"

Manners stepped over to the stone, and, with a certain feeling of curiosity, flashed his light into the cavity. It was fairly deep, and the earth was dry and sandy. Manners became thoughtful as he stood there.

"And these stones were laid down by the old monks," he thought abstractedly. "My hat, I wonder what St. Jim's was like all those years ago? I'll—"

Suddenly, Manners' train of thought was interrupted, and he bent down quickly. He had caught a glimpse of yellow amongst the sandy earth, close up against the wall, as though a piece of paper were tucked under the adjoining stone. Manners grasped it, and pulled it out.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "What is it?"

The amateur photographer of St. Jim's unfolded the yellow old parchment and commenced to read the faded, crabbed handwriting.

"It's—it's an old document!" he murmured excitedly, reading on. "Great Christopher Columbus! It's—"

But Manners broke off, and, with the parchment in his hand, darted towards the exit, and ran pell-mell up the old stairs, leaving his photographs and camera in the crypt. He was too excited to care about such small details.

With fast-beating heart he scrambled through the old ruined chapel, and ran at express speed across the now dusky quad, in the direction of the brilliantly-illuminated School House.

CHAPTER 9.

The Key to Hidden Treasure!

"H A, ha, ha!"

A soft, suppressed sound of laughter came from the back of the old ruined chapel as Manners' form was seen flying across the quad. There could be no mistaking his excitement at something or other.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's found it!"

"Old Manners has dug out the giddy parchment."

"Oh, my hat, what a lark!"

Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. gazed at one another with grinning and gleeful faces. It was not quite dark yet, but the dusk was thick behind the old chapel, and the New House juniors had the quad to themselves. Redfern looked at his chums with an expression of intense satisfaction.

"It's worked!" he chuckled.

"My only Aunt Matilda Jane!" exclaimed Figgins, gazing over towards the School House. "That giddy barn over the way will be wild with excitement in about an hour. I say, I wonder if they'll buzz off to the old ruins tonight?"

"No fear. There's not time," said Kerr shrewdly. "They'll wait till daylight, I expect. I know one thing, though—they won't recognise my handwriting!"

And the New House heroes nearly wept with laughter. The success of their jape was almost too good to be true; for, inwardly, they had feared that some hitch would occur. But, so far, matters were running on exactly the right lines.

Manners simply hurled himself into the entrance-hall. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth happened to be there, and he stared at Manners in amazement, as the Shell fellow rushed up the stairs.

"My only hat!" said Lumley-Lumley. "He's off his rocker!"

Manners disappeared, and shot round the corner into the Shell passage. As he did so he collided violently with Clifton Dane, and the latter sat down with considerable abruptness.

"Sorry!" gasped Manners. "Couldn't help it, old man!"

But he did not offer to help the unfortunate junior. Clifton Dane picked himself up, and gazed after Manners in sheer astonishment.

"What the dickens is up with him?" he murmured. "What did the silly chump come flying round the corner at that speed for? He—he ought to be shoved in a strait-jacket!"

Clifton Dane walked away, brushing himself, and Manners wrenched open the door of Tom Merry's study and dashed into the room. So violently did he enter that he collided with the table, and stood there grasping its edge and panting for breath.

"You ass," howled Tom Merry, "look what you've done!"

"Upset all the giddy ink!" roared Monty Lowther.

The sudden jerk of the table had tipped the inkpot over, and the fluid was flowing all over the tablecloth. Monty Lowther endeavoured to shift in time, but the ink reached the table-edge and splashed on to his trousers. Lowther let out a fiendish yell.

"Ow! My trousers are ruined!" he roared, starting to his feet. "You—you fathheaded lunatic, Manners!"

"Sorry!" gasped Manners, his eyes gleaming. "I say, I—"

"Bump him!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Collar the idiot!"

Manners started back and dodged. He banged the door to, and waved the yellow parchment in the air.

"I've got it!" he shouted. "Look at this! I've found something that'll make you go off your nappers with excitement! I'm a bit excited myself, and—"

"You're off your rocker!" said Tom Merry.

"I'm not! This parchment—"

"Blow the parchment! What do you mean by bursting into the room like a babbling lunatic? Have you been seeing ghosts down in the crypt, or—"

"I've found a treasure!" roared Manners excitedly.

"You'll find a thick ear before you've done!" growled Tom Merry.

"And a black eye!" added Monty Lowther wrathfully.

Manners looked at his chums excitedly.

"You asses!" he yelled. "Don't you understand? This parchment's thousands of years old!"

"Go it!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "Why don't you say it's millions of years old? You'll be telling us it's an Egyptian papyrus next!"

"Well, it's hundreds of years old, anyhow," said Manners.

"Rot!"

"Tosh!"

"It is!" shouted Manners.

"Yes, I said it is tosh!" grinned Tom Merry.

"No!" howled the amateur photographer of St. Jim's. "I mean it's hundreds of years old! Can't you chaps realise that I've made the biggest discovery of—of modern times? This parchment is a key to a hidden treasure!"

"It doesn't look like a key to me," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "I'll bet it wouldn't fit the lock of this door, anyhow!"

"Not that kind of key, ass! I tell you, I—I—"

Manners paused, unable to frame his words.

"What have you found, Manners?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes. Give us an explanation," said Lowther.

Manners, in swift sentences, told his chums how he had found the parchment.

"It must have been under that stone for hundreds of years!" he finished excitedly. "The thing couldn't have been up before, or the paper would have been found. If Reddy hadn't dropped my knife down we should never have seen it."

"Let's have a squint at it," said Tom Merry quickly.

Manners moved across to the table, followed by his two interested chums. He planked the parchment down, and all three bent over it.

"Well!" demanded Manners abruptly.

"I—I— Blessed if I know what to say!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling!



Hallo, everybody!

Two Americans recently argued three hours. A "nasal" engagement.

Headline: "Comedians Dissolve Partnership." Joking apart?

Quick one: "Is that clock right?" asked the patient in the lunatic asylum. "Yes," said the nurse. "Then why is it here?" demanded the patient.

They say kleptomaniacs are not responsible for the things they steal. A "stainless steal"?

Story: "What did you say when your boss gave you a photograph of himself instead of a bonus?" asked Smiggs. "I said it was just like him!" said Smoggs.

Reply to Joe Frayne: No, when apes fight it is not called "guerilla" warfare.

The driver of a horse and cart says life is not all honey. Full of "whoa"?

"I suppose you will say next your ancestors were in the Ark with Noah?" said Biggs sarcastically. "Oh, no," replied Baggs boastfully; "they had a boat of their own!"

Here's a short story: Car—careering —careless—carless!

"It—it can't be true!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Why can't it? The thing was buried hundreds of years ago, and it's absolutely genuine! Anybody can see that with half an eye! Look at the parchment! Look at the old writing! Look at the dirt stains! Why—why, the thing's genuine enough!"

Manners was becoming more excited than ever.

"Can't you realise what it means?" he went on animatedly. "Don't you chaps realise that there's a giddy treasure hidden in the castle ruins? It's been there ever since it was hidden!"

"Go hon!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Marvellous!" said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't rot!" Manners exclaimed.

"The chap who wrote this thing—"

"Jasper Townshend."

"Yes, that's his name. He said he wrote this parchment so as to let the finder know that he'd hidden gold and silver in the castle. Of course, at that time the castle wasn't in ruins; but the spot must be the same, although now it will be all grass-grown. I tell you, it's the biggest thing that's ever happened."

"I wonder how much treasure there is?" said Monty Lowther, with gleaming eyes. "He says there's a 'goodly sum.'"

"That's it," said Tom Merry. "'A goodly sum in an oaken chest.' Wealth untold. My only aunt, I—I can't believe it, you know."

"Let's read the thing again!"

And the Terrible Three hastily scanned the faded, crabbled handwriting, which did not bear the slightest resemblance to Kerr's. Tom Merry

I hear a new crashproof helmet for motorists has been invented. Something new in "top gear."

A motor-cyclist charged at Wayland pleaded his machine had been struck by lightning. "That's no excuse," snapped the magistrate. "You shouldn't try to pass lightning on a busy road!"

D'you know this? Why is the fourth of July? The answer is yes. "Y" is the fourth letter of July.

Headline: "Overdue Smacks Arrive." Another jag gets what he was "fishing" for!

Gore has just brought in a few little jokes. I have sent for a magnifying glass.

Story: "And why were you driving at sixty miles per hour?" asked P.-c. Crump of the speedster. "My brakes aren't working properly," came the reply, "and I was hurrying home to avoid an accident!"

Then there was the financier who, answering a phone call in his bath, said he was only just keeping his head above water.

Said Mr. Ratcliff to the photographer: "I hope it will turn out an attractive photograph." "It will be perfect," said the photographer; "you won't know yourself."

Then there was the bus driver who said he hadn't much time for meals, so he had a bite at the wheel. A bit tough?

Here's Mellish's maxim for nosy parkers: If at first you don't succeed, pry, pry again.

Cheerio, chaps!

& Co. had not the faintest suspicion of a jape, and it was dawning upon them that Manners had hit upon something which would startle the school.

The parchment had apparently been found by the purest accident. Manners had no idea that Redfern had deliberately dropped his knife down the chink. Besides, Redfern had not been present when the discovery was made.

The parchment was old, stained, and the writing upon it was apparently brown and faded with age. The Terrible Three did not consider the matter long. They told themselves that the parchment was genuine, and there was, indeed, an enormous treasure hidden in the old castle ruins.

Figgins & Co.'s jape was working out to perfection.

CHAPTER 10.

Excitement in the School House!

TOM MERRY looked up.

"There's no spoof about it," he said. "Manners, old man, you've hit upon something that's really big. I vote we rush along to Study No. 6 and tell Blake & Co. My hat, what a smack in the eye this'll be for the New House!"

"Yes, rather!"

"What-ho!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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ASK DAD TO WRITE FOR ART LIST.

The Terrible Three hurried out of their study, Tom Merry carrying the parchment. They were all very much excited, and ran along the passage to Study No. 6, the famous apartment occupied by Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

The Terrible Three burst into the study with a crash. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were busy at their prep, and they started to their feet in alarm, thinking, for the moment, that it was a study raid.

"What the—"

"Who the—"

"Bai Jove, deah boys, what—"

"It's Tom Merry!"

Blake & Co. stared at the Shell juniors.

"Any more of you?" inquired Blake. "Because if you Shell bounders are looking for a scrap—"

"Don't be an ass, Blake!" said Tom Merry. "We're not raiding you; we're on a peaceful mission."

"Bai Jove, that's all wight then!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "But I must warn you, Tom Mewwy, that you entahed the study with quite unnecessary violence. Weally, I do not wegard it as good mannahs—"

"Oh, dry up, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "We've made a discovery!"

"What, have you been able to decipher one of Manners' photographs?" inquired Blake.

"Look here—" began Manners.

"Or found out the meaning of one of Lowther's puns?" added Digby.

"You ass!" said Lowther. "I'll—"

"You'll be quiet, my son!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Look here, Blake, we didn't come here to rag you, or be ragged ourselves. We came to let you into a secret—the biggest thing imaginable!"

"Bai Jove, you know, you make me cuwious, deah boy! Pway let us know what this remarkable discovery is!" said Arthur Augustus. "Has it got anythin' to do with that piece of papah you are wavin' in your hand, Tom Mewwy?"

"It has, Gussy; a lot to do with it," replied the captain of the Shell. "You may not believe it, but it'll probably be the means of our finding thousands of pounds."

"What?"

"Which?"

"How much?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Thousands of pounds!" repeated Tom Merry firmly, and with an impressive air. "It's a key to a hidden treasure. And we've only got to follow out the directions to make ourselves as rich as Yankee millionaires."

Blake & Co. stared.

"Rot!" said Jack Blake.

"Piffle!"

"You're pulling our giddy legs!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You wait till you've read this parchment!" said Manners excitedly. "Of course, we knew you wouldn't believe it at first, but you'll jolly soon be convinced!"

"Rot!"

"I found it under the stones in the old chapel crypt," went on Manners. "It's been there for hundreds of years, and it tells all about a treasure that was hidden by the monks."

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye.

"Bai Jove, you know," he ejaculated, "this is wathah intewestint! I always wondahed if there was a hidden treasure somewhere about. Those old monks were queer johnnies, an' there's no tellin' what they were up to."

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"Let's have a look at that paper," said Blake.

"That's the idea!"

The Fourth Formers pushed their way to Tom Merry's side, and the latter held up the old parchment so that it could be read. Then, with breathless interest, Blake & Co. perused the quaint document. When they had done, they looked at the Terrible Three with fast-rising excitement.

"I—I say!" exclaimed Blake. "Do—do you think it's genuine?"

"Of course it is!"

"But—but—"

"There are no 'buts' about it, my son," declared Tom Merry. "The whole thing's as plain as a pike-staff!"

"Plainer than that," said Monty Lowther. "It's jolly certain that those old monks wouldn't write a paper like that and hide it just for fun. Besides, it's just the sort of thing that might be expected, when you come to look at it in the right way. The monastery was threatened by soldiers. Perhaps the king had intimated that he was going to pinch all the tin, so the monks thought that they'd diddle him out of it."

"Lowther's right," said Manners. "And after all the fuss was over, when it was no longer necessary for the gold to be hidden, the monk who'd written this paper was dead. So, of course, the treasure's still there. It must have been lying buried for centuries."

"The poor old monk must have been murdered," said Blake, drawing on his imagination. "That would explain why this parchment had been there all this time. In those days, you know, they used to commit all sorts of outrages. And they'd think nothing of raiding a monastery, and shooting everybody."

"Bai Jove, you know, that's w'ong!" put in Arthur Augustus. "They didn't do shootin' in those days, deah boys. I wathah imagine that they'd wun them thwough with swords, or stwing them to the gallows!"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "You needn't go into details!"

"I was only cownectin' you, deah boy!" said D'Arcy. "Howevah, the main thing is that Mannaahs has found the parchment. Bai Jove, I suggest we wush off like anythin' to the wuins, an' search for the tweasuah!"

"Now?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No, not now," he said, recovering his calmness somewhat. "Look here! There's no need for us to get excited. Nobody but us has seen this paper, so there's no terrific hurry to search the ruins."

"We haven't any giddy rivals, the same as they've got in stories," said Monty Lowther. "If Redfern had spotted the thing, he and the rest of the New House bounders would have tried to steal a march on us. But Redfern didn't see it, did he?"

Manners shook his head.

"Of course he didn't!" he said.



"The silly chump buzzed off before Manners found the parchment," said Tom Merry. "Now, as nobody else knows, I vote we keep it a secret among ourselves and then form an expedition."

"That's it," said Blake heartily—"an expedition!"

"Sounds like the real thing!"

"Bai Jove, a search-party would sound bettah!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "A search-party, you know, deah boys—"

"Search-party be jiggered!" interrupted Monty Lowther. "We're not looking for somebody who's lost! Still, it doesn't matter what you call it. It's a good idea, and I second it. We'll keep mum, and search for the treasure by daylight."

"Good egg!" said Blake.

"Pway let me inspect the parchment again, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus pored over the "ancient" key to the "treasure," and his chums followed his example. Blake & Co., in addition to the Terrible Three, were quite taken in by the parchment. Its unexpected discovery, its very genuine appearance, and its whole aspect of probability, deceived the juniors completely. They never dreamed that it was nothing more nor less than a gorgeous jape on the part of their rivals of the New House.

"I say," exclaimed Digby suddenly, "suppose we rush off to the old crypt, and have a squint down that hole? There's a chance there might be something else."

"I didn't look very thoroughly," Manners admitted; "but I don't think there's anything else there. Still, it wouldn't be a bad wheeze to go and make sure."



The old parchment was spread out on the table and for a few minutes there was silence as Tom Merry & Co. eagerly read it. "Do you chaps realise what it means?" said Manners excitedly. "There's a giddy treasure hidden in the old castle ruins!"

"All serene," said Tom Merry, "we'll go!"

And the juniors moved towards the door in a body. Their interest was thoroughly aroused, and this new suggestion of Digby's struck them as being very practical. There was just a chance that the cavity in the crypt might contain something else, and it would be best to make sure.

So, excited and eager, they hastily opened the study door and rushed out into the passage.

There was a sudden yell as they collided with someone.

"Ow!" yelled a well-known voice. "Great Scott! You young rascals, I'll—"

In their hurry to leave the study, the juniors had biffed into Knox, the School House prefect, with considerable violence, causing Knox to flounder to the floor, and knock his head with a crash against the wall. The temper of Knox was very uncertain, as the juniors well knew, and they all took to their heels.

"Come back, you young rascals!" roared Knox furiously. "Come back, or—"

But his voice fell on deaf ears. The juniors fled, and emerged into the dark quad in a scattered group.

"My hat," panted Tom Merry, "that was a narrow escape! What the dickens did you chaps want to bowl Knox over for?"

"It was your fault for pushing!" growled Blake.

"I say, deah boys, hadn't we bettah hnwyy agwoss to the cwypt?" suggested D'Arcy. "The quad is deserted now, and we shall not be seen. The chaps might think it funny if they saw all of us goin' into the chapel."

"Yes, we'll go across straight away—"

Tom Merry halted.

"I—I say," he exclaimed, in a startled voice, "who's got the parchment?"

"You have, you ass!" said Blake.

"I haven't!" said Tom Merry quickly.

Nobody else had, and the juniors looked at one another in dismay. It was evident that it had been brushed out of Tom Merry's hand in the scuffle with Knox. In the excitement, Tom Merry had not noticed its disappearance.

CHAPTER 11.

An Unscrupulous Rival!

"GREAT Scott!" ejaculated Manners blankly.

"The parchment's gone!"

"I—I had it in my hand," said Tom Merry quickly.

"My hat, I believe I know when I dropped it. I pushed past Herries, and my hand caught his arm. The parchment must have slipped from my fingers."

"You careless ass!" said Manners.

"It was Knox's fault," said Tom Merry. "If he hadn't come along at that moment we shouldn't have biffed into him. I expect the parchment's in the passage."

"Go and fetch it then!" exclaimed Blake anxiously.

"If that's lost—"

"Somebody else will get the treasure if—"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry crossly.

"You chaps get into the crypt, and I'll buzz back and find the parchment!"

And the hero of the Shell, feeling greatly worried, hastened back into the School House.

The others crossed over to the ruined chapel, and, by the aid of Manners' lamp, made their way down into the crypt.

The New House juniors were still watching for developments, and they chuckled with glee.

"The jape's working simply a treat," grinned Redfern.

"Rather!" agreed Figgins. "Tom Merry & Co. have told Blake and his lot, and they're all going down to the crypt to inspect the hiding-place of the parchment."

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Lawrence.

"There's never been a jape played like this before! The School House will simply be fuming when Tom Merry & Co. find the 'treasure'!"

"Ha, ha, ha! They'll be the laughing-stock of St. Jim's," chuckled Redfern. "Our plans are going splendidly, and, in my opinion, there won't be a single hitch."

But, although the others agreed with him, Redfern was wrong. There had been a hitch already.

Tom Merry had dropped the parchment in the excitement of knocking Knox over, and he and his chums had dashed off without knowing of their loss. Knox picked himself up with a black brow, and scowled round him furiously.

Not a sign of the juniors could be seen; they had conveniently vanished.

Knox was very unpopular at St. Jim's. His bullying tendencies, his bad temper, and his disagreeable spirit generally made him one of the most disliked fellows in the school. He indulged in bullying whenever occasion offered, and gave the juniors lines with a heavy hand.

"The young brutes!" he muttered, as he glared down the passage. "They knocked me down on purpose. But I know who they were, and I'll—"

Knox paused, and his attention became riveted upon the floor.

"What on earth's that?" he muttered.

He bent down, and picked up the parchment which had been lying against the wall, and turned it over in his hand.

"Queer looking lot!" he muttered.

"Those young rascals must have dropped it!"

He stuffed it into his pocket, and walked away to his own study. Arriving there he turned on the light, and seated himself in a chair.

He pulled the parchment out of his pocket, and slowly turned it over in his hand, finally frowning at it in a puzzled manner.

"Hanged if I can make out what it is!" he murmured. "Seems to be an old piece of parchment, with some faded writing on it. I reckon it's—"

Knox paused as he began to take in the sense of the wording. He bent forward eagerly, reading the words carefully. Then, in some excitement, he rose to his feet and stepped across to the light, and stood beneath it scanning the parchment. At last he looked up, and in his eyes there was an expression of disbelief and amazement.

"It can't be right!" he muttered. "It must be some silly trick of the juniors."

He looked at the parchment again, and noted the brown, faded writing.

"And yet it can't be," he told himself. "This thing wasn't written yesterday, I'll swear! By Jove, I wonder if—"

Knox paused, and scanned the parchment again.

"I wonder if it can be genuine?" he thought. "I can't make inquiries as to where it came from, because I should let the young beggars know I've got it. They must have dropped it when they bowled me over."

Knox's excitement was growing, and he paced his study with short, nervous strides. At last he sat down in his chair, and bent over the parchment. For ten minutes he sat there, examining it closely, then he looked up.

"It's the real thing right enough," he said to himself. "There's no swank about it. Those kids must have found it somewhere. The writer of the parchment says he was going to hide it in the crypt. One of them must have found it there. That explains why they were so excited, and why they dashed out of the study at such a rate. By George, I—I hardly know what I'd better do!"

Knox was perfectly aware that the parchment was not his, yet the thought that it would be the means, perhaps, of his finding a priceless treasure, made the unscrupulous senior hesitate.

"Why should I give it back to those Shell kids?" he thought. "After all, I found it in the passage. I don't know for certain whose it is, so I can't give it back to the owner."

A disagreeable grin passed across the Sixth Former's face.

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"Hang it!" he exclaimed aloud. "I'll keep it for myself! I found it, and I've got a perfect right to it! If those kids ask me anything about it, I'll say that I haven't seen it."

Knox did not possess many scruples, and he came to his decision after very little thought. To his mind there was nothing dishonourable in what he was going to do. He had found the parchment, and therefore it was his to do as he liked with.

Knox would have thrown the thing into the fire then and there had he suspected its real nature. But he did not suspect it, and was as thoroughly "spoofed" as the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. had been.

"I'll study the thing thoroughly," he decided, "and then go over to the old castle ruins to-morrow before lessons, and search for the treasure. If I find it, I shall explain that I found the parchment, and that it's mine."

And Knox turned to the table again, and re-read the document from beginning to end. He was very much excited, and forgot all else but the ancient parchment and its amazing message.

CHAPTER 12.

Tracking the Parchment!

TOM MERRY glanced at his watch as he hurried down the steps of the School House into the quad.

"There's an hour before supper," he murmured. "Time to do a lot, if we hurry. Prep can go to the dickens for to-night. With such a thing as hidden treasure on the board, we can't afford to think about prep."

And the captain of the Shell crossed the quad to the old chapel.

Tom Merry was feeling rather worried. He had searched the Shell passage, but had seen no sign of the parchment. He had also casually dropped into several studies, and into the Common-room, but everybody seemed to be in their normal state, and no excitement prevailed. So Tom Merry took it for granted that the parchment had not been found by any of the juniors. He had asked one or two boys if they had seen a piece of paper lying in the passage, but nobody had any knowledge of it.

He descended into the old crypt with a worried look upon his face, and his chums crowded round him in the light of Manners' lamp.

"Well," demanded Manners quickly, "have you got it?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he replied shortly.

"You haven't got it?" said Blake blankly.

"No; I couldn't find it."

"Then you're a silly cuckoo!" declared Manners. "You're a nice chap. I must say, to be trusted with the parchment!"

"You ought to have kept it yourself, Manners," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly. "You don't think I dropped the parchment on purpose, do you?"

"Well, never mind that," said Monty Lowther. "The thing is to get the parchment back before any harm's done. I wouldn't mind betting Manners' camera that Knox has collared it. It's just the kind of thing he would do."

"That's what I think," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'm awfully sorry, you chaps, that the parchment's lost, but it wasn't my fault."

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"Oh, no, of course not!" said Herries sarcastically.

"Well, it wasn't. The blessed thing was jerked out of my hand. I vote we make Knox give it to us back."

"That's all very well," said Jack Blake, "but I don't see how you're going to do it. Knox is a prefect, and a beastly rotter at that! We can't go up to him and demand the thing. Besides, if we did, he'd give us lines all round for biffing him over."

"Oh, hang the lines!" said Tom Merry, with a worried look. "What are a few lines compared with treasure? But it's my opinion that if Knox has got the thing he won't give it up. He's cad enough for anything."

Arthur Augustus polished his monocle.

"Well, what's to be done, deah boys?" he asked. "I wathah think it would be a good ideah if I bearded the boundah in his den, as it were. It needs a fellow of tact and judgment for a job like that, and I am just the wight chap."

"I don't know about being white," growled Monty Lowther; "you're green enough!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Yes, dry up, you punning idiot!" said Blake. "It wouldn't matter so much if you made decent puns. But I say, it's no good us standing here talking. We shall never get the parchment that way."

"That's what I think," said Tom Merry. "We'd better get to work. I'm jolly certain that Knox has collared the parchment, so we must search his study."

The others stared.

"Search his study?" repeated Blake in surprise.

"Yes."

"But Knox is a prefect!" exclaimed Digby.

"And we should get into a fearful row if we were found out," added Manners.

"But we shouldn't get found out," replied Tom Merry. "Are we going to stand by and see that rotter Knox collar our parchment? Are we going to let him get the hidden treasure for himself?"

"Wathah not, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Well, some of you chaps seem to be in favour of it," said the hero of the Shell. "In a matter like this we must take certain risks without hesitation. It's practically certain that Knox has pinched our parchment, and I therefore propose that we search his study on the quiet to see if we can find it!"

"Good idea," said Manners. "Knox is a beastly rotter, and it would be just like him to keep the parchment to himself just because he happened to pick it up. It's mine, and I'm blessed if I'm going to be diddled out of it! Why, the thing may be worth thousands of pounds! Think of it, chaps—thousands of pounds, and that cad has got it, and won't give it up!"

The juniors were now all in favour of Tom Merry's suggestion to pay a visit to Knox's study.

"One moment, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't you think it would be bettah to find the parchment, and then make a copy of it for our own use?"

"Why, Gussy?"

"Well, deah boy, in that way Knox would not know that we had visited his studay; for he would still have the parchment, and we could take a wise out of him by awwivin' at the tweasuah gwound first."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"It's a good wheeze, Gussy," he admitted. "A jolly good wheeze. In fact, we could get up early to-morrow morning and go over to the castle before breakfast. I suppose you chaps would be game?"

"Rather!"

"Of course!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "Then I vote that Manners and I leave the supper-table ten minutes before the usual time—we can easily give an excuse—and search Knox's study. You other chaps will be able to keep your eye on the Sixth Form table and see that he doesn't surprise us. When he does come he'll find everything untouched, but we shall have made a copy of the parchment."

"Good egg!" said Blake. "That's a ripping idea, Tom Merry! Of course, Knox may not have the parchment at all, but I don't think there's much doubt."

"I don't think there's any doubt at all," said Tom Merry, looking round the old crypt. "By the way, did you find anything else in that hole?"

"No," said Manners, "nothing at all."

"Well, if we don't find the parchment again it'll be rotten!" growled Jack Blake. "I'm jolly certain there is a treasure, and if we're going to lose it—"

"We're not!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Knox is bound to have it; if some of the other fellows had collared it I should have heard about it."

"You wouldn't have heard much about it if Mellish or Levison had collared it," replied Blake. "They're rotters enough for anything!"

"I know that," said Tom Merry.

"But I got to know that both of the cads had been in the Common-room for over an hour, so they couldn't have had a hand in it. It's Knox, I tell you—and we'll do the bounder yet!"

And the treasure-hunters, all of them still thoroughly excited and eager, discussed the plan further. Finally, they all ascended to the chapel and passed out into the quad. Their ardour was a little damped by the sudden disappearance of the parchment, but all of them had high hopes of its being recovered before bed-time. They knew that it would be practically useless asking Knox for it if the prefect made up his mind not to give it up. So they had, therefore, decided upon the only likely course of action.

CHAPTER 13.

Redfern & Co. Make Inquiries!

"WE shall have to buck up, Manners, old man. If Knox comes along and finds us here there'll be a fearful shindy!"

"Oh, we shan't be more than ten minutes, and I don't suppose Knox will come along yet," replied Manners. "I don't care for the job of searching another fellow's study as a rule, but this time I think we're justified."

"We shall be justified if we find that Knox has got it," said Tom Merry.

"While I look through these drawers, you search the bureau!"

But Manners did not have to do much searching. Before Tom Merry had been looking at the desk-drawers two minutes, he uttered a low exclamation.

"Here it is!" he murmured excitedly. "As large as life, and twice as natural. I knew the rotter had it!"

"The bounder!" ejaculated Manners. "We'd better start making a copy."

(Continued on page 18.)



**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! One of the best Martin Clifford yarns I have ever read. That is my candid opinion of the next ripping story of Tom Merry & Co. which you will find in the GEM. Believe me, chums, you are in for the finest fiction treat of the year. Let me just whet your appetite a little.

"TOM MERRY'S GREAT JAPE!"

Herbert Skimpole, the brainy man of the Shell, gets the idea of forming a science club. Of course, the juniors all treat it as a joke, but it's not much of a joke when an unforeseen circumstance compels them to join it and take up the study of geology! Just imagine it—fellows having to go out with Mr. Lathom and Skimmy to study rock-formations and whatnot!

Naturally, it "gets their goat." Then it is, however, that Tom Merry has a brain-wave—the jape of the year for ending their troubles. How the jape is worked off on Mr. Lathom, and how it leads to more serious trouble for Tom Merry, with a flogging hanging in the balance, I will leave Martin Clifford to tell you all about, in his own inimitable style, next Wednesday. But just remember what I have said—it's one of our author's best efforts.

"THE CAPTIVE SCHOOLMASTER!"

Poor old Manders' life recently has been a misery, with the sneak-thief Poggers menacing him at every turn. But now has come the worst—he is the captive of the man whom he thinks is insane.

Slog Potters, however, is far from "dotty"—but, at the same time, he is just as far from getting his hands on the Head of Rookwood's notecase, which he stole and hid in the lining of Manders' overcoat!

Hence Slog Poggers' "fondness" for Mr. Manders—or, rather, his overcoat! But with the Rookwood master in his hands, Slog is hopeful that the coat

will soon be, too! That remains to be seen in Owen Conquest's next great Rookwood story. With the Jester's prize jokes and "Just My Fun," it completes another grand number.

THE LURE OF THE CUP!

Last January sixty-four football teams started out hopefully on the Wembley trail after that elusive but much-sought-after prize—the F.A. Cup. Of those sixty-four teams only four now remain in the competition, and after next Saturday's Semi-finals, two of those will no longer have any interest. Almost to reach Wembley's doorstep, only to provide a stepping-stone for a rival, must be very disheartening for any club. Still, there's always another day, another season's Cup competition.

It was in 1871-2 that the lure of the Cup first began to be felt in English football. From that time the trophy has been held by various clubs sixty times, and naturally the Cup has had some hectic adventures. In 1889, for instance, when Preston North End won it without conceding a goal, such was the rejoicing of their supporters on the team's victorious return, that the Cup was lost in the crowd and kicked about in the street before it was recovered! On another occasion, the trophy was smashed in three pieces in the wild rejoicing at a banquet given in honour of the winners! Fortunately, it was mended so well that the F.A. never noticed that it had been broken.

AN ILL-FATED TROPHY!

But that particular Cup must have been ill-fated, for in 1895 it disappeared for ever! It was on show in a Birmingham shop window, Aston Villa then being the holders, when one night

burglars "won" it easier and quicker than any football team had ever done!

The present trophy is actually the third one to be provided by the F.A., the second Cup having been withdrawn from the competition in 1909, when Manchester United won it. They had an exact duplicate of the Cup made in honour of winning it. But the F.A. decided that it wouldn't do to have two Cups identically the same in existence, and so they presented the second trophy to Lord Kinnaird, who was president of the F.A. at the time.

Since then the third Cup has been won twenty-two times, there being no competition during the Great War. Who will be the twenty-third winners? That remains to be seen, for you can never tell with Cup-ties. At any rate, good luck to the four teams concerned in Saturday's Semi-finals!

THE FLYING HOTEL!

A flying liner, with all the luxury and comfort of a first-class hotel, capable of conveying fifty passengers across the Atlantic to America in just under two days! That's the Hindenburg, the world's biggest airship, which will make her maiden voyage early in May. She is expected to do the journey from Germany to New Jersey and back in a week.

The Diesel engines of this 815 ft. long flying hotel can develop about 4,400 h.p., which give her a maximum speed of 84 m.p.h. She can also carry enough crude oil for her engines to take her through the skies for 8,000 miles.

There are two large decks, the upper deck containing a dining-room, a meeting-hall, writing and reading-rooms, and cabins fitted with hot and cold water. The lower and smaller deck is fitted with bath-rooms and the officers' and crew's quarters. A new feature of the Hindenburg is a smoking-room, for it is the first one ever to be built in an airship. If you would like to take a single trip in her, your fare will cost you a mere £83!

A DUD REWARD!

Here's a snappy story from Brazil. Two counterfeiters were arrested and held in custody. The lawyer they engaged, however, obtained their release, on a point of law, pending the trial. The two counterfeiters paid the lawyer five hundred dollars and promptly disappeared. Now the lawyer is after them as well as the police—for the notes he received were dud ones!

TAILPIECE.

Higgs: "They say that fashions in dogs are always changing."

Hoggs: "Yes, every day has its dog!"

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.

Miss Betty Turner, Boucher Avenue, Te Puke, New Zealand; girl correspondents; stamps; age 14-16.

Miss Edith Ram, 3, Esmond Road, Bedford Park, London, W.4; girl correspondents; films; age 15-16.

Miss Irene Wootton, 3a, Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London, W.5; girl correspondents; films; age 15-16.

PEN PALS COUPON
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Miss Alma Nicholls, Cooroy, N.C. Line, via Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; girl correspondents; age 14-16; California, Canada; films, autographs.

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A. T. Dawson, 57, Victor Street, South Elmsall, near Pontefract, Yorks; age 17-20; professional Soccer.

Philip Poynter, 18, Newlyn Drive, Bredbury, near Stockport, Cheshire; age 14-15; British Columbia; scouting.

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A. L. Mihailoff, Thangool, Queensland, Australia; British Empire; films.

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"Rather!"

And for the next five minutes, there was nothing to be heard in the study save an occasional murmur, and the scratch of pen on paper.

"Done it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now, Knox, my beauty, we've got you on toast! If you think you're going to collar the treasure, you're jolly well mistaken. It's ours, and we're not going to be done out of it by a beastly bully!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Manners clatily. "My hat, it was a ripping idea of Gussy's to search this study! I say, Knox is a blessed burglar!"

"I expect he thinks he's a right to it, as he found it. Of course, he hasn't, really, but Knox is rotter enough for anything!"

"I don't care what he does now," grinned Manners delightedly. "We've got a copy of the parchment, and we'll be on the scene before him. He'll never dream of this move, and think he's got plenty of time."

And the two Shell fellows, very much elated, hurried out of Knox's study, and dashed off to the Fourth Form passage, a copy of the parchment safely in Tom Merry's pocket. The juniors had just come from supper, and Blake & Co. and Monty Lowther looked at their two chums rather anxiously.

"Have you got a copy?" asked Jack Blake quickly.

"Was the giddy parchment in Knox's study?"

"Yes, it was!" grinned Tom Merry cheerfully. "It's all right, you needn't worry any more. We've got a copy of the parchment, and Knox will have to take a back seat! He'll never suspect that we've been to his study, and we shall be able to steal a march on him!"

"Hurrah! That's ripping!" exclaimed Blake, his spirits rising. "I'd begun to think that we should be diddled!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, deah boys, if this tweasuah is a weally big one, I shall buy a motor-car with my share!"

"Why not go farther, and have a giddy yacht, Gussy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "But I say, there's no telling how much gold there is buried at the old castle!"

"That's why I'm so jolly impatient!" said Manners. "Hanged if I don't feel like breaking bounds and going to the ruins now!"

"We all feel like that," said Tom Merry, "but it can't be done! And, after all, there's no such hurry as that. Now that we've got a copy of the parchment we can all hurry off to the ruins, and be there long before Knox is up."

"Of course," Reilly and Page of the Fourth came along the passage.

"Hallo, what's all the excitement about?" asked Page curiously. "You chaps look jolly pleased 'over something."

"Faith, perhaps somebody's left 'em a fortune!" grinned Reilly.

"Can't we look happy now?" asked Blake.

"Sure ye're welcome to look happy," replied the Belfast junior. "But is it some jape against the New House?"

"Not this time, Reilly, old man," replied Tom Merry.

And to avoid further discussion, the juniors entered Study No. 6. But they did not stop there long. They were all excited to a degree, and too restless to sit down. So, at Blake's suggestion, they passed out into the quad, in a body, to have a breath of fresh air.

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before bed-time. Now that they had recovered—or as good as recovered—the parchment, they were all immensely enthusiastic about it. Even now, after having had time to think about the matter, the idea that the whole affair was a New House jape never entered their minds.

"We shall have to be up early," said Manners thoughtfully. "I'll bet we shan't need an alarm clock, either! We shall all be awake as soon as it's light!"

"If we tumble out just before seven—"

"Hallo, you chaps, holding an open-air meeting?"

Three forms loomed up out of the darkness. They were Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, and they looked at their rivals with affected surprise.

"No," replied Tom Merry, "we're just talking about a wheeze which is going to make you New House bouders sing smaller than you've ever sung before!"

"Rather!" chuckled Jack Blake.

Redfern & Co. grinned.

"Rats!" said Redfern. "I'll bet you won't take a rise out of us!"

"You wait!" said Manners. "Ha, ha, ha! You wait! You and Figgins & Co. will go green with envy to-morrow!"

"Well, you've gone green without any envy," said Owen blandly.

Manners turned red.

"Fathead!" he said warmly.

"But what's the excitement?" asked Lawrence innocently. "Blessed if you chaps don't appear to be off your heads about something!"

"There's something important on," said Redfern wisely.

"There is—jolly important," said Tom Merry. "But we're not going to tell you fellows yet. You'll know all in good time, if you are good little boys."

"Oh, we're not curious," said Redfern loftily. "Keep your old secret!"

"Good-night!" said Owen sweetly.

"Good-night."

Redfern & Co. crossed the quad to the New House, leaving their School House rivals chuckling. But as soon as Redfern & Co. entered their own House they doubled themselves up and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my only chapeau!" moaned Lawrence. "I shall burst my giddy sides!"

"It's too funny for words!"

"It's gorgeous!"

"Those fatheads are taken in completely!" chuckled Redfern gleefully.

"The jape's working a treat! Tom Merry & Co. are simply off their rockers with excitement!"

"I—I say," gasped Owen, "let's go and tell old Figg!"

"Come on!"

They passed upstairs, still holding their sides, and entered Figgins & Co.'s study.

"What's up?" asked Figgins. "Are you chaps ill?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Redfern.

"We're—we're laughing!" gasped Lawrence.

"Oh, I thought you were pegging out!" said Figgins. "What's the grin about?"

Redfern wiped his eyes.

"We've just seen those School House kids!"

"They're in the quad," explained Owen.

Figgins & Co. grinned a grin of understanding.

"Well?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"They're dotty with excitement!" said Redfern. "The secret hasn't got

beyond the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. They're simply red in the face with excitement."

"It's the jape of the term!" chuckled Kerr.

"I expect the silly asses will rush off to the castle ruins immediately after lessons to-morrow," said Figgins. "We must keep a strict watch—"

"Half a tick!" interrupted Owen.

"What's up?"

"Why," said Owen, "didn't we hear Manners saying something about getting up early, Reddy? We just caught a word or two as we strolled up."

"My hat! That's right," said Redfern. "Manners mentioned an alarm clock, and then Blake chimed in with a remark that they would have to tumble out at seven. It hadn't struck me before."

"They're going to get up early," said Figgins.

"Before rising-bell."

"So that they can rush off to the ruins and dig for the giddy treasure!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Ha, ha, ha! It's too funny for words!"

"They're as enthusiastic as—as old Manners with his camera!" chuckled Figgins. "This jape's worked out in first-class style, and we shall have the School House absolutely on toast!"

"They think they're going to make us sing small, while all the time they're running their heads into the giddy noose," said Lawrence. "I say, I wouldn't miss seeing them dig for the treasure for worlds!"

"No fear!"

"We'll go," said Figgins firmly. "We'll get up early and follow the bouders. I suppose you chaps are game?"

"Rather!"

"I should say so!"

"My hat, yes, Figg!"

"We'll all get up at seven," went on Figgins decidedly, and with a twinkle in his eyes. "We'll— But there goes nine-thirty! Time for us to go to bed!"

"We shan't need any waking to-morrow morning," chuckled Redfern. "I hope it'll be fine, you chaps. When Tom Merry & Co. return after finding the 'treasure,' they'll be the laughing-stock of the whole school, from the First to the Sixth! They'll feel like burying their diminished heads until the laugh's over."

"Then they'll have to bury 'em for a long time!" grinned Figgins. "The laugh'll last for weeks, once it's started."

"Well, it's started now," said Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the New House juniors burst into a roar, and they were still chuckling when they went up to bed.

CHAPTER 14.

The Treasure-Hunters Set Out!

KNOX, the prefect, sat in his study after the juniors had gone to bed. Before him on the table was the piece of ancient parchment, which was causing so much excitement. Knox was reading it word for word, and in his eyes there was a look of great excitement.

"It's great!" he murmured. "The thing's perfectly genuine. Just before bed-time all those kids were collected in the quad, discussing the loss of this parchment. I'll bet a quid the little idiots never guessed that I've got it. They think they've lost it in the quad, or about the grounds."

Had Knox been less excited, and less enamoured with the prospect of finding

the treasure, he would have had a suspicion that all was not right. He would have realised that the thing was so utterly improbable as to be well-nigh impossible.

But Kerr had done his work so thoroughly that Knox was entirely deceived. The thought that the thing was a jape never entered his mind.

On his desk were several old books—books relating to the monks who had lived in the monastery hundreds of years before. For a considerable time Knox had been poring over them, filling his mind with an atmosphere which made him forget all everyday matters. He could think of nothing else but monks, and old castles, and hidden treasure. The genuineness of the thing had so taken hold of him that had he been told it was all a jape he would still have gone to the ruins and searched at the spot mentioned in the parchment.

Kerr, in his thorough manner, had mapped out the exact spot where the treasure was supposed to lie. The Scottish junior had even gone so far as to make a small plan, showing quite distinctly the place at the ruins where the treasure was hidden. The plan was not elaborate—merely a small drawing at one of the bottom corners of the parchment.

Knox rose and stood regarding the closely-written, crabbed handwriting.

"And to think this was written hundreds of years ago!" he murmured. "Why, anybody with half an eye could see it was!"

He read over the faded characters.

"The wording of this parchment, although speedily written, owing to necessary haste, is of very great significance," Knox read out. "I, Jasper Townshend, a monk of this noble monastery, am penning these brief words in order to set down certain facts which are necessary to the finding of untold wealth. Indeed, I am in sore fear that the soldiers of his Majesty will swoop down upon us, like the vultures they are. Therefore, before it is too late, I am setting down knowledge of the gold and silver which I and my worthy colleagues have placed safely in the grounds of the castle—which is, indeed, but a short distance from here—lest it be wrested from us. The money—a vast hoard—is contained in an oaken chest, and it represents the savings of years. In faith, it is indeed a goodly sum. I verily envy the finder of this scrap of paper, which I am now concealing beneath the floor of the chapel crypt. A rough plan below will guide the finder of this paper to the spot where I have hidden the treasure. If he follows the directions closely it is impossible to go wrong. I need write no more."

Knox stared at the paper, after he had finished perusing it, with gleaming eyes, and glanced at the rough plan below. He could recognise the ruins immediately, for Kerr had done his work cleverly. Had Knox been calm he might have wondered why the monk did not conceal his treasure beneath the floor of the crypt, but that never occurred to him.

"Great Scott, there's no telling how much money there is in the oaken chest!" he muttered. "Those old monastery johnnies used to have pots of money hidden away!"

Knox pored over the parchment and the old books, and at last stowed the former in his pocket, and turned out the light.

"I'll get up early and go before breakfast," he told himself. "I've got a jolly good alarm clock, and I'll be up before anybody else."

And Knox, full of his dreams, went up to bed.

Soon St. Jim's was all asleep.

The morning dawned clear and fine—a beautiful spring dawn. Long before the rising-bell was due to ring, Jack Blake of the Fourth hopped out of bed. The sun, already risen, was shining slantwise over the landscape, making everything look fresh and beautiful.

"Ripping morning!" murmured Blake. "My hat, we'd better get up and rout those Shell bouncers out!"

And Blake turned from the window and bent over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bed.

"Wake up, Gussy!" he whispered. D'Arcy sat up, blinking.

"Bai Jove, Blake, I was only dozin'!" he exclaimed. "Is it time to get up, deah boy?"

"Of course it is!" "Weally, Blake—"

But Blake was rousing the others, and D'Arcy hopped nimbly out of bed and commenced dressing. In less than five minutes the juniors were ready—with the exception of Arthur Augustus.

"Aren't you ready, Gussy?" asked Herries impatiently.

"Bai Jove, I have been scarcely no time, deah boys!" protested D'Arcy. "Pway allow me anothah ten minutes to conclude my d'vessin'. I have only to put—"

"You've only to bunk on your jacket and come with us," said Blake firmly. "No fancy dressing this morning, Gussy."

"I uttably wufuse to come immediately," said Arthur Augustus. "I have to d'vess carefully, deah boys, or—"

"Rats!" said Blake. "Come on!"

And Arthur Augustus, much against his will, was forced to leave the dormitory before he had dressed to his

satisfaction. But he was consoled by the remembrance that he could finish his toilet after the return from the castle.

Blake & Co. hurried along to the Shell dormitory, and they were just going to enter when the door opened, and the Terrible Three emerged.

"Oh, you're up!" said Blake in surprise.

"Of course we're up!" replied Tom Merry. "We were just going to rout you chaps out."

"Well, we've routed ourselves out, thanks!" grinned Blake. "Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The little crowd of juniors descended the stairs, and quietly unbolted the outer door. In a few moments they were crossing the quad. Taggles, the school porter, was already about, and the gates were unlocked.

Just as the juniors were passing out of the gate, the door of the lodge opened, and Taggles stood in the portal, gazing at the juniors in surprise.

"My heye!" he ejaculated.

"Hallo, Taggy!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Nice morning!"

"My heye!" repeated Taggles. "If you young rips ain't hup!"

"Go hon!" said Blake. "We're not up, Taggy—we're down!"

"Nice goings hon!" said Taggles. "Seems to me the 'ole school's a-gettin' up hearly!"

"No, not all the school, Taggy," said Monty Lowther; "only the most important members of it."

"Young rip!" growled Taggles.

The juniors passed out of the gates chucking. They were intensely eager to get to the ruins, and as they walked Tom Merry carefully examined his copy of the plan, and memorised the directions beneath it. Suddenly Herries came to stop.

"We've forgotten something," he said.

"Forgotten something?"

"Yes, we ought to have brought Towser along," said Herries blankly.

"My bulldog would have sniffed out the treasure in no time! I—"

But Herries' voice was howled down.

"Blow your bulldog!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly. "Towsah is wathah above the limit, you know. He has no wespsect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Look here—" began Herries.

"Towser's not coming!" roared Blake.

So the party proceeded without the pleasure of Towser's company. They soon forgot about the matter, Herries included, and hastened on to the ruins

(Continued on the next page.)

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with eager footsteps and expectant hopes.

So eager were they, in fact, that they proceeded on their way without once glancing behind. Had they done so, they might possibly have caught sight of several lurking forms following them.

Tom Merry & Co. were unaware of the fact, but the two Co.'s of the New House were hot on their track. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co. had carried out their plan, and they tracked their School House rivals to the ruins with many chuckles and grins.

CHAPTER 15.

Hidden Treasure!

"MY hat, don't the ruins look fine!"

Blake uttered the words. The juniors were climbing the slopes of Wayland Hill to the ruins. The old castle stood out magnificently in the morning sunlight, its old walls covered with clinging ivy, looking picturesque in the extreme.

But the other juniors were too intent upon their object to take any notice of the beauty of the scene. Manners, who had been looking ahead with eager eyes, suddenly came to a halt with a surprised ejaculation.

"My only Aunt Josephine!" he ejaculated blankly.

"Well, what about her?" asked Monty Lowther.

"You ass!" exclaimed Manners excitedly. "This isn't a time to rot! There's—there's somebody at the ruins! I just saw him moving!"

"What?"

"Somebody there?"

"Yes," said Manners, in dismay. "I saw him moving!"

One name flashed through all the juniors' minds.

"Knox!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"That's who it is—Knox!"

"He's there before us!"

"He's forestalled us!"

"Bai Jove, this is wotten!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, deah boys, that fidgetful boundah has played the same game as us. He's avvived on the scene first. He will collah the tweasuah!"

"My hat, he won't!" yelled Manners. "It's ours! I found the giddy parchment, and I—"

"What's the good of talking here?" interrupted Tom Merry briskly. "The best thing we can do is to hurry to the ruins and see if it really is Knox. It may not be him, after all."

"There's not much doubt about it," said Blake.

"No, but there's a chance," replied the captain of the Shell. "I vote we steal up without letting him know. Then, if it is him, we shall have to decide what to do."

And the juniors hurried forward, now proceeding with great caution. At last they arrived at the old ruined wall of the castle.

"We shall have to go easy!" whispered Tom Merry. "The hiding-place of the treasure is just against the north wall, and we can see it if we dodge round these old heaps of stones. I'll go and have a peep first, and if Knox is there you can all come up and watch proceedings."

Tom Merry crept forward among the old stones, and cautiously pushed his head round a jutting piece of masonry. Then he caught his breath in quickly.

For, at exactly the spot marked on the treasure-chart, Knox, the prefect, was digging away at the loose stones with considerable energy.

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"It is Knox!" murmured Tom Merry, turning his head to the others. "Come on, there's plenty of room for all of you round about these stones."

Two minutes later the School House juniors were all crouching against various chunks of masonry, only their heads showing. The prefect was too preoccupied to glance up.

Tom Merry & Co. were intent upon their task, and were too interested to think of anything else. And behind them six forms cautiously made their way across the open space to the other side of the ruins.

The New House juniors were soon ensconced in a position equally as good as Tom Merry & Co.'s, and they looked upon Knox with wide-open eyes.

"My—my only hat!" gasped Redfern. "That explains why they're all looking on. It's Knox, the giddy School House prefect!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Figgins blankly. "Then—then our giddy jape's miscarried!"

"Has it?" chuckled Kerr. "I think it's going better. Fancy Knox, a prefect, falling into the giddy trap! We shall have the laugh on the School House right through!"

"By Jove, yes!" agreed Figgins. "But I wonder how the dickens Knox came to get hold of the parchment?"

"He's got it in his hand!"

"Blessed if I know!" exclaimed Redfern. "But he has got it, and Tom Merry & Co. are flabbergasted about it, too. That's what they were pointing at a little while ago."

The situation was a curious one in the extreme.

Knox was under the impression that he had the ruins to himself, while Tom Merry & Co. thought that they were the only watchers. The perpetrators of the jape were looking on with grinning faces. The others, however, under the impression that the parchment was genuine, did not feel like grinning.

"I say, you know, this is wotten!" declared Arthur Augustus. "If Knox weally unearths the tweasuah he will vewy likely claim it all for himself!"

"If he does we'll jolly soon make an alteration," said Tom Merry grimly. "Come to think of it, it would be best for us to reveal ourselves now, and ask him what the dickens he means. I—"

"Look there!" exclaimed Digby suddenly.

He caused the others to rivet their attention on Knox again. The prefect was bending over the hole he had dug, and the juniors could see that he was very much excited.

The spot where the "treasure" was hidden was one which the New House juniors had carefully selected. The ground was composed of loose pebbles, which penetrated downwards for several feet. Therefore, when Knox had commenced digging, there was no indication that the spot had been recently disturbed. At the time when the parchment had been made out two of the perpetrators had hurried off to the ruins to select the spot, so that there would be no mistake.

Knox had dug for a considerable depth, and the loose stones were piled about him. Had he been less eager he would have realised that a place such as that would be very exposed for a treasure to be hidden.

Now he bent over the hole and laboriously lifted out a square, heavy oak box—an old chest which Figgins & Co. had routed out from the New House box-room. It certainly looked ancient enough, and Knox's eyes gleamed triumphantly.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed aloud.

"It's true! The parchment was right! I've found the treasure, and by the appearance of this box, it looks like a valuable one!"

With feverish haste and shaking hands Knox inserted the edge of his spade under the box-lid and wrenched it open. The lid gave a creak, and finally flew back.

"Now for the rumpus!" giggled Redfern to his chums.

Knox gazed into the box with eager and expectant eyes. Then, with startling abruptness, all the colour fled from his cheeks, and he started back with a loud exclamation.

"Great Scott!" he shouted.

Blankly, scarcely realising the truth, he bent over the chest. It was half-full of loose stones, while on the top of them a small book rested. It was a well-thumbed volume, entitled "The Fretworker's Treasure," and its cover was decorated with gaudy gold and silver lining.

Knox picked it up dazedly, and gazed at a piece of paper which was stuck on the back cover. It simply bore the words: "The Treasure! The gold and silver will be found on the front cover." The words were written in the same handwriting as the parchment, and with the same faded ink.

Knox staggered back as though struck, and his brow grew black as thunder.

"It's a jape!" he gasped, his fury rising rapidly. "It's a jape! Those young sweeps left the parchment in the passage on purpose—on purpose for me to pick up!"

Tom Merry & Co. were gazing at Knox with amazed and startled faces. They, too, could not realise that the whole thing was a jape. Yet there was obviously something wrong, for the prefect's face was a study of rage, disappointment, and chagrin. Suddenly he moved, and the box was revealed to the juniors. They could see that it contained nothing but stones!

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus aloud, starting to his feet. "Bai Jove, the tweasuah is all spoof, deah boys!"

Knox turned quickly, and his angry looks intensified. The next moment he came striding across to the juniors, and was upon them before they could make their escape.

"You—you young rascals!" roared Knox, black in the face with fury.

"Here, I say—" began Tom Merry wrathfully.

"What do you mean by daring to jape a prefect?" roared Knox, with an angry scowl. "You shall pay for this!"

"J-j-jape you!" gasped Manners.

"What do you mean, Knox?" asked Blake, in dismay.

The juniors were too flabbergasted to answer the prefect's question. They, themselves, could scarcely realise that the parchment was nothing more nor less than a gigantic jape.

"What do I mean?" shouted Knox. "I mean that I'm going to report you to Mr. Railton, and that I'm going to have you punished! I—I—"

Words failed the enraged prefect, and, forgetting himself in his fury, he hurled himself at Tom Merry, who was foremost. Before the captain of the Shell could realise it, he was flung violently to the ground. The juniors forgot their dismay in a moment. They sprang forward in a body.

"You rotten bully!" roared Blake.

"What?"

"You cowardly bully!" shouted Blake.

And, before the others could stop him, he hurled himself at Knox, and

punched the prefect violently upon the nose. Knox staggered backwards, blood streaming from his nose.

But the blow had calmed him, and his face was now pale and set. He realised, too, that he was no match for the juniors.

"All right," he muttered thickly. "You shall pay for this, you young hounds! You're all in it, and you'll all pay for it!"

And Knox pushed roughly through the juniors, and strode off towards St. Jim's.

"Well, it's rotten!" growled Blake dismally.

"Horrible!" agreed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Suppose we go and look at the 'oaken chest,'" said Tom Merry. "After all, the jape wasn't against us really. Knox stepped in and saved us in the nick of time."

Blake grinned.

"So he did," he said. "My hat—wasn't he wild? It just served him right for sticking to the parchment."

New House juniors were enjoying the result of their jape.

"You awful spoofers!" yelled Manners.

"You swankers!"

"Bounders!"

"New House wasters!"

"Go on!" yelled Figgins encouragingly. "We like being called those names, you know. Who's Cock House at St. Jim's?"

"New House!" roared his chums.

"Rats!" howled Manners wrathfully. "School House for ever! If you



As Tom Merry & Co., with crimson faces, passed in at the gateway they had to run the gauntlet of jeers from the New House juniors. "Who's Cock House now?" asked Pratt. "New House!" came the answer. "Who was completely spoofed?" "School House!" "Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 16.

All's Well That Ends Well.

TOM MERRY looked round him with a rather sickly expression.

"I—I'm dashed if I know what to say!" he exclaimed. "It's a jape—a gigantic jape of those New House rotters! My hat, they'll grin over this for weeks!"

"It was all Manners' fault," said Blake, anxious to clear himself.

"My fault!" roared Manners indignantly.

"Yes, you found the parchment."

"Well, how was I to know it was a giddy fake thing?" shouted Manners wrathfully. "Now I come to look at it, we were all a set of mugs to be taken in. Of course, Redfern dropped my knife down that chink on purpose."

"Of course he did!" said Tom Merry. "The whole thing's a plot—carefully arranged and carried out to the smallest detail. On the quiet, it was a jolly fine wheeze, and we can't deny it. We were spoofed completely, and I don't mind owning that Figgins & Co. have scored."

The jape's compensated for by old Knox falling into the trap!"

And the School House juniors, feeling a little more cheerful, walked across to the spot where Knox had been labouring. But they were very silent. Even now they felt a little dazed, as though unable to realise the awful truth.

Tom Merry grinned as he looked at the "treasure."

"They did it jolly well, you know," he said. "There's a treasure here, right enough. But not the sort we expected. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that?" ejaculated Blake, startled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody laughin', deah boys!" said D'Arcy.

"Found the treasure?" yelled a voice, full of merriment.

"You're giddy millionaires now!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at one of the old walls, with their wrath rapidly rising. Over the top of the wall six faces were visible, and upon each face a grin of delight could be seen. The

bounders come down here, we'll shove you in this hole and bury you!"

"Not this morning!" said Redfern sweetly. "It's nearly brekker-time, children, and the morning air has made us hungry. Good-bye! Hope you have a nice time with old Knox. We didn't mean him to be japed, but accidents will happen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There'll be a different kind of accident happen in a minute!" said Tom Merry significantly. "We'll get our own back, Figgy!"

But the New House juniors only roared with laughter, and they strolled away, chuckling. Fatty Wynn was walking unusually fast, for a change—perhaps because he knew that breakfast was waiting for him upon his arrival at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at one another with grim looks.

"Well, we're done!" said Tom Merry. "We're diddled!"

"Dished and spoofed!"

"Done as brown as a berry!"

"Well, it's only the ups and downs of THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,466.

war," said Jack Blake philosophically. "The luck was turned against us this time, but we'll soon get our own back!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "But those New House boundahs will cwow like anythin'!"

"The whole school will crow—that's the worst of it!" growled Manners.

And, in a dejected group, the School House juniors wended their way back to the school, enraged with themselves for having fallen so easily into the New House trap.

When they arrived at Rylcombe Lane, they looked ahead at the gates rather apprehensively. And their fears were justified. For at the gates nearly the whole of the New House juniors were gathered, waiting to welcome them!

Figgins & Co. had hurried back in order to acquaint the fellows with the news.

Tom Merry & Co. passed in the gateway with crimson faces.

"Who's Cock House now?" yelled Pratt defiantly.

"New House!" came a roar.

"Who was completely spoofed?"

"School House!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry, glaring round. "You chaps can grin—"

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "Much obliged to you for giving us permission!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackling fatheads!" said Manners loftily. "What was your old jape, anyhow? If I couldn't think of a better one than that, I'd bury my head!"

"That's what you'd better do now," chuckled Redfern. "I should think you all ought to bury your heads after being shown up!"

"Shown up!" roared Blake.

"Yes, shown up, my sons!" replied Redfern. "You're all shown up as the representatives of the least-important House at St. Jim's! New House is Cock House, and if you get too fresh again, we shall have to—"

"Salt the beggars!" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three, feeling somewhat discomfited, marched on across the quad. The sound of the breakfast-bell was some consolation to them as they entered the School House. When they appeared in the dining-hall, a low murmur of laughter ran through the big room from end to end. But Tom Merry & Co. were getting accustomed to the laughter by now, and they merely grinned in response.

After breakfast, Kildare, the popular captain of St. Jim's, put his head into Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage.

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"You young rascal!" said Kildare sternly. "What have you been up to? Mr. Railton wants you at once in his study. I've already told Blake and his chums to go there!"

The captain of St. Jim's withdrew, and the Terrible Three looked at one another grimly.

"Well, this is a nice thing!" said Monty Lowther. "I say, what a cad Knox is!"

"He's an outsider," said Tom Merry. "But I suppose we'd better go."

"No help for it," said Manners.

And the Terrible Three left their study and made their way to Mr. Railton's room. The Housemaster of the School House was there, and before him Blake & Co. were lined up, all of them looking as though butter would not melt in their mouths.

Mr. Railton looked very stern.

"Knox has told me of a very disgraceful affair!" he exclaimed. "I do

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not interfere with juniors as long as they keep their jokes to themselves, but I cannot allow you to play practical jokes upon prefects."

"But, sir—" protested Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton held up his hand.

"It is useless making excuses, Merry," he said severely. "Knox has informed me that a joke has been played upon him connected with an imaginary treasure, hidden in the castle ruins. This sort of thing will not do, my boys—I cannot allow you to play tricks with a prefect in such a manner. In addition—and this makes your offence very serious—you set upon Knox when he discovered the trick, and treated him with gross disrespect and violence!"

"We didn't, sir!" protested Blake.

"Did you touch him at all, Blake?"

"Yes, sir," admitted Blake reluctantly. "I—I punched his nose!"

Mr. Railton's brow grew stern.

"You admit that, Blake, and then try to make excuses," he said coldly. "Let me tell you all that I am very much surprised at your action. As a rule, you are well-behaved; but on this occasion you have evidently forgotten yourselves. To play such a joke upon a prefect, and afterwards assault him, is a serious offence. You will all be punished alike, and I shall make it very severe, in order that you may realise the seriousness of your offence. Every boy in this room is forbidden to leave the school grounds for a fortnight!"

"Gated for a fortnight!" ejaculated Tom Merry blankly.

"Yes, Merry," said Mr. Railton sternly. "And I hope you will realise in that time that you have acted very wrongly. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

The juniors filed out of the room, their thoughts very bitter against Knox.

"It's rotten!" said Blake bluntly, as they paused in the passage. "We couldn't say anything to excuse ourselves, because it would have come out then that it was Figgins & Co.'s jape, and we don't want to get those bounders into a row."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry. "Old Railton's a brick, as a rule, but this time he's cut up rusty."

"Which is proof that Knox has been telling whoppers," said Monty Lowther. "Of course, Knox thinks we japed him on purpose, and that makes it worse. We—we can't do anything."

"Gated for a fortnight!" groaned Manners. "How rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agree with you, Mannahs," said D'Arcy. "We can't sneak, of course; but there is nothin' to prevent us goin' across to the New House, and waggin' Figgins & Co. That would velieve our feelin's a bit."

"Good egg, Gussy. We'll bunk over directly after dinner," said Tom Merry, brightening up. "Even if we're gated, we'll make things jolly warm for Figgins & Co. for daring to get us into such a hole as this."

But, perhaps fortunately for Figgins & Co., that ragging never happened. For during lessons they learned what had happened to Tom Merry & Co. The New House juniors were sportsmen, and they determined that their School House rivals should not suffer for their jape.

Accordingly, after lessons that morning, Figgins & Co., together with the School House juniors, went straight to Mr. Railton's study. The Housemaster was in his study, and he gazed at the crowd of juniors in surprise. There were thirteen of them, and the room was pretty full.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"What is the meaning of this, boys?" Figgins stepped forward.

"It's about the gating you've given these chaps, sir. They don't deserve it!"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Figgins," he exclaimed, "how dare you dispute my—"

"I'm not, sir," interrupted Figgins quickly. "You see, sir, that jape about the hidden treasure was ours—I mean it was a New House jape, sir."

"A New House—er—jape, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir."

And Figgins proceeded to explain, with occasional interruptions from Redfern & Co. When the long-legged New House chief had done, Tom Merry explained that he had accidentally dropped the parchment, and that Knox had found it.

Mr. Railton nodded, a smile at the corners of his mouth.

"I think I begin to understand," he said. "I will ring for Knox and see what he has to say."

Three minutes later Knox entered the study.

"I think there has been a little mistake, Knox," said Mr. Railton quietly. "These juniors did not deliberately play a practical joke upon you. The parchment was dropped by accident!"

"It's a lie, sir!" said Knox angrily. "It was placed there on purpose for me to find! I know them, the young scoundrels!"

"Knox," said Mr. Railton sharply. "please be careful what you say!"

"Well, sir, the young beggars set upon me at the ruins!" growled Knox.

"They didn't!" said Redfern quickly. "Knox went for Tom Merry and knocked him down. Blake, like a sensible chap, dotted him on the boko—I mean—"

"That will do, Redfern," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I think, Knox, that this matter had better come to an end immediately. I do not wish to inquire into it further. The punishment I gave is rescinded, and there is nothing more to be said."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry gladly.

"But—" began Knox furiously.

"Silence!" exclaimed the Housemaster sternly. "I may say that I am surprised at the part you have taken in this affair, and I do not wish to inquire too closely into the details. Knox, you may go."

And Knox went, feeling very small.

The juniors trooped out of the study, all of them feeling pleased.

"Old Railton's a brick!" said Figgins. "All's well that ends well. And the New House is Cock House at St. Jim's."

"Tosh!"

"Piffle!" grinned Tom Merry. "We'll get our own back, Figgy, don't you worry!"

And the School House juniors vowed to themselves that before long they would wipe out the stain. Really there was not much stain to wipe out, for the jape had been against Knox more than anybody else.

And there was never any more reference—in the School House, at least—to the time when Tom Merry & Co. had been on the treasure trail.

(Next Wednesday: "TOM MERRY'S GREAT JAPE!" Here's the best school story of the week, bar none—telling of the jape of the year at St. Jim's. Don't miss it, chums!)

MORNY on the WARPATH!



Mr. Manders stared blankly at the coal scattered over the carpet and the ink streaming over the table and dripping down to the floor. "What—what—" he stuttered, breathing fury. "What rascal—what scoundrel—" The Modern master little knew that the culprit—Morny—was hiding behind the curtain!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

A Shindy in Manders' House!

"H A, ha, ha!"
Mr. Manders, Housemaster of Manders' House at Rookwood School, glanced from his study window and frowned.

Some middle-aged gentlemen, with happy natures, would have smiled at hearing that cheery peal of boyish laughter. But Mr. Manders did not smile. He hadn't a happy nature. He frowned. Frowns came more naturally to Roger Manders than smiles.

Besides, it was Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth who laughed. Manders did not like Arthur Edward. Neither did he like Mornington, who was talking to Lovell at a short distance from the open window. And what were two Classical fellows doing, anyway, on the Modern side of the quad, chattering and laughing almost under the House windows?

Morny had said something that made Lovell laugh. Mr. Manders wondered, sourly, whether it was anything in reference to himself. He thought that very likely it was. And, in point of fact, Manders was right. It was!

Lovell, still grinning, walked towards the doorway of the House—Manders' House, leaving Morny where he was.

Manders turned from the window. He was inclined to step out of his study and demand to know what the Classical junior wanted in his House. Still, fellows in the different Houses at Rookwood did call on one another sometimes, and even Mr. Manders could hardly find fault if Lovell had looked in to speak to Tommy Dodd about the football, or something of the sort. Mr. Manders

grunted, and turned his attention again to the pile of papers on his table.

His attention remained fixed on those papers for about a minute. Then Mr. Manders lifted his head, breathing hard through his long, thin nose. From outside his study—from the direction of the staircase—came a sudden din. A heavy bump indicated that some fellow had fallen down. A loud howl hinted that the fellow had got damaged in the process. Then came a yell:

"Bag that Classical cad!"

Mr. Manders had good reason to punish Valentine Mornington; but, all the same, the justly incensed master would have saved himself an immense amount of trouble if he had not laid it on quite so hard!

Mr. Manders rose to his feet. He whisked across to his door, dragged it open, and whisked out of the study. That Classical junior, Lovell, was evidently making some disturbance in the House. No doubt that was why he had come—Dalton's boys were all unruly young rascals, in Mr. Manders' opinion.

Moderns and Classics at Rookwood were generally more or less at war, and Lovell, it seemed, was carrying the war into the enemy's country. Roger Manders was the man to deal with him—drastically.

With his gown fluttering behind him, Mr. Manders rushed down the passage like a thunderstorm. On the staircase, quite a lively scene was in progress.

At the foot of the stairs sat Tommy Cook of the Modern Fourth, in a gasping state. He, it appeared, was the fellow Manders had heard bumping. His chums, Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle, were on the stairs, with Arthur Edward Lovell in their grasp. Lovell, clinging to the banisters, was evidently resisting being sent rolling down after Cook. A dozen Modern juniors had gathered round—howling encouragement to the two who were handling Lovell.

"Cave!" gasped Tommy Cook, scrambling to his feet as his Housemaster appeared. "Look out, you men!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Dodd and Doyle together. And they released Arthur Edward Lovell with great suddenness. They had rather forgotten that such a din was likely to reach Manders if he was in his study. Now they were reminded of it.

"Ooooooh!" gasped Lovell.

He was in a breathless state. He looked untidy. His collar was crumpled under one ear, his tie under the other, and his hair looked like a mop. He spluttered wildly for breath.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"What does this uproar mean? What is that Classical boy doing here? But I need not ask!" added Mr. Manders bitterly. "You came here to cause a disturbance, Lovell! I have no doubt of that."

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"Me, sir!" gasped Lovell.
 "You!" rapped Mr. Manders.
 "It—it's all right, sir!" stammered Cook. "Lovell barged me over by—by—by accident, and I—I—I came a purler; I—I mean, I—I fell over—"

"You need make no excuses for Lovell, Cook! I do not believe that he pushed you down the stairs by accident. Lovell, did you push Cook down the stairs?"

"I—I—I sort of biffed into him, sir!"
 "Do you dare to say that it was an accident?" thundered Mr. Manders.

Lovell did not answer that question. In point of fact, he could hardly claim that it had been an accident. Never had a fellow been more deliberately barged over than Tommy Cook had been.

"Descend the stairs at once, Lovell!"
 Lovell, still gasping, descended the stairs. The three Tommies looked dismayed. They had been prepared to rag the Classical junior on their own. But they did not want Manders on the scene. They did not want Lovell taken to his Form-master for a caning. But it was one of Mr. Manders' ways to turn up exactly where he was least wanted.

Certainly, Lovell had asked for it. His amazing neck in walking into Manders' House and barging a Modern fellow down the stairs, was something really rather out of the common. Lovell was a thoughtless fellow at the best of times, but this was a little out of even Lovell's limit.

"Follow me!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Do not put your collar straight, Lovell, and leave your tie where it is. I shall take you to your Form-master exactly as you are. Mr. Dalton shall see you in your present disgraceful and dishevelled state!"

"Oh, sir—"

Buzzzz!
 The sharp buzz of a telephone-bell came down the corridor. Mr. Manders stopped, with a snappish exclamation of impatience. The telephone-bell was buzzing in his study.

"Lovell, you may go—I cannot take you to Mr. Dalton now. I shall report your conduct to him later. Leave this House at once."

"Oh crikey!" gasped Lovell. He stared after Mr. Manders as that gentleman's long legs whisked up the corridor, going back to his study. "Poor old Morny!"

He left the House—and glanced at the spot where he had left Mornington, near Manders' window. That spot was vacant. The dandy of the Fourth was no longer there, and as Lovell walked back to his own House he wondered what was happening to Valentine Mornington in Mr. Manders' study!

Tricked on the Telephone!

MORNY caught his breath.
 "Oh gad! What foul luck!" he muttered.

The buzz of the telephone took Morny by surprise. It made him jump. He was not a foot from Manders' telephone when the bell started its raucous solo.

Tommy Dodd & Co. had wondered why Lovell had barged in and started the shindy on the stairs. They had not guessed—and certainly Mr. Manders hadn't—that it was a deep-laid scheme to draw the Modern master from his study, and give him a little harmless and necessary occupation, while Mornington got busy in that apartment.

Only a few seconds after Manders left

the study by the door, Morny had whipped in at the open window.

Swiftly, silently, he closed the door and got busy. To empty, a bottle of gum into Mr. Manders' armchair was the work of a moment. To up-end his inkpot in the middle of his table was the work of another. Distributing the contents of the coal-scuttle over the carpet took longer—but not very long, for Morny was a rapid worker! Disconnecting the telephone was going to be the next step. But before Morny could carry out that playful design, the bell was buzzing, and the returning footsteps of Mr. Manders were heard in the corridor.

There was no escape for Morny! It was a matter of seconds. There was no time even to clamber out of the window—certainly not to escape from sight. Manders was almost at the door before the bell ceased its buzz. Mornington, barely in time, backed behind the window curtain. Luckily for him it was a long curtain that reached the floor, and as it was pulled aside from the window there was plenty of cover in its folds.

Barely was Morny behind the curtain when the door opened, and Mr. Manders whisked in. He noticed that the door which he had left open was shut, but did not for the moment attend to that circumstance. But he had to take note when he stumbled over a chunk of coal as he whisked across the room to the telephone, which was on a small table beside the window.

"Wha-a-t!" ejaculated Mr. Manders, as he stumbled.

The bell had ceased, and was about to buzz again. But Mr. Manders did not seize the receiver immediately. He stared blankly at the lumps of coal scattered over his carpet. Then his eyes fell on the up-ended inkpot in the middle of the table. Ink was flowing in streams over the table, and dripping down on the floor.

"What—what—what—" stuttered Mr. Manders—"what rascal, what scoundrel—what—what—who—"

Buzzzz!

The telephone bell restarted after the interval. Reminded thus that he had a call to take, Mr. Manders bounced to the instrument, grabbing the receiver off with a grab that made the telephone rock. He was breathing fury. He barked into the transmitter:

"Hallo! Yes—what—"

"That Latcham two-O?" came a rather husky voice. "Mr. Manders?"

"Yes. What is wanted?" rapped Mr. Manders.

He was in the very worst of tempers, and anxious to get finished, and at liberty to deal with the rascals who were booked for exemplary punishment.

"Speaking from Coombe Police Station, sir!" came the husky voice.

"Constable Jones speaking, sir."

Mr. Manders had never heard of Constable Jones, of Coombe Police Station, and did not want to hear of him now. Likewise, he wondered why on earth a police-constable had rung him up from the village station. So did Morny, for that matter. Only the thickness of the curtain was between Morny and the telephone, and he heard the voice that came through almost as clearly as Mr. Manders did.

"What do you want?" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Can you come down to the station, sir?"

"No!" yapped Mr. Manders.

"If you could make it convenient, sir—"

"I can do nothing of the kind!" snapped the Housemaster, "I am not at

present going out of the school gates at all. I have been attacked on several occasions by a ruffianly tramp named Poggers, who is still at large—still at large, sir, which reflects no credit whatever on the local police force."

Morny grinned behind the curtain.

All Rookwood knew that Mr. Manders was keeping within the precincts of the school since his last encounter with Slog Poggers.

Really, Manders was hardly to be blamed for his caution. Slog Poggers was a rather hefty character, and Manders was no fighting man.

"But, sir—" came the voice over the wires.

"You need say no more," rapped Mr. Manders. "I absolutely decline to take one step outside the gates of Rookwood until the police have done their duty—their duty, do you hear? The duty of the police is to protect the public. I have a right to expect to walk the public highways without fear of being attacked by a rascally ruffian—a man, sir, who robbed the headmaster of this school, and has not yet been brought to justice."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Enough!" booted Mr. Manders. "I decline to do anything of the kind, and that is enough, until you can inform me definitely that the wretch Poggers is in custody!"

"Yes, sir; that's how it is—"

"Eh—what?"

"We've got him, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"We've got him at the station now, sir, and if you'd walk down and identify him—"

"Oh," repeated Mr. Manders, "I—I understand! Certainly, constable—I will certainly come, and without delay! You are sure you have the right man?"

"Well, sir, he's got to be identified before he can be charged; but he's the man all right. A word from you, sir, will be enough, as you've seen him a good many times. And if you're going to charge him, sir—"

"Certainly I am going to charge him! I am going to charge him with assault—violent assault, and robbery! He robbed me of an overcoat—luckily an old coat, as it happened, nevertheless, a robbery. Only a few days ago he attacked me in Latcham Wood when I was walking to Bagshot School. Most assuredly I shall charge him!"

"Very good, sir! Then you'll be coming—"

"Within the hour."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Not at all, constable—not at all!" said Mr. Manders, quite genially.

He put up the receiver in a state of great satisfaction—such satisfaction that he forgot, for the moment, the rag in his study. It was an immense relief to Mr. Manders to hear that Slog Poggers had been at last laid by the heels.

Not only had the rascal robbed the headmaster of Rookwood of a wallet packed with notes—not only had he caused wild excitement at Rookwood School, hunted all over the place, and finally run down in Mr. Manders' own room, but since then he had haunted the vicinity, and made a special mark of Mr. Manders.

Why, was rather a mystery. Mr. Manders suspected that he was not quite right in the head—for his object seemed to be to rob Mr. Manders of his overcoat.

Naturally, it was very disquieting to Mr. Manders to be haunted by an insane, or semi-insane, ruffian with a maniacal desire to tear his overcoat from his back.

It was such glad news that Manders

rose from the telephone with something approaching a smile on his face. It was a deep, deep relief to hear that that dangerous character was "lagged" at last. Mr. Manders purred with satisfaction.

And Mr. Slog Poggers stepped from a telephone box at Latcham, equally satisfied, if not more so.

Mr. Poggers had cause to be satisfied, as the man he wanted had undertaken to walk down Coombe Lane within the hour, which gave Mr. Poggers ample time to get on the spot to lie in wait for him.

Mr. Manders' satisfaction would have been considerably dashed, no doubt, had he known that "Constable Jones" was otherwise named Slog Poggers—and that Mr. Poggers, so far from being in safe custody, had just been telephoning to him.

squatting at the phone. Well, he wouldn't be phoning like that if he knew that Morny was in the study, would he?" added Lovell argumentatively.

"Oh, my summer bonnet!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Morny must have skidded under the table, or something," said Lovell. "I'm certain Manders hasn't spotted him yet. We may be able to do something. Might get Manders out again somehow—what? Come on!"

The Co. followed Lovell across to Manders' House. As they went Lovell explained how it had happened. His chums listened with feelings hardly to be expressed in words. It appeared that Lovell was already booked for a row for having kicked up a shindy on the Modern side. Now he was going back to ask for some more!

"If you can't talk sense——" hooted Lovell.

"You wouldn't understand it if I did, old bean! What's the good of talking sense to a blithering idiot?"

Lovell breathed hard.

"Look here, I'm going to help Morny, if I can!" he snapped. "Manders seems to have forgotten that he was going to take me to Dicky Dalton. I'm going to remind him. That will give Morny a chance."

And Arthur Edward Lovell, leaving his friends, walked straight up to the open window of Mr. Manders' study.

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome watched him uneasily. They shared his concern for Mornington—hidden in the study, with his escape cut off and discovery impending over him. Certainly, if Mr. Manders, reminded of Lovell, marched off to Dalton's study with him it would



"Ooogh!" gasped Mr. Manders as Slog Poggers leaped out on him and seized him by the collar. The master gave Poggers one startled, terrified look and almost collapsed. He could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw the ruffian whom he supposed to be in the hands of the police!

Lovell Means Well!

"**A**NYTHING up?"

Jimmy Silver hardly needed to ask that question. It was plain, from the look on Lovell's face, that something was up.

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome were looking for Lovell. He was late for tea in the end study. But they forgot tea at the sight of his dismayed face.

"Been hunting for trouble again?" asked Newcome, with a touch of sarcasm.

"And finding it?" inquired Raby.

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Lovell.

"Poor old Morny——"

"Morny?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"What about Morny?"

"He's fairly landed," said Lovell dismally.

"Thank goodness it's Morny and not you!" said Raby. "You've woke up enough trouble this term. But where's Morny?"

"In Manders' study."

"What?"

"Come along with me," said Lovell. "We may be able to help him somehow. He's trapped like a rabbit in Manders' study! Manders hasn't got him yet—I squinted at his window, and he was

From a safe distance the Fistical Four "squinted" at Manders' window. They had a glimpse of Manders. He was not sitting at the telephone now as when Lovell had taken his last squint. He was standing near the window—they glimpsed the lean figure and narrow face. Apparently he had finished on the phone.

"And—and Morny's there?" asked Jimmy Silver. Manders could be seen, but there was no sign of Valentine Mornington.

"He's there," said Lovell. "There'll be a fearful row if he snaffles Morny. He got Morny a whopping the other day, and Morny had it fixed to make him sit up—a regular rag, you know! Morny's rather a reckless ass to try on such a game——"

"He seems to have got a more reckless ass to pull his chestnuts out of the fire!" said Raby.

"Don't jaw!" snapped Lovell. "Manders hasn't spotted him yet. Look here, if we could get Manders away——"

"Let's go into the House and kick up a shindy," suggested Newcome, with deep sarcasm. "You've only got one whopping to come, and you can do with another—and one each for us will be more amusing than tea in the study!"

give Mornington a chance. But they were more concerned about Lovell than about Morny; neither did they think that any state of affairs was likely to be improved by Arthur Edward barging into it.

Lovell grinned as he looked in at the open window.

Mr. Manders was staring round the study with an expression on his face rather like that of a tiger eager to get at his prey. The satisfaction he had derived from the talk on the telephone faded away as he gazed at the coils scattered over his carpet and the ink streaming from his table. Now he had observed that his armchair was also streaming with gun. Breathing wrath, the Modern master gazed at the havoc.

"Who has done this?" Lovell heard his voice. "What young rascal—what depraved young scoundrel——"

Mr. Manders broke off as he sighted Lovell standing under the window. Arthur Edward ceased to grin immediately as the Modern master's baleful eye turned on him. Clearly it was no time for grinning!

"Oh! You!" almost hissed Mr. Manders, whisking across to the window.

"I'm waiting for you, sir!" said Lovell meekly.

"What—what?"

"I—I thought you were going to take me to Mr. Dalton, sir."

Mr. Manders stared at him. It almost seemed as if Lovell was anxious for the Modern master to take him to Richard Dalton—which was certainly very unusual. However, now that he was at liberty to deal with the young rascal, Mr. Manders asked nothing better.

"I shall certainly do so, Lovell, and at once!" he snapped. "You may wait for me at the door. I shall—"

Mr. Manders broke off, with a convulsive start.

Standing at the window to speak to Lovell, his elbow came in contact with the bunched curtain drawn to the side of the window.

There was nothing in that, of course, to make Mr. Manders start. What made him start was the fact that his elbow bumped on something behind the curtain!

It was something harder than the curtain—and it was something that moved as Manders' bony elbow collided with it through the curtain.

It was, as a matter of fact, Valentine Mornington's nose—and Morny barely repressed a yelp at the unexpected knock.

"What—what—" stuttered the surprised Housemaster.

He stared, or, rather, glared, at the curtain. Something was behind it—something that moved! The truth flashed into Manders' mind at once! The "something" that stirred behind the curtain was evidently a "somebody." The ragger was still in his study—he had not escaped, as Manders had taken for granted—he had only dodged out of sight.

Grasping the curtain, Mr. Manders dragged it away with a wrench that nearly jerked the hangings off the rings above.

"Oh gad!" gasped Mornington, as he was suddenly revealed.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Lovell.

"Mornington!" thundered Mr. Manders.

His eyes gleamed at the Classical junior. Morny's eyes flashed at Lovell's dismayed face, outside the window, for a second. Lovell had meant well—he had meant the very best. But he had, unfortunately, caused Morny to be discovered by drawing Manders to the window and causing him to establish contact between his bony elbow and Morny's nose!

"Mornington!" repeated Mr. Manders, almost in a shriek. "You—here! You have done this! You have upset my ink—upset my coals—you—"

Words failed Mr. Manders.

As a Modern master he had no right, and no power, to inflict punishment on Classical juniors. He could only report a Classical offender to his Form-master, or, in serious cases, to the Head. But Mr. Manders forgot that now. He forgot everything but that his study had been ragged and that the ragger was standing there, under his eyes and within his grasp.

He reached out and grasped Mornington by the collar. With his other hand he grabbed up a cane from the table.

Whack, whack, whack!

Mornington roared.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh! Ow! Leggo!" yelled Mornington, as the cane descended in a shower of terrific swipes. He struggled frantically.

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"Oh crumbs!" gasped Lovell, staring in blankly at the window. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome, farther off, watched breathlessly. The swipes of the cane rang like pistol-shots through the open window into the quad.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooo!" yelled Mornington. "Leggo! Let me go, you old ass! You've no right to cane me—Yarooo! You've no right to—Whooooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Right or wrong, Manders was caning him—such a caning as Morny had never experienced before—though he had often asked for trouble in his career at Rookwood. A Head's flogging had been within his experience, but it was nothing to this. Whack, whack, whack!

Morny struggled. But Manders' arm, though bony, seemed to have plenty of muscle in it. He held the dandy of the Fourth bent over the inky table, with a grip like steel, and his right arm rose and fell—whack, whack, whack!

Morny yelled and struggled and kicked. But it bootied not. Outside, the Fistical Four gazed, spellbound. Within the House, Tommy Dodd & Co. listened to the uproar from Manders' study, and wondered who was getting it! Heedless of spectators, heedless of listeners-in, Manders whacked and whacked till his bony arm was tired.

Not till then did he cease to swipe. By that time Morny was more tired than Manders was.

"Now—now go!" gasped Mr. Manders. Breathless, he pointed to the door with the cane. "Go!"

And Morny went—wriggling like an eel.

Two In Ambush!

"I'D go to Dalton about it!" said Townsend of the Fourth.

"I'd go to the Head!" said Smythe of the Shell.

"Sheer cheek of Manders!" said Lovell.

"Whopping Classical!" exclaimed Patty of the Fourth. "It's the limit!"

"The jolly old limit!" agreed Oswald.

There was general indignation on the Classical side. Sympathisers surrounded Morny in his own House.

His chum, Erroll, said nothing. He sympathised, but he could not be blind to the fact that Morny had asked for it—begged for it. Certainly, it was quite out of order for a Modern master to whop Classical fellows. But it was hardly in order for a Classical fellow to be discovered in a Modern master's study, having just recklessly ragged the same.

Mr. Dalton, no doubt, would have been annoyed at what had happened. But it was difficult to see what he could have done—Morny being so utterly and hopelessly in the wrong.

Not that Morny had any idea of going to Dalton, or going to the Head. He hardly listened to the advice showered on him.

In his study, No. 4 in the Classical Fourth, he wriggled and wriggled. Morny was tough—hard as nails. But that terrific whopping had got through his toughness. He uttered no sound, though he had yelled loudly enough in Manders' study.

There were a lot of fellows in the study and at the open doorway. It was quite an indignation meeting. Fellows had forgotten tea in the studies. Everybody was excited and indignant. Morny said nothing. He wriggled.

"Modern beaks can't whop Classical!" said Arthur Edward Lovell argumentatively. "They just can't."

"It's too thick!" declared Topham. "I'd go to the Head—"

"Rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "If the Head heard what Morny did in Manders' study, he might add a little more, and Morny's had enough."

"I tell you Modern beaks can't whop Classical," said Lovell. "I'd like to know what Rookwood is coming to when Modern beaks whop Classical men. I've got it coming—from Dicky. But I'd like to see a Modern beak lay a paw on me."

Lovell meant to be sympathetic, but, as usual, he put it unfortunately. Mornington's glittering eyes turned on him.

"You fool!" he said.

"Eh!"

"Manders would never have found me in his study if you hadn't barged in, like the silly idiot you are."

"I jolly well meant—"

"Idiot!"

"Look here, Morny—"

"Fool!"

"If that's all you've got to say when a man's sympathising with you, Morny—"

"Dolt!"

Arthur Edward Lovell tramped out of Study No. 4. Mornington glanced round at the other sympathisers.

"When you fellows are done jawing, you might cut and give a fellow a rest," he said.

They looked at him. Sympathy faded away to a considerable extent. Morny was not really a fellow to be sympathised with. He hated sympathy.

"Well, if that's how you take it—," said Smythe of the Shell warmly.

"Oh, get out!"

"Look here—," said Townsend.

"Get out!"

"I'll get out fast enough," bawled Torny, "and I'm jolly glad Manders whopped you, and I wish he'd given you a few more!"

And Townsend marched off with Smythe, and the rest of the sympathisers followed, leaving Morny with Erroll in the study. Jimmy Silver lingered in the doorway, and Mornington gave him a bitter look.

"Will you shut that door?" he asked.

"Don't be an ass, Morny!" said the captain of the Fourth quietly. "You asked for what you got from Manders. He's a bit of a tartar, but you asked for what you got. I can see what's in your silly head, and you'd better wash it out, and leave Manders alone."

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"I'll leave him alone when I've given him some of what he's given me," he said. "Now get out, and mind your own business."

"Keep an eye on that silly ass, Erroll!" said Jimmy Silver, and he shut the door and went.

Mornington, still wriggling, leaned at the side of the study window. It was a bright and sunny afternoon, quite warm for March—one of those balmy spring days that give promise of summer. Plenty of fellows were in the quad, and on Big Side games-practice was going on. But Morny did not look at the fellows in the quad or the game in the distance. His glance turned on the gates.

Erroll looked at him uneasily. Only too well he knew that thoughts of vengeance were burning in the mind of his reckless chum. He was intensely anxious about what Morny might do before the effect of that whopping wore off.

"What about tea, old chap?" he asked.

"Hang tea!"

"Look here, Morny, what are you thinking of?" demanded Erroll.

"You know what I'm thinking of," answered Mornington coolly. "I'm going to make Manders squirm." He laughed savagely. "I'm not going to walk into his House and hit him in the eye. More ways than one of killin' a cat. I'm not goin' to ask for the sack. But—"

Q "But what?"

"Wait till he walks out!" muttered Morny. "Wait till I get a chance at him outside the school, with nobody to see—"

Erroll smiled, relieved by that remark.

"You'll have to wait long enough for that," he said. "Manders never goes out of gates now, and isn't likely to till that man Poggers is run in."

Morny opened his lips—and closed them again.

He had not forgotten what he had heard on Mr. Manders' telephone. That afternoon Manders was to walk down to Coombe to identify Slog Poggers at the police station. No one knew anything about it, excepting Mornington—but Morny knew! And his fierce, angry thoughts were concentrating on that—on Manders walking down a shady lane, with no eyes to see what might happen to him. Manders had said that he would go within the hour—and it was nearly an hour now since Morny had heard that talk on the telephone.

That was why he was watching the gates from his study window. He was waiting to see Manders start.

At the moment Mornington was utterly reckless, and savagely resolved to give back some of what he had had from Manders.

There was no doubt that the Modern master had exceeded his authority, and over-done that whopping. That was no excuse for Mornington's savage thoughts of vengeance, and, indeed, the lapse of twenty-four hours would have made all the difference. It was unfortunate that the opportunity came while Morny was still writhing from that severe thrashing, and thinking of nothing but vengeance.

Erroll said no more, but busied himself getting tea in the study. He hoped that his chum would feel better after tea. Anyhow, if he was going to wait till Manders went out of gates, thoughts of vengeance would have faded away long before that happened—so far as Erroll knew.

Unheeding him, Morny watched from the window.

His eyes gleamed at the sight of Mr. Manders walking down from his House. He was not wearing his overcoat on that warm spring afternoon, but he had his hat on, and was evidently going out. Quietly, Morny watched him till he passed out at the distant gateway.

"Tea's ready, Morny," said Erroll.

"I'm going out for a stroll," Morny

smiled sourly. "A walk will do me good—after what I've had from Manders."

"Oh, all right!"

Erroll glanced after him doubtfully as he left the study. But he did not know what Morny knew, and certainly had not the faintest suspicion of what was in his chum's mind.

Morry left the House—but did not approach the gates. It was not yet lock-up, but he did not intend to be seen going out—in view of what was to happen to Mr. Manders! He sauntered away to a quiet spot in Little Quad, and dropped over the school wall. A minute or two more, and he was in the

What was he going to do? He hardly knew himself—except that he was going to repay that savage beating somehow. He was ahead of Mr. Manders—a good distance ahead. He stopped, and cut a stick in the thicket. With the stick grasped in his hand, he hurried on—to wait at the dip in the lane, where overhanging trees made it very dusky—almost dark, now that the dusk of evening was at hand.

It was, perhaps, the feel of the stick in his hand that brought more keenly to Morry's mind the madness of what he was planning—and not only its folly, but its wickedness. Even if he was successful, if he escaped unrecognised, what would he be, even in his own estimation, but a young ruffian and hooligan? And what chance had he of escaping unrecognised, unless he struck from behind like a coward? His face crimsoned at that thought.

More slowly he approached the hedge, where it looked over the dip in the lane. He was twitching with pain—he was bitterly and savagely angry and revengeful—but his mind was in doubt. He did not know what he was going to do, or whether, after all, he was going to do anything.

With a black brow—as angry with himself as with Manders—he peered through the hedge into the dusky lane. And then, in his surprise, he forgot his thoughts of vengeance as he stared blankly at a figure crouching in the dry ditch beyond the hedge—with its back to him, watching the lane from that place of concealment. Although its back

was to him, Mornington knew who it was—and knew that Slog Poggers was not in custody at Coombe Police Station, but was crouching by the dusky lane, waiting for Mr. Manders!

Kidnapped !

SLOG POGGERS heard no sound in the hedge behind him, or did not heed it if he heard. Slog's attention was concentrated on the lane, his ears intently straining at the sound of approaching footfalls. Crouching in the deep dry ditch, hidden by straggling willows from the road, he waited and watched—and his piggy eyes gleamed.

He knew that the "bony old covey" would come—he had only to wait. The lane was lonely, especially at the fall of dusk. At long last he was going to get his thievish hands on the overcoat, in the lining of which he had hidden the stolen wallet, that night weeks ago in Manders' House at Rookwood.

Mr. Poggers had been quite beaten by the Modern master's caution in remaining within the precincts of the school ever since Slog's last attempt. It seemed to Mr. Poggers quite a brain-wave, that idea of tricking Mr. Manders out of his refuge, by telephoning news of his own arrest. He had not been sure of success, but it had worked like a charm. For it was Mr. Manders who was coming up the lane!

One hefty punch, a grab at the thick grey overcoat, a rapid flight, and that would be that! Once the wallet hidden in the lining of that overcoat was in his hands, Mr. Poggers would not let the grass grow under his feet—he was not likely to stop till he was in the next county! This, he knew, was his last chance. Once bitten was twice shy, and

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the "bony old covey" could not be tricked out of gates again. But it was all right this time!

But was it?

He sighted the lean angular figure coming up the lane; he knew the hard, narrow face; he stirred in his lair, and prepared to spring, and then a startling change came over his stubbly face.

It was the bony old covey—that was all right. But he was not wearing the overcoat!

Slog gazed at him blankly.

He had never counted on that. He had never even thought of it. Every time he had seen Mr. Manders out of the school, Mr. Manders had been wearing an overcoat. Now he was not!

The warm mildness of that March day accounted for it, of course. As the plays in their courses fought against Sisera of old, so the seasons fought against Mr. Poggers. Winter was giving place to spring, and, for the first time in Slog's experience, Mr. Manders was walking abroad without an overcoat.

It was bitter!

Slog felt that it was cruel luck! Fate was hard and unjust to a bloke who wanted nothing but to recapture a wallet he had pinched more than a month ago. It seemed like the K.O. to the dismayed Mr. Poggers, for it was, as he realised clearly, his last chance. Manders would never be tricked out of safety again. It was now or never—and the bony old covey had come out without the much-desired overcoat! Slog could have groaned. He could almost have cried. Instead of either, Slog swore. With bitter emphasis, he requested unknown powers to strike him pink and blue!

Mr. Manders reached the spot where the footpad crouched in ambush. He was thinking of Slog; of the pleasure of identifying him at the police station, and making a formal charge. But he was not thinking of seeing him.

The next moment, he did see him—and felt his grasp. Slog, desperate, jumped out of the ditch and seized him by the collar.

"Ooogh!" gasped Mr. Manders.

He gave Mr. Poggers one startled, terrified gasp, and almost collapsed. He could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw the ruffian whom he supposed to be safe in the hands of the police. Slog, only too evidently, was not in the hands of the police. Mr. Manders was in the hands of Slog!

"You ole fool, you!" said Slog between his teeth. "You ole sketch, you!"

You come out without it, 'ave you? Strike me pink!"

"Urrghh!" Mr. Manders gurgled, half-throttled by the grasp on his collar.

"Ugh! Release me—urrghh!"

"You ain't got it on!" hissed Slog. "Blow you, you ain't got it on! 'Owd a bloke know you wouldn't 'ave it on! I ask you."

"I—I—urrghh!" gurgled Mr. Manders.

He cast a frantic glance up and down the dusky lane. No one was in sight! Neither Mr. Manders nor Slog dreamed that a Rookwood junior was watching the scene through the hedge—grinning!

Mornny, in his present mood, found this amusing!

In any other mood, he would have weighed in with the stick in his hand. Wincing with pain from the thrashing he had had from Manders, he had no idea of intervening to help the man who had swiped him, only an hour ago, not wisely but too well! Keeping behind the hedge, Mornny watched—and grinned!

"I got you," said Mr. Poggers, in a ferocious growl, "and I ain't got no chance of getting you agin! You ain't got what I want, blow your ugly mug! But mebbe you'll send for it, if I keep you safe in a quiet place for a bit—wot? Mebbe you'll see that I get it if I park you in the middle of the wood, and twist your neck occasional, till I get 'old of it!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Certainly!" gasped Mr. Manders. "I—I shall be very—er—ah—urrgh—very pleased—"

"Old your jaw," said Slog, "and 'op it with me! And you let out so much as one yelp, old 'un, and I'm telling you that you won't know what 'it you! That's a tip, you 'ole sketch; you!"

With an iron grasp on Mr. Manders' collar, Slog hooked him through a gap in the hedge, not three yards from the spot where Mornnington stood watching.

There was a gasp from Mr. Manders—but not so much as a yelp! He did not want to test the weight of Slog's knuckly fist.

"Oh gad!" breathed Mornnington.

Keeping in cover of the hedge, he watched Slog and his prisoner with bulging eyes. The footpad was kidnapping Manders. It was amazing—but there it was! He wanted something, or other from Manders, and he was going to keep hold of Manders till he got it. Blankly Mornnington watched the ruffian hooking Mr. Manders along behind the hedge, till they disappeared into the dusky shades of Coombe Wood.

"Oh gad!" gasped Mornny, when they were gone.

He pitched away his stick, jumped into the lane, and walked back to the school, laughing.

Old Mack was about to close the gates when the dandy of the Fourth strolled in, and old Mack gave him a look as he passed. The grin on Mornny's face made old Mack suspect that the young rascal had been up to some mischief—not a new thing for Mornnington!

Jimmy Silver stared at Mornnington as he sauntered into the House.

He was quite surprised by the change in Mornny.

He had last seen him wriggling with anguish, black with rage, meditating vengeance. Now he saw him smiling cheerfully, like a fellow who found the world a quite amusing place to live in.

"Feeling better, old man?" asked Jimmy amicably.

"Heaps!" said Mornny.

"Good! Let old Manders rip!" said Jimmy.

"I'm letting him rip!"

"That's right! Much better to leave him alone," said Jimmy.

Mornnington chuckled.

"Think so?" he asked.

"Sure of it, old chap," answered Jimmy. "Leave him alone, and give him a wide berth, and have nothing whatever to do with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornny. "Silver, old man, that advice is too good not to be taken."

Mornny walked on, leaving Uncle James of Rookwood staring after him, puzzled. Jimmy had given him good advice, and he could see nothing to laugh at in that advice—especially if Mornny was going to act on it! Mornny, apparently, saw some joke in it which was quite hidden from Jimmy Silver.

Mornny kept the joke to himself. What was going to happen to Mr. Manders in the hands of Slog Poggers he did not know, and did not—at present—care! When late that evening a rumour spread that Manders was missing from his House, and that nobody knew where he was, Mornny chuckled—and said nothing. Mornny had asked for that whopping in Manders' study, but really it would have profited Mr. Manders not to have laid it on quite so hard!

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