

"FIGGY'S GRAND CIRCUS!" THIS WEEK'S BEST SCHOOL YARN —STARRING THE ST. JIM'S OHMS— INSIDE.



CIRCUS HORSE AND ELEPHANT RUN WILD AT ST. JIM'S!—

FIGGY'S GRAND



Cowboy Kit struggled desperately to quell the savage spirit of his steed, but it was no use. The animal broke away at last and bolted. "Look out!" yelled Tom Merry, and the crowd of juniors scattered in hot haste from the charging runaway.

CHAPTER 1.

Under Suspicious Circumstances!

"YOUNG raskils!" said Taggles. That was Taggles' fixed opinion.

As Taggles was school porter at St. Jim's, and had seen generations of schoolboys come and go at the old college, Taggles certainly ought to have known.

"Hup to some mischief, as usual!" growled Taggles, glowering in the direction of the woodshed. "I wonder wot it is now!"

"Hallo, Taggy, old son!" said a cheery voice, as Tom Merry of the Shell came by. "Lovely afternoon, isn't it? That's why you're looking so good-tempered."

Taggles rested upon his broom, and regarded Tom Merry with much disfavour.

"Wot is it now, Master Merry?" he demanded.

"That depends," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "What is what?"

"Wot's the little game?"

"Game?" said Tom Merry innocently.

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"Yes!" said Taggles emphatically. "Fust I seed Master Blake slip across to the woodshed. Then I seed Master Herries foller him there. Then I seed Master D'Arcy. Then I seed Master Manners. And I says, says I, 'Wot's the little game?' I says."

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a very important meeting, about a very important person," said Tom Merry mysteriously. "We're meeting in the woodshed to discuss a very important subject."

"Hoh!"

"By the way, it's your birthday to-morrow, isn't it, Taggles?"

"Yes, Master Merry," said Taggles, thawing a little.

"By Jove," said Tom, "you keep awfully youthful, Taggy! Nobody would take you for ninety, to look at you!"

Taggles turned purple.

"I ain't ninety!" he roared. "I'm sixty-five to-morrow!"

"My mistake!" said Tom Merry blandly. "I didn't know you were such a kid!"

Taggles jabbed away savagely with the broom, and declined to answer.

Tom Merry whistled cheerily and walked on, and disappeared into the woodshed. Five minutes later Monty Lowther of the Shell came along, and Taggles bestowed a glare upon him. Monty Lowther replied to it with a benevolent smile.

"Hallo, Taggy! How does it feel to be a hundred?" he inquired.

"I ain't a 'undred!"

"Well, well, the difference isn't worth mentioning. You will be to-morrow," said Monty Lowther soothingly.

"I won't be!"

"Why, isn't your birthday to-morrow?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

"Yes, it is, Master Lowther; but I shan't be a 'undred," said Taggles. "I shall be sixty-five."

"You're sure it isn't a hundred?" said Lowther.

Taggles snorted.

Monty Lowther sighed, and walked on to the woodshed.

"Young raskils!" repeated Taggles, glowering at the woodshed. "I've a good mind to report 'em!"

Taggles thought it over. But he concluded that there was very little to

—SCHOOL FUN AND CIRCUS THRILLS ABOUND IN THIS GREAT YARN.

CIRCUS!

By
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 2.

An Interrupted Meeting!

TOM MERRY glanced round upon the meeting, pleased with the impression he had made.

The juniors were all listening with great attention.

Taggles was an exceedingly crusty old gentleman, and he had had many a rub with the junior boys of both Houses. A surprise for Taggles, of course, seemed to the juniors to mean naturally, a jape of some sort on the school porter, and they were all prepared to rally round Tom Merry for that purpose.

"Go ahead!" said Blake.

"Pile in!" said Herries. "I'm with you all the way. Taggles threw a stick at my bulldog the other day. You know what an inoffensive animal Towser is, too. Poor old Towser had just nipped hold of his trousers—that was all. He's so playful."

"Weally, Hewwies, I have often remarked that that wroten bulldog of yours has no respect for a fellow's twousahs!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"I've remarked just as often that you are an ass—"

"I wufese to be called an ass!"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, "I rise to a point of order. Is this meeting about Taggles, or about Towser? I'm asking the honourable chairman for information."

"Order!"

"It's about Taggles," said Tom Merry. "Shut up, Gussy! Shut up. Herries! Blessed if you Fourth Form kids know how to behave at a meeting!"

"What's that?" demanded Blake warmly. "Whom are you calling kids?"

"Order!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "some of you appear to be labouring under a misapprehension. This meeting is not called for the purpose of ragging Taggles."

"Oh!"

"Taggles has a birthday to-morrow, and we're going to give him a pleasant surprise on his birthday. Taggles has deserved well of St. Jim's."

"Has he?" said several voices in surprised tones.

"Of course he has. He's been school porter for dog's ages, and he's a regular institution here. He's getting old, and my idea is to give him a benefit."

"A—a—a what?"

"A benefit. We're going to raise funds and give him a testimonial and a purse containing something in cash, you know—as a sign of appreciation on the part of the juniors of St. Jim's."

Monty Lowther, Manners, and Figgins, who were in the secret already, nodded approval; the other fellows looked astounded.

"I'm not denying that we've had our rubs with Taggles," said Tom Merry. "But he's going to have a birthday. And he's an institution at St. Jim's—not exactly a wholly agreeable institution, but he's part of the old place—like the Head's cane, for instance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's suggestion had come as a surprise to most of the fellows, but on second thoughts they were inclined to approve of it.

After all Taggles, the porter, was, as Tom Merry said, a part of the old place—a regular institution at St. Jim's.

He had been there so many years that

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report in the juniors simply entering the woodshed. The woodshed, of course, was not out of bounds.

Taggles resolved to wait until the suspected mischief reached a further stage.

Three juniors came by arm-in-arm a few minutes later, evidently bound for that important meeting in the woodshed. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House at St. Jim's, and the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co.

"Ho!" said Taggles. "I know what it is now—another of their blessed 'Ouse rows, and my woodshed is going to be turned upside-down! Ho! Master Figgins!"

Figgins & Co. halted, and bestowed pleasant smiles upon Taggles.

"Feeling fit this afternoon?" asked Figgins genially.

"I'm fit enough!" growled Taggles.

"You're wearing jolly well, Taggles," said Kerr encouragingly. "It isn't every school porter who makes a century, not out!"

"I ain't made a century!" howled the exasperated Taggles. "I'm sixty-five to-morrow, Master Kerr, and well you know it!"

"Well, sixty-five isn't a bad innings," said Fatty Wynn, "and no sign of the wicket going down yet, either."

"Look 'ere, I ain't 'avin' no bloom in 'Ouse rows in my woodshed!" said Taggles, shaking a warning forefinger at the New House trio. "I warned yer fair and square. Honly the hother day my woodshed was mucked up, and I 'ad to stack up all the faggots again, and I'm fed-up! I ain't 'avin' any more of it! I'll report yer!"

Figgins grinned.

"Isn't a House row this time, Taggy," he said. "We're going to a very important meeting."

Taggles grunted.

"Now, don't lose your temper the day before your birthday, Taggy," said Kerr. "Try to keep pleasant till you've fairly turned ninety-four."

"I ain't ninety-four, you—you—you—"

Figgins & Co. walked on before Taggles could finish. They disappeared into the woodshed.

Taggles jammed his broom into the corner and snorted again.

"I'll keep a hey on them," he said, "and at the first sign of a row I'll report 'em! I'll bring Master Knox down on 'em! Master Knox is always glad to catch 'em out! I'm not goin' to be worried to death by a parcel of young raskils!"

And Taggles approached the woodshed.

Taggles was a tactician in his way. He did not approach the door of the shed, but walked very quietly towards the window. At the window he could hear all that was going on, and a corner of the shed screened him from the sight of any fresh arrivals.

Inside the shed there was a buzz of voices.

Nearly a dozen juniors of both Houses had met there, and Tom Merry was addressing the meeting:

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, this meeting has been called for a most important object—"

"I don't think Taggles would like to be alluded to as an object," said Monty Lowther, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Order!"

"Shurrup!"

"Cheese it!"

"Young raskils!" murmured Taggles, outside the window. "Some more of their tricks on me—drat 'em! I'll report 'em!"

"Important object," said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen—"

The door opened, and Kangaroo of the Shell came in, followed by Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence—three New House fellows. Reilly, Kerruish, and Page of the School House followed them in. Reilly pushed back his cuffs as he entered.

"Sure, and I'm ready!" he exclaimed. "Here's the New House bounders! Pile in!"

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry. "This isn't a scrapping match!"

It was a happy thought on the part of Tom Merry & Co. to give old Taggles, the school porter, a benefit on his birthday. But in "raising the wind" the chums of St. Jim's raised more fun and thrills than cash!

"Sure, what are we here for, then?" demanded Reilly in surprise.

"Ass! It's a meeting—a peaceful meeting—"

"Oh, all right!" said Reilly. "I'll be as peaceable as a little lamb. But what is it about entirely?"

"Taggles."

"Taggles!" repeated Reilly.

"Yes. Mind, Taggles mustn't know a word about it," added Tom Merry in a warning voice.

And Taggles, outside the window, chuckled grimly.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Kerruish. "Get to the washing!"

"We're going to give Taggles a surprise—the surprise of his life," said Tom Merry impressively.

Taggles, outside the window, grunted.

"Ho, har you?" he murmured. "Taggles will 'ave somethin' to say about that, I think. I'll report yer!"

And Taggles glided silently away and went in search of Knox of the Sixth—the most unpleasant prefect of St. Jim's, who was the special enemy of Tom Merry & Co. And the meeting remained in blissful unconsciousness of the fact that Taggles had overheard them and had gone to report them to the prefect.

he had forgotten himself how many it was. He remembered headmasters there before the time of Dr. Holmes; and Dr. Holmes had been headmaster far beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant, with the exception of Taggles.

"In honouring Taggles," went on Tom Merry, who had evidently prepared a little speech in advance, "we are honouring ourselves and the old school and old age, you know. Of course, Taggles isn't so very old; sixty-five is quite youthful in these days. But he has been here from—from—"

"From time immemorial," suggested Blake.

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "I like that. We'll put that in the testimonial. Taggles has been here from time immemorial, and we're going to recognise his long and faithful service on his sixty-fifth birthday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and we've got lots of time, especially as Abbotsford have scratched their match at the last moment," said Tom Merry. "My idea is to put our heads together and raise funds for giving Taggles a really stunning surprise on his birthday."

"Hear, hear!"

"Both Houses will stand together in the matter," added Tom Merry. "All House rows are off now. It's pax."

"Hear, hear!"

"And, mind, not a word to Taggles. It's got to come as a great surprise."

"Agreed!" said Figgins heartily. "We're quite ready to take the matter in hand, if you School House chaps will back us up."

"Oh, quite!" said Kerr

"That isn't exactly what's wanted," said Tom Merry grimly. "You see, we're managing the affair ourselves, and we want you New House chaps to back us up."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon Figgins. "I'm surprised at you, Figgins!"

Figgins sniffed.

"Well, you see, you School House kids will make a muck of it," he explained. "You'd better leave it in our hands."

"Sensible thing to do!" remarked Redfern.

"Don't be funny, Figgins!"

"Don't be an ass, Tom Merry!"

"Order!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Order yourselves!" said Redfern indignantly. "Of course the New House will have to manage it. Don't you want it to be a success?"

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Funds will have to be raised," said Figg. "A subscription among ourselves won't amount to much. We've got to raise funds, and that will require ideas. And where will you School House chaps be then?"

"Echo answers where!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Rats!"

"We jolly well shan't come to the New House for ideas!" said Tom Merry warmly. "What you fellows have got to do is to back us up—"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"Look here, you New House fat-heads—"

"Yah! School House duffers! Rats!"

"Oh, chuck them out intirely!" exclaimed Reilly. "Sure, and I knew there would be trouble with them. Chuck them out on their necks!"

"Like to see you do it!" said Figgins belligerently.

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"Faith, and I'll—"

"Yah! Go home!"

"Ye New House spalpeen!"

"You bog-trotter!"

That was enough for Reilly. He rushed at Figgins, and clasped him in a loving embrace, and they waltzed round the woodshed. There was a crash as they bumped into a pile of faggots and brought them to the ground.

"Order!" roared Tom Merry.

He rushed to separate the combatants, and grasped Figgins by the ears. Kerr promptly rushed to his chum's rescue, and dragged Tom Merry off. Tom Merry and Kerr were rolling on the floor in another moment.

"Order!"

"Stop it!"

"Order! Order!"

There was a roar of voices in the woodshed. In the midst of the din the door opened, and Taggles appeared, followed by Knox, the prefect.

"Ere they are!" roared Taggles. "I knew wot it would be—wreckin' my woodshed, same as they did before! Young raskils!"

"Stop that row!" commanded Knox.

Crash!

Figgins and Reilly bumped into the prefect and sent him flying. Knox gave a yell, and sat down in the doorway.

"Ow! You young villains! Ow!"

"I'll fetch Mr. Railton!" gasped Taggles.

"Well, you blessed ungrateful old sinner!" exclaimed Monty Lowther indignantly.

"I told yer I'd report yer!" said Taggles.

"You—you—you—"

Knox scrambled to his feet.

"Clear out of here at once!" he shouted. "Every boy present will take fifty lines! You, Reilly, and you, Figgins, will report yourself to the Head for assaulting a prefect! Now clear off at once!"

The meeting broke up in dismay.

Taggles chuckled as the juniors retired from the woodshed. Tom Merry gave him a reproachful look.

"That's too jolly bad of you, Taggles!"

Taggles snorted.

"I ain't 'avin' any!" he said. "I told you as 'ow I'd report yer!"

"We'll jolly well chuck the idea now!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully.

"No, we won't," said Tom Merry. "We'll heap coals of fire on his head!"

"Wot!" roared Taggles. "Let me catch you a-tryin' to put coals on my 'ead, that's all! I'll report yer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors departed, leaving Taggles with a brow like thunder. He was looking a little alarmed, too. The juniors were very exasperated, and there was no telling what wild young rascals like Tom Merry & Co. might do.

"I'll report 'em to the Head!" gasped Taggles at last. "So that's the idea, is it—the surprise they was goin' to give me—heapin' coals of fire on my 'ead? My word!"

And Taggles stumped away to the School House, to report to the Head that horrible scheme of heaping coals of fire on his head.

CHAPTER 3.

Before the Head!

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, laid down his pen as patiently as he could

Reilly and Figgins had come into the study, followed by Knox.

"Well, what is it?" asked the Head.

"Nothing, sir," said Figgins promptly.

"Nothing at all, sir," said Reilly.

"There has been a very serious disturbance, sir," said Knox. "Taggles reported to me that the juniors were wrecking the woodshed, and I went to stop them."

"Quite right, Knox."

And these two boys, sir, rushed at me and bumped me over," said the prefect.

Dr. Holmes frowned at the two juniors.

"That was very wrong of you!" he said.

"Sure, it was an accident, sir!" said Reilly. "Knox is making a mountain out of a molehill, sir. We bumped into him by accident."

"Didn't even see him, sir," said Figgins.

The Head pursed his lips.

"I really think you might settle these trivial matters, Knox, without taking up my time, which you know is valuable!" said Dr. Holmes. "Dear me, what is this?"

Taggles burst into the study.

"Sir! Dr. Holmes—"

"Well, Taggles?"

"I ain't 'avin' it, sir! My life ain't safe!" howled Taggles.

"What!"

"Them young rips, sir—"

"Taggles!"

"Them juniors, I mean, sir. I ain't sayin' anythin' about them bustin' up my woodshed, but when it comes to puttin' burnin' coals on a man's 'ead—"

The Head started.

"What—what! Nonsense, Taggles!"

"Burnin' coals, sir, on my 'ead!" said Taggles. "My life ain't safe, with them young rips—Master Merry and the rest—"

"What do you mean, Taggles? Do you tell me that Merry has put coals on your head?" asked Dr. Holmes, in bewilderment.

"Which 'e ain't done it yet, sir, but that was wot they was a-plottin' of," said Taggles.

"Nonsense!"

"Master Merry 'imself said so, sir."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "There must be some mistake. Merry could not possibly think of such a cruel action."

"Which 'e said so 'imself, sir—burnin' flamin' coals to put on my 'ead, sir! Which my life ain't safe!"

"Knox, kindly fetch Merry here at once!"

"Certainly, sir!" said the prefect.

He left the study. He returned in a few minutes with Tom Merry.

Dr. Holmes regarded Tom sternly.

"What is this Taggles is telling me, Merry?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"He says that you have threatened to place burning coals on his head."

Tom Merry jumped.

"I, sir?"

"I knew it must be a mistake—a most absurd mistake!" said the Head, relieved. "I am sure you would not think of anything of the sort, Merry."

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Which 'e said so!" howled Taggles.

"'E said so with 'is own mouth, sir."

"I couldn't say it with anybody else's mouth, sir," said Tom Merry. "But you're dreaming, Taggles."

"I ain't! You said yourself that you was goin' to put burnin' flamin' coals on my 'ead, because I fetched Master Knox to stop your goings-on in the woodshed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry suddenly, understanding at last.



"'Elp!" moaned Taggles, as Abdullah carried him across the Head's garden. "This is a 'orrid dream! 'Elp!" Splash! Taggles was dropped into the artificial lake. "'Elp!" he spluttered.

"Merry!" said the Head severely. "This is not a laughing matter!"

"Excuse me, sir! Taggles has made a little mistake!" gasped Tom Merry. "I was speaking figuratively, sir."

"What did you actually say?"

"Some of the fellows were ratty, sir, at Taggles sneaking about us to Knox; but I suggested heaping coals of fire on his head."

"That's it!" said Taggles. "Barn- ing, flaming coals! That's it!"

The Head smiled.

"You are under a misapprehension, Taggles. Merry was speaking in a figurative sense. Heaping coals of fire upon one's head does not mean actual burning coals, Taggles. It means that he would treat you with kindness instead of retaliating for the supposed injury you have done him."

Taggles jumped.

"Ho!" he said only half-convinced. "Well, that's all right; but if anybody begins puttin' coals of fire on my 'ead—"

"You may go, Taggles."

"Which my woodshed is messed up, sir, and in awful disorder—"

"The delinquents will be properly punished. You may return to your duties, Taggles."

And Taggles, grunting, returned to his duties.

"I will deal with the juniors, Knox," said the Head.

And the prefect, understanding that that was his dismissal, retired from the study.

"Now, my boys," said the Head, "I cannot allow these disturbances, and I cannot have Taggles troubled, especially as it is his birthday to-morrow. I suppose this was one of your House quarrels?"

"Well, it ended something like that, sir," said Tom Merry ruefully. "But it was a peaceful meeting to begin with. The fact is, sir, we're going to surprise Taggles on his birthday; we're getting up a testimonial and a birthday present for him, and the meeting was called to discuss ways and means."

Dr. Holmes smiled genially.

"That is a very good idea, my boys, and I approve of it highly. I suppose Taggles was not aware of it?"

"Oh, no, sir! We're keeping it dark till we're sure it's going to be a success, sir."

The Head coughed.

"Ahem! If Taggles had been aware of that laudable object of the meeting, he would probably not have reported you to me," he remarked. "In the circumstances, you need not do the lines."

"Thank you, sir."

"But please try to carry out this laudable scheme without any more disturbances," said the Head. "I am sure you will find it better to work in harmony."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Tom Merry immediately. "We know it, sir; but the New House chaps are rather obstinate—"

"The School House fellows are a bit pigheaded, sir," said Figgins. "but—"

"You may go," said the Head, with a smile and a wave of the hand. And the juniors left the study.

"Sure, the Head's a brick!" said Reilly enthusiastically. "Sure, if we'd known it was going to turn out like this we might have given Knox another bump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Taggles is a blessed old worm, and doesn't deserve a testimonial at all," growled Figgins.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "We'll heap coals of fire on his head. All you New House chaps have got to do is to back us up—"

"Knock you down, more likely!" said Figgins.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, if you won't back us up, and we won't back you up, the only thing to do is to run the thing separately," he said. "You chaps see what funds you can raise, and we'll do the same in the School House, and then we'll have a committee meeting about the way to spend 'em to the best advantage."

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The first thing to be done is to raise the funds."

"Done!" said Figgins. "And I'll guarantee that we'll beat the School House in raising a fund, same as we do in footer and cricket—"

"And in gas!" grinned Tom Merry. And so it was agreed. And the rival juniors at St. Jim's put their heads together in their two Houses to discuss ways and means, while the unconscious and ungrateful Taggles confided to Mrs. Taggles his fixed opinion that all boys ought to be "drowned" at birth—and especially Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 4.

Figgins' Great Wheeze!

"HALLO!"

"Look here!"

"What on earth—"
The Terrible Three of the Shell had just come downstairs after a consultation in their study. Monty Lowther caught sight of a notice on the school board, and drew the attention of his chums to it.

The notice was written out in Figgins' sprawling handwriting, and the wording of it made the juniors exclaim in wonder. For this is how it ran:

"NOTICE!"

"At 4 p.m. precisely, on the junior footer ground, will take place a performance of Figgins & Co.'s Circus.

"Pavilion seats, one shilling. Standing room round the ground, sixpence.

"Only paying chaps admitted to the ground. Free list entirely suspended. Any chap found looking on without paying will be walloped.

"All the proceeds for the Benefit Fund.

"(Signed) G. FIGGINS."

The Terrible Three whistled.

"Figgins' Circus!" said Manners, in amazement. "What is it, I wonder? Figgins & Co. as a troupe of performing donkeys, perhaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seen this?" called out Tom Merry, as Blake, Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, came along.

"No," said Blake. "What is it?"

"Read it!"

"My hat! Figgy's circus! Must be a hoax!"

"Bai Jove!"

"A New House dodge for raising funds for their benefit," grinned Tom Merry. "But I don't quite see where Figgy has got his circus from. It's a stunning idea, if there's anything in it."

"If!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! I wogard that as a vevy big 'if.' By the way, you fellows, I had a wire—"

"Let's go and see Figgins," said Tom Merry. "If there's anything in this, we'll help him out, you know."

"I was just tellin' you that I've had a wire—"

"Come on!" said Blake.

"I've had a wire fwom a fellow at Gweyfwhahs," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wrathfully, as he followed the juniors out of the House. "Do you wemembah a fat chap who came ovah with their football team—chap as fat as Fatty Wynn, named Punter or somethin'—"

"Bunter," said Tom Merry. "Chap in goggles."

"That's it. I've had a wire fwom him. He says he's accepted my kind

invitation for this aftahnoon, and will be here at half-past four by the twain."

"Then you'll have to look after him," said Digby. "We've got plenty to do raising funds for the giddy benefit."

"Yes. Really, Gussy, you shouldn't issue invitations in this reckless way without consulting your uncles," said Blake severely.

"But I didn't," said D'Arcy. "He says he's accepted my kind invitation, but I haven't the least wemembah of givin' him a kind invitation."

"Well, he's remembered it, if he's coming," grinned Tom Merry.

"But I didn't invite him ovah," said D'Arcy. "He's a ventwiloquist, and he played a wotten twick on me while he was here. I wemembah. I certainly don't wemembah invitin' him. As a mattah of fact, he isn't the kind of fellow I like."

"Awful nerve, I call it!" said Herries. "The chap is a regular bounder. Still, you can look after him, D'Arcy. You won't have anything to do."

"I'm afwaid I shall be requiahed to supewintend the waisin' of the fund, and—"

"Quite a mistake; you won't!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo! Here's Figgins!"

The chums of the School House had reached the footer ground. On the senior ground, close at hand, the Sixth Form were playing the Fifth. It was a Senior Form match, and the seniors were very busy, and most of the members of the Sixth and Fifth who were not playing were gathered round the ground.

Round the junior ground New House juniors were posted, at distances of a few feet from one another, evidently to guard the ground from invasion.

Outside the junior pavilion was the great Figgins himself with the Co.

Figgins bestowed an affable and condescending nod upon the School House fellows.

"Coming to the circus?" he asked. "A shilling for a seat, or sixpence standing room."

"What circus?"

"My circus," said Figgins.

"Performing porpoise?" asked Monty Lowther, with an interested glance at Fatty Wynn. And the School House juniors grinned.

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Fatty Wynn crossly. "This show is jolly well going to knock spots off the School House, anyway. If all the pavilion seats are sold, it will come to four quid, at least, and we ought to raise another three or four from the standing room. That will beat anything you can do."

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr emphatically.

"But what circus?" demanded Tom Merry. "Where is it? What is it?"

"Yaas, wathah! Explain that, deah boys."

"Certainly!" said Figgins airily.

"Jaggers' Circus is at Wayland, and we've borrowed some of their animals to give a show. It occurred to me that a circus performance here at St. Jim's would be the right thing at the right moment. Chaps will pay to see a circus, where you might offer 'em Shakespeare for dogs' ages and they'd only pay you to leave off, if they paid you at all. So I buzzed off on my bike and struck a bargain with Jaggers."

"My hat!"

"He's sending the animals over in charge of his men, you know—a performing elephant and a buckjumping

horse. He's doing it cheap for the advertisement—expects to get a crowd of St. Jim's chaps over to see the real show, you know. They don't want the animals till to-night for their regular show, and it doesn't hurt Jaggers to turn an honest quid by hiring them out. Don't you think a buckjumping horse and a performing elephant are worth paying a tanner to see?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll make all you fellows stewards, if you like," said Figgins, "to see that everybody who comes to the show pays up. Lots of fellows may come and look on without shelling out."

"School House chaps!" remarked Kerr.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "I hope you've got your performing elephant under proper control. It would cause trouble if he broke loose and wandered away."

"Oh, that's all right! The elephant-tamer comes with him," said Figgins. "But a New House chap is going to ride him, you see, to make it more interesting. Now then, we ought to have a drum or something to attract the crowd, and—"

"I'll get my cornet, if you like," said Herries.

"H'm! That might drive them away instead of attracting them!"

Herries snorted.

"Never mind, get it!" said Figgins. "Fellows will come along to see what's the matter, so it will be all right. Fatty is going to work the cymbals. He's made them himself out of two saucepan-lids. Get your cornet, Herries, old man. It's time we began taking the money!"

"Of all the wheezes—" said Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Don't you think it's a jolly good one?" demanded Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes—if it works all right."

"Oh, this wheeze will work all right! It isn't under School House management."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you got the Head's permission to bring elephants and wild horses into the school?" asked Tom Merry.

"We've got his permission to give a performance to raise funds for the benefit. We didn't mention the elephants or the horses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Lend a hand in taking the money."

"Right-ho! If there's any to take."

The crowd were already arriving.

CHAPTER 5.

Levison Takes a Hand!

CRASH, crash, crash!

Toot-toot, toot-toot!

Fatty Wynn, with the home-made cymbals, and Herries, with the cornet, outside the pavilion, made noise enough to attract all St. Jim's to the spot.

The cymbals and the cornet were certain to draw attention to Figgins' circus. Indeed, they might have been heard for a considerable distance from St. Jim's.

The New House juniors had made their preparations. A canvas tent had hastily been run up next to the pavilion to shelter the animals till the performance began. The performing animals were there, with their attendants.

The news of Figgins' circus spread over St. Jim's like wildfire. Fellows came from far and near.

A dozen New House fellows and an equal number of School House juniors

had been appointed stewards to collect the entrance fees from all comers.

They had some difficulty in collecting it.

The fellows seemed to have an idea that they were entitled to walk on their own ground without paying if they liked.

Tom Merry & Co. undeceived them on that point.

Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners, Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn of the Shell, and Vavasour, and the chums of Study No. 6, and Reilly did yeoman's service as collectors of cash.

Fellows who didn't want to pay for admission were invited to clear off on pain of being summarily ejected "on their necks."

Gore, Crooke, and Levison and Mellish came down in a party and stationed themselves outside the pavilion. Clifton Dane came up to them with a plate in his hand.

"What's that for?" asked Levison.
"Are you sitting or standing?" asked Dane.

"Standing at present."
"Then you pay sixpence."
"Rats!"

"Are you going to pay or clear off?" demanded the Canadian junior.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.
"Neither," he said calmly. "I suppose a chap can stand on his own ground if he wants to."

"I should jolly well think so!" said Mellish.

"You've come here to see the circus," said Dane.

"Well, we shall see what's going, I suppose," said Crooke. "But I'm jolly well not going to pay anything for one."

"Same here!" said Levison.
"Pay up!" said Dane.

"Rats!"
"Then clear off!"

"More rats!"
"Oh, I'll pay!" said Gore, throwing a sixpence into the plate. "There's your tanner!"

"You others going to pay?"
"No fear!"

"Kick them out, chaps!" said Dane.

And half a dozen stewards seized upon Crooke, Levison, and Mellish, and they were hurled forth, with loud and angry expostulations.

"You rotters!" howled Levison, picking himself up. "I'm not going!"

"Kick him out!"

Several boots were at once forthcoming for the service. Levison raced off the football ground with a powerful propulsion behind.

He retreated to the School House, gritting his teeth. Mellish and Crooke, on second thoughts, paid up, and stayed on the ground.

The cash-collectors had plenty to do. Fellows were coming up in crowds, some of them with dire threats of what they would do to Herries if he didn't leave off. Herries did not heed. He blew away at the cornet, with puffed cheeks and bulging eyes, as if he were blowing for a wager.

Four o'clock chimed out from the old tower of St. Jim's.

"Time for the performance," said Tom Merry.

"Must finish taking the money first," said Figgins.

Fresh crowds of fellows were arriving. From a distance Levison was watching the scene, with a dark look on his face. The cad of the Fourth had been handled rather roughly, though no more roughly than he deserved. Partly on that account, and partly from the impish desire to cause mischief—which was his ruling passion—Levison was turning a peculiar scheme over in his mind.

He strolled away from the School House and made his way to the back of the pavilion. The canvas shelter for the animals had been fixed at the side of the building—simply a slope of canvas from the top of the pavilion to the ground, with flaps covering in the ends. From behind the building Levison raised the flap of the canvas and looked into the enclosure.

Inside, the buckjumping steed—not looking very fiery just now—was tethered to a peg in the ground. The elephant was not even tethered. The two men in charge of the animals had gone out of the tent, watching the scene on the footer pitch.

It was Levison's opportunity.

His eyes gleamed as he crawled in under the canvas flap and approached the horse. The steed was saddled ready for the performance, and Levison approached it with outstretched hand and soothing words.

The horse blinked at him and went on munching from a bundle of hay.

Levison stroked him with a treacherous kindness, and with a deft hand inserted a small stone under the girth.

The horse moved a little, and Levison backed away from him. As soon as the buckjumping began that jagged stone under the girth would irritate the animal, and the buckjumping was likely to be a little more in earnest than usual.

It was a cruel trick—and very like Levison.

Then the cad of the Fourth turned his attention to the elephant. The huge animal, evidently the tamest of the tame, took no notice of him. There was a gaily decorated howdah upon his back, fastened by girths under the great body. Levison approached the great animal with some trepidation. If the elephant were alarmed or angered one movement of the huge foot would have been enough to crush the cad of the Fourth.

But the elephant was as tame as a household cat. Levison stroked it, and it took no notice. The junior inserted his finger under the tight girth without alarming the elephant; then he rammed

in a stone—a larger one with jagged edges. The elephant made a movement and turned its great head, and in a second its trunk was winding round the cad of the Fourth.

Levison tried to spring away—too late!

He was in the grip of the elephant's trunk and was swept off his feet, and the earth and the tent swam round him.

A yell of terror broke from the frightened junior.

"Oh, help—help!"

He struggled wildly in the grip of the elephant's trunk.

A man ran into the tent. He was Captain Cambon, the elephant-trainer, a Frenchman. He uttered an angry exclamation.

"Mon Dieu! You could not meddle viz ze animals, garcon! But he vill not hurt you. It is ze trick zat he perform. Arretez, Abdullah!"

At his master's word the elephant set the junior upon his feet, unharmed, and blinked his sleepy eye at Cambon.

"You could not come in here!" said the performer. "It is not safe to meddle viz ze animals. Go you out!"

Levison panted for breath. His head was swimming, and he could hardly realise yet that he was out of danger. In the dreadful moment when he had been elevated in the elephant's trunk he had seen himself, in his terrified imagination, dashed upon the hard ground and crushed to death.

Figgins looked into the tent.

"Ready?" he asked. "Why, what are you doing here, Levison—sneaking in without paying, you cad? Clear out!"

"I—I—"

"Clear out!" roared Figgins.

And Levison was glad enough to crawl under the flap of the canvas and disappear.

He was still trembling as he hurried away, and his face was very white, but there was a gleam of spiteful satisfaction in his eyes.

"I fancy that performance won't go just as they want it!" he muttered, between his teeth. "There will be a surprise for them when it starts—hang



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them! But—but Figgins saw me there! I—I wonder if they will suspect me now?"

And that thought was quite enough to dash the satisfaction of the cad of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 6.

Buckjumping Extraordinary!

"GENTLEMEN—" Bang, bang! Clang! Crash! "Gentlemen—" Toot, toot—tootey-toot-toot!

"Gentlemen, the circus is now open. The performance is about to begin! Gentlemen, this performance is the catch of the season! Allow me to present to you Cowboy Kit, the famous, celebrated, and well-known buckjumping rider of the Far West!"

Thus Figgins.

And the crowd cheered.

Figgins' idea of a circus performance at St. Jim's had caught on like wildfire. As there was no match on that afternoon it filled up a long-felt want, as Blake remarked. And as it was held for the benefit fund all the fellows who sympathised with that worthy object were quite willing to shell out sixpences and shillings. They would get something for their money, at all events; so it was much better than an ordinary subscription.

There was a cheer as Cowboy Kit led the buckjumping steed out of the tent upon the pitch. The horse seemed a little restless.

"Hurrah!"

Crash, crash, crash! went Fatty Wynn's improvised cymbals.

Toot, toot, toot, toot, toot! went Herries' cornet.

"Chuck that row!" called out Gore. "You're frightening the horse, to say nothing of splitting our eardrums!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Cease fire!" grinned Figgins.

And the musicians ceased their arduous labours.

Cowboy Kit, who was clad in his circus costume of a cowboy of the Wild West, mounted the fiery mustang.

He rode round the pitch at a great speed, cracking his whip in the air with a succession of reports like pistol shots; then he put the steed through an exhibition of buckjumping.

It was very realistic.

All the onlookers realised that the horse was in an excited state, and the earnest look on the cowboy's face was very convincing.

The thud of hoofs on the turf, the snorting of the horse, and the deep breathing of the rider were very realistic indeed.

"My hat!" murmured Jack Blake. "Blessed if that looks like a show performance at all! I come from Yorkshire, and I know something about horses. I'll bet you that gee-gee is jolly near out of hand!"

"Looks like it, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"My hat!" roared Clifton Dane.

"Look there!" The mustang was rearing savagely, and as the rider forced him down, he swept round his head, and made a savage snap at Cowboy Kit's leg with his teeth.

The cowboy's whip descended upon the head with a crashing blow.

Cowboy Kit's face was paler now, and hard set.

A murmur rang through the juniors. They realised now that it was not merely a circus performance they were seeing. The horse was out of hand.

Some unknown cause had rendered it

savage, and it was trying with desperate strength to unseat its rider and break away.

And the circus rider knew it.

He was struggling with the horse, striving to quell its savage spirit, and he was striving in vain.

The mustang was getting more and more out of control.

Figgins looked startled.

"My word! This is more than we bargained for!" he said. "The chap can't manage his own horse!"

"Something's gone w'ong with it, dear boy!"

"What on earth could go wrong with it? It was all right when they brought it here," said Kerr.

"Nobody's been meddling with it, I suppose?" said Tom Merry anxiously.

Figgins jumped.

"My hat! I found Levison in there, and—"

"Levison?"

"Yes. But he couldn't have—"

"He jolly well could have, and would have!" growled Herries. "He's a beast to animals! Remember the trouble there was over his tormenting my bulldog?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Great Scott!" muttered Figgins. "If he's done anything to the horse, he ought to be boiled in oil! Pass the word to the fellows to clear back, in case he breaks away! It wouldn't be a joke to be run over!"

"Bai Jove, it wouldn't!"

The fellows round the field were already crowding back, in case the horse should bolt.

The struggle between the mustang and its rider was growing harder and fiercer.

Cowboy Kit's white, set face showed how earnest it was with him. He was using the whip now, but the heavy blows did not seem to quell the savage spirit of his steed.

The circus rider had an iron grip on the reins, and he was trying to keep the mustang to circling round the pitch. But the animal broke away at last and bolted, and the crowd scattered in hot haste.

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

Crash, crash, crash! went the thundering hoofs as the horse careered across the pitch to the quadrangle.

"My hat!"

"Look!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Figgins & Co. stared after the flying horse in dismay. His rider was holding him well, but he could not stop him. He could only guide him, and he was guiding him towards the school gates. Outside, in the open country, the infuriated animal would be able to do less harm.

With foaming mouth and lashing hoofs, the mustang careered through the gateway and disappeared.

There was a buzz on the football field.

"Bai Jove! Jolly glad he's gone!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suppose the chap will wide him back to the circus at Wayland—he'll be tired out by then."

"Rotten thing to happen!" growled Figgins. "Mucked up the first half of the show!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This what you call an entertainment?" sneered Crooke. "Got the cheek to charge us a tanner for seeing a silly horse run away with a silly ass?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Figgins, with a worried look.

"Well, I think it's rotten!"

"Nobody wants to know what you

think!" said Herries. "I dare say you had a hand in it—whatever it was Levison did to the horse!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Is Levison here?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

But there was no sign of the cad of the Fourth. He was keeping at a safe distance.

"Better have the other turn on now," said Kerr. "The first one has ended rather suddenly, but the performing elephant will be all right."

"Yes; bring the elephant on, Captain Cambon."

"Oui, oui!" said Cambon.

"I say, D'Arcy—"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked round as he heard the fat voice. A very fat junior, with a very large pair of spectacles, was blinking at him with an agreeable smile. D'Arcy recognised Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, who had come over with the Greyfriars team for their match at St. Jim's.

"Good-afternoon!" said D'Arcy, shaking hands with the fat junior.

"Had my wire?" asked Bunter.

"Yaas!"

"Good! Got some sort of a performance on here?" asked Billy Bunter, blinking round the pitch in surprise.

"Yaas; a circus performance for a benefit fund," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Are you going to stand or sit, Buntah?"

"Well, I'd rather sit down."

"That will be a shilling."

"What!"

"Standin' woom sixpence."

"Oh!"

Clifton Dane presented a plate to the Greyfriars junior.

Billy Bunter coughed.

"Ahem! I'm frightfully sorry; but I left my purse, with all my money in it, at Greyfriars, otherwise—"

"No pounds wanted" said Dane; "only tanners."

"Unfortunately, Bob Cherry borrowed my last tanner as I was coming away," said Billy Bunter.

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'll pay for my guest, dear boy."

"Good! I'll send it to you later out of a postal order I'm expecting," said Billy Bunter.

"All sewene!"

And Arthur Augustus dropped a sixpence into the plate.

Crash, crash, crash! went the cymbals; toot-toot-toot! the cornet.

The elephant was on the scene.

CHAPTER 7.

Mr. Rateliff Gets Wet!

"HURRAH!" The juniors cheered the elephant and his skilful rider.

Captain Cambon—regiment unknown—was a good performer, and he could do all sorts of tricks on the elephant's back.

The great animal trotted round the pitch with the Frenchman performing acrobatic feats on his back, turning somersaults, or hanging on to his howdah with one foot, or allowing himself to be lifted in the great trunk.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that's wippin'!"

And the juniors cheered. After the unfortunate experience with the buck-jumper, it was a great relief to Figgins & Co. to see the elephant's turn going well.

But Abdullah, the elephant, soon began to show signs of irritation.

After lumbering round the pitch several times, he stood quite still, and refused to budge.

His surprised master urged him and coaxed him, but it was of no use.

The elephant seemed to have made up his mind that he would not move.

"Bai Jove! Is there somethin' w'ong with the elephant as well as with the horse?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in surprise.

It certainly looked like it.

Captain Cambon was growing annoyed. He struck the elephant at last, and the great animal took him up in his trunk.

"He's starting again," said Figgins.

"Bwavo!"

The elephant carried the captain along for a short distance, and set him down upon his feet, and then lumbered away.

"Look out!" shouted Gore, as the great quadruped bore down upon the ropes.

The juniors scattered.

Abdullah tramped on and left the pitch, proceeding in the direction of the senior footer ground.

Figgins & Co. gazed after him in utter dismay.

What Kildare and the rest of the seniors would say if the elephant invaded their pitch in the middle of a Form match the juniors could hardly guess.

Figgins ran up to Captain Cambon and caught him by the arm.

"Stop him!" he shouted. "Bring him back!"

Cambon shook his head.

"I'll try," he said. "But something's irritated him, and he's out of sorts. I don't know what it is, unless somebody has been meddling with him!"

"Levison!" groaned Figgins. "Do your best; there will be a row about this."

"Ciel, I do my best!" said Cambon. "I do not understand it at all, mon garcon. It is zat somebody have irritated him while he is in zat tent, n'est-ce-pas?"

"Collar the beast; he'll be among the footballeers in a minute."

"Je vais—I run—I fly!" said Cambon.

He dashed after the elephant, calling to Abdullah. But Abdullah was evidently in an obstinate humour. He tramped on, and there was a yell of alarm from the Upper Form fellows gathered round the senior footer ground.

"Look out!"

"Look at that beast!"

"Where has he come from?"

Darrell of the Sixth had just sent the football soaring high into the air. It came down again, to crash on the elephant's thick hide as he lumbered into the field.

The concussion could not have hurt Abdullah, but it irritated him.

He gave an angry snort, and tramped on the field, and the footballeers scattered promptly enough before him.

Abdullah wrenched up several seats and smashed them on the earth. Then, as Cambon dashed up to capture him, he lumbered away at a great rate.

"Oh, my nat!" gasped Figgins. "There will be the dickens to pay for this?"

Cambon was still vainly pursuing the elephant. When he came up with him,

Abdullah calmly took him in his trunk and carried him away a dozen yards or so, and set him down, and then lumbered off.

The elephant was not showing any signs of ferocity, which was fortunate; but he was evidently in a state of irritation that placed him beyond control.

The juniors could only watch him in dismay and wonder what he would do next.

The doctor's garden seemed to offer some attraction to Abdullah. He tramped on to the little gate, and tore it off its hinges with one wrench of his trunk.

Then he thundered into the garden.

Taggles was there, at work with a lawn-mower, or, rather, he had been at work with a lawn-mower. Just at the present moment he was sitting on the lawn-mower, under the shade of a tree, taking a well-earned rest, and mopping his brow with a handkerchief. He had his back to Abdullah, and did not trouble to turn his head at the sound of the elephant's footsteps, which were soft enough on the lawn.

Abdullah paused, and looked down at the back of Taggles, as if wondering what it was.

Then he curled his trunk round Taggles' hat and jerked it off.

Taggles gave a yell.

"None of your tricks!" he yelled. "Don't you come into this ere garden! It ain't allowed! I'll report yer! I—Oh crikey!"

The words died on Taggles' tongue as he looked up and saw the elephant.

He stared blankly at the huge beast, frozen with terror.

The elephant sniffed round him and wound his trunk about the gasping and helpless school porter, and lifted him from his feet. Then the unfortunate Taggles found his voice.

"Ow! 'Elp! 'Elp!"

"Don't struggle!" shrieked Cambon, dashing up. "He will not hurt you if it is zat you do not struggle viz him!"

"'Elp!" moaned Taggles. "This is a 'orrid dream! 'Elp!"

Abdullah trotted on, carrying Taggles across the garden.

Splash!

Taggles was dropped bodily into the artificial lake in the Head's garden, and the elephant turned away, leaving him spluttering and floundering there.

"'Elp!" spluttered Taggles.

Tom Merry and Figgins hastened to drag him out. Taggles lay gasping on the grass, in the middle of a pool of water that ran from his clothes.

"Ow!" moaned Taggles. "It's a 'orrid dream! Ow!"

The elephant lumbered on, followed at a respectful distance by the amazed and dismayed juniors.

"It's too awful for words!" groaned Figgins. "There will be a frightful row about this! Oh, my only hat! I wish we'd never thought of the rotten circus!"

"Well, we've got all the collection," said Kerr.

"Chaps will be asking for their money back now!" growled Gore.

"Let 'em ask!"

"He's making for the New House!" yelled Redfern, as Abdullah lumbered across the quad.

"Head him off, somebody!"

Nobody seemed inclined to take the risk of heading off the elephant, however. Abdullah reached the New House, and began rubbing his side against the stone porch.

(Continued on the next page.)



Make the Jester Smile and Win a MATCH FOOTBALL!

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THE VOID.

Gussy: "The dentist told me I had a large cavity that needed fillin', deah boy."

Monty Lowther: "Did he recommend any special course of study?"

A football has been awarded to J. Clark, 2, Lord Roberts' Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

THE ENGINE WAS MISSING.

Passer-by (to owner of antiquated car): "Engine trouble?"

Owner: "Well, I can't tell until I walk back and find the engine!"

A football has been awarded to V. Hembry, 15, Princess Street, Treforest, Pontypridd, Glamorgan.

SOME USE.

Binks: "Did Jones get his new play used?"

Jinks: "Yes; the stage-manager tore up the manuscript and used it in a snow-storm scene!"

A football has been awarded to C. Milbourn, 83, Myddleton Road, Bowes Park, London, N.22.

A FACER FOR HIM.

Teacher: "Did you make that face at me, Brown?"

Brown: "No, sir; you just walked in front of it!"

A football has been awarded to A. North, 24, Fieldhead Road, Sheffield.

RABBIT HUNTING.

Rastus: "What am yo' stalkin' dat rabbit for, Sambo? Your gun ain't loaded!"

Sambo: "No; but de rabbit don't know dat!"

A football has been awarded to B. Hoy, 93, West Circular Road, Belfast, N. Ireland.

TOO STRONG.

Mr. Smiggins (in theatre): "'Ere, Martha, let's get out o' this place quick!"

Mrs. Smiggins: "But what's all the hurry? Musculo, the strong man, comes on next."

Mr. Smiggins: "Yes, and this fellow next to me's just whispered that 'e thinks 'e'll bring the house down!"

A football has been awarded to H. Hayes, 24, East Street, Blackburn.

GROWING UP.

Little Horace was wearing his first pair of long trousers and thought himself a real man.

"Mother," he said, "can I call pa Bill now?"

A football has been awarded to A. Clayton, 73, Maynard Road, Leicester.

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"There's something irritating him in the girth," said Tom Merry.

"Might get it off him," said Blake.

"I zink zat is it," said Captain Cambon. "I zink I try him."

He rushed up to the elephant. Abdullah did not wait for him. He trampled into the New House, through the wide open doorway, and the strong oaken floor sounded and creaked under his heavy tread.

"And Ratty's at home!" groaned Figgins.

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, was indeed in his study. The New House master was busy upon examination papers, and at such times he liked to be very quiet.

The noise he had heard from the footer field had annoyed him very much. The sound of a giant's footsteps in the House filled the cup of his wrath to overflowing.

The sound of Abdullah walking in the passage was like unto somebody rolling heavy weights about, and the Housemaster was naturally indignant.

He jumped up, and opened the door of his study.

"What is this?" he shouted. "How dare you make such a disturbance! How dare you—Why—what—what—what—"

Mr. Ratcliff recoiled into his study in terror.

Abdullah was just outside his door.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Help, help!"

Abdullah strode in.

Mr. Ratcliff, almost fainting with terror, backed away towards the window.

Crash!

The elephant had brushed against the table, and the table went flying, and its contents shot off to the floor.

He was still coming on, and Mr. Ratcliff executed a strategic retreat through the open window.

Mr. Ratcliff was not an athlete, but he performed that jump through the window in a very creditable manner.

He rolled over as he landed on the ground outside, and sat up dazedly, and looked up. The head and trunk and tusks of Abdullah looked down at him from the study window.

"Good heavens!" spluttered the New House master. "Help, help!"

He picked himself up and ran.

Captain Cambon dashed into the House. He ran into the Housemaster's study, and found Abdullah rubbing himself on the doorpost, evidently to remove something under his girth that irritated him. Cambon hurriedly searched for it, and found the jagged stone. The cause of the elephant's peculiar outbreak of temper was now explained. Cambon succeeded in persuading him out of the House, and he lumbered out into the quadrangle again. He stopped at the fountain in the quad, and began to drink, drawing up the water with his trunk.

"It is all right now, mes garçons!" gasped Cambon. "Look at zis zat I have found; some vicked boy he have placed zat zere under the girth!"

"Levison!" said Figgins, between his teeth.

"For goodness' sake get the beast away before he does any more damage!" said Tom Merry. "There will be the dickens to pay, as it is!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Ratcliff came up, trembling with rage. The sight of the elephant peaceably drinking at the fountain reassured the Housemaster; he understood that

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he had not to deal with some ferocious wild beast, as, in his terror, he had fancied at first.

"Was this animal purposely brought into the precincts of the school?" he thundered.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly. "We've been giving a show!"

"How dare you! You shall be flogged for this! Take the brute off the premises at once! Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir. I—"

"Take him away!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "Take the brute away!"

Abdullah looked round. He was not in an equable temper yet, and perhaps the Housemaster's loud, rasping voice irritated him. He lumbered towards Mr. Ratcliff, and the Housemaster backed away in terror.

"Take him away! Take him away! Ow! Ooch!"

Splash!

A spout of water flew from the elephant's trunk, and swamped all over Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster staggered back, drenched.

There was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff yelled, too—but not with laughter. He gathered his gown about him, and fled madly into the New House, and disappeared.

"Oh crumbs!" said Jack Blake, wiping his eyes. "There will be trouble over this! But Ratty got it in the neck that time! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take him away!" moaned Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Captain Cambon succeeded in leading the recalcitrant elephant out of the gates at last, much to the relief of the St. Jim's juniors.

CHAPTER 8.

Levison Catches It!

DR. HOLMES had heard the uproar in the quadrangle, and it had drawn him to the window. He had seen Mr. Ratcliff's mishap, and so he was not surprised when the New House master burst into the study with face aflame.

"Dr. Holmes, I—I—Most outrageous—most unparalleled—most—"

Dr. Holmes made a soothing gesture. "Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff—"

"I have been assaulted—I have been—"

"I saw it all from my window," said the Head. "It is a very serious thing. How did that animal come here at all?"

"I understand that some of the juniors brought him here for a performance, or something of the sort!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "The severest punishment—the severest possible punishment—"

"I will send for the boys who seem to have been concerned."

And Toby, the page, was dispatched in search of Tom Merry, Blake, and Figgins.

The three juniors came into the Head's study looking dismayed, as they felt. Dr. Holmes fixed a very stern glance upon them.

"Am I to understand that you were responsible for introducing that dangerous animal into the school grounds?" he asked severely.

"I did it," said Figgins. "These chaps didn't have anything to do with it, sir. It was my idea."

"We were backing you up, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "We're all in it, sir. But we didn't mean any harm. The elephant was going to be used in giving a show—"

"You gave me permission to give a show for the benefit fund," said Figgins.

The Head coughed.

"True. But you did not mention that you intended to introduce a dangerous animal into the show, Figgins."

"He isn't dangerous, sir."

"The brute has invaded and wrecked my study!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "I was compelled to throw myself from the window. Then he drenched me with water from the fountain—squirted it upon me with its trunk, sir—"

"I saw it," said the Head.

"But it was the fault of the rotter who irritated him, sir," said Tom Merry. "Some cad put a sharp stone under his girth to irritate the skin and make him wild."

"Is it possible that any St. Jim's boy would be so cruel and so wicked?" said the Head, shocked and angry.

"The stone was found there, sir."

"Do you know who did it?"

The juniors looked uncomfortable. They knew that it was Levison, and they intended to make Levison smart for it, but they did not want to sneak even about the cad of the Fourth.

"We didn't see it done, sir," said Tom Merry at last.

"I do not believe a word of it!" rapped out Mr. Ratcliff.

The Head gave him a glance that he understood at once.

"Merry says the stone was found, Mr. Ratcliff," Dr. Holmes said quietly. "I decline to doubt Merry's word for a moment. The boy who was guilty of that cruel action was the cause of all the trouble. I must know who that boy was."

"Ahem!"

"If this was done, Merry, where and when was it done?"

"In the tent where the elephant was before the performance, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Then someone entered the tent and did this thing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was anyone seen in the tent?"

"Yes, sir."

"His name?"

The juniors were silent. Before the Head could speak again there was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Captain Cambon came in. The Frenchman was looking very angry, and he had a jagged stone in his hand.

"Monsieur," he said, "is it zat you are headmaster of zis school? Is it zat you permit the cruelty to ze inoffensive animals?"

"Certainly not!" said the Head.

"Zen look at zat!" said Cambon, holding up the stone. "Look at zat, monsieur! It is zis pierre—zis stone—that a vicked boy have stick undair ze girth to drive my elephant vild viz himself, n'est-ce-pas? Ze vicked garcon!"

"Can you give me the boy's name, monsieur?" asked the Head.

"I do not know ze boy, sir, but I heard ze ozzers call him Levison."

"Levison!" said the Head, frowning. "A boy who has been found guilty on a previous occasion of cruelty to animals." The Head rang for Toby again. "Kindly fetch Master Levison here at once."

In a few minutes Levison entered the study. He was looking a little pale, but quite calm and collected.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Levison," said the Head, regarding him sternly. "You are accused of having designedly played a trick to goad this gentleman's elephant—a cruel trick."

"If Tom Merry says—"

"Merry has said nothing. This gentleman accuses you!"

"Captain Cambon found him in the tent with the animal, and I saw him there," said Figgins, with a glare of angry contempt at the cad of the Fourth.

"What have you got to say, Levison?"

"I haven't done anything, sir."

"You were in the tent?"

"I just went in to see the animals, sir," said Levison meekly. "No harm in that, sir. I'm studying natural history specially, and I wanted to see the elephant at close quarters. I did nothing whatever to irritate him, sir."

"Ze vicked boy!" said Captain Cambon. "If it vas not you, zen who vas it that placed zat stone where it would irritate ze elephant?"

"Oh, sir! I——"

"Silence! You may leave this matter to me, Mr. Rateliff. Levison is, undoubtedly, the only person to blame, and he will be severely punished. But understand, Figgins, that I forbid you to introduce elephants or any such animals into the precincts of the school again."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly.

And the juniors departed, and Captain Cambon followed them. The New House master came out, only half-satisfied. He had suffered very much, and he would have been better pleased to see half a dozen fellows, at least, caned. Still, there was something consoling in hearing the wild howls that

up; but it must be at least three pounds."

And when the stewards piled together their takings, and added them up, they found that the total amount was three pounds ten shillings—a very substantial sum, as Figgins proudly declared, towards the fund for Taggles' benefit.

"Bet you School House chaps won't beat that," grinned Figgins. "Things went wrong; but we got the cash, and that's the principal point. It's up to you to go and do likewise."

"My dear chap, we'll beat you hollow!" said Jack Blake.

"Go ahead, then!"

"Beat them hollow," said Tom Merry reflectively, as they came into the



"My heye!" exclaimed Taggles. "I never knowed anything like it!"

"Oh, you're squify!" said the fowl.

The school porter staggered back, came in contact with a pile of tinned goods, and brought them to the floor with a crash!

"I am sure I don't know," said Levison. "Perhaps Figgins may have done it."

"What!" roared Figgins.

"Or Tom Merry——"

"Why, you—you—you——" gasped Tom Merry.

"Silence!" said the Head. "I believe you are guilty, Levison."

Levison bit his lip.

"There is no evidence, sir!" he stammered. "I was there—but anybody else might have got into the tent just as easily as I did——"

"It is true that the evidence is circumstantial," said the Head, "but the chief evidence against you, Levison, is furnished by your own character. You have been convicted before of cruelty to animals, which shows that there is a cowardly and cruel strain in your nature. I shall do my best to eradicate it. I am going to cane you severely, Levison."

proceeded from the Head's study after he left. Levison was "going through it," experiencing the only form of appeal to his feelings that he really understood—a severe caning.

"Jolly well out of that!" said Figgins, as the juniors emerged, relieved, into the quad. "And, although I wouldn't have given Levison away, I am jolly glad he's got it in the neck!"

"Yes, rather; the cad!"

"All wight!" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, joining them.

"Right as rain!" said Figgins.

"The show's been wathah a fwoat," said Arthur Augustus, with a grin.

"But we've got the takings—that's the chief point—and it will be a jolly good leg-up for the fund," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah; that's twue enough!"

"How much?" asked Tom Merry.

"We've got to pile in and count it

School House. "M'yes—but how are we going to do it?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "But it's up to us to manage it somehow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors put their heads together to solve the knotty problem.

CHAPTER 9.

Rather Awkward!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Hallo! Where did you spring from?" asked Clifton Dane.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane had just come into their study—the end study in the Shell passage in the School House. They were surprised to see a fat junior ensconced in the armchair, with his feet on another chair, and a plate on his knees. It was Billy Bunter.

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of Greyfriars, and he was evidently making himself at home.

He blinked at the Shell fellows through his big spectacles without stopping operations on the tarts he was eating.

"I say, you fellows, have you got rid of that elephant?"

"He's gone," said Kangaroo.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter, with a breath of relief. "I dodged in here to get out of his way. I don't like elephants myself."

"They say a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind, though," the Cornstalk junior remarked.

"Ahem! Is this your study?" asked Bunter.

"Yes. And those are our tarts," said Clifton Dane pointedly.

Bunter proceeded to demolish another, in spite of that remark.

"I suppose you don't mind a fellow taking a snack after a long journey?" he said.

"Much the same whether we do or not, it appears," said Kangaroo. "But pile in! You're welcome!"

"Thanks!" said Bunter. "I'm making myself at home, you know."

"Yes; you look it."

"Whose parrot is that?" asked Billy Bunter, with a nod towards the cage swinging in the window.

"Mine," said Clifton Dane.

"Can he talk?"

"Can he?" said Dane disdainfully.

"I should jolly well say he can! He's a marvellous parrot. Picks up anything that's said in the room where he is, and repeats it like—like anything."

"Oh, really!" said Bunter, looking uneasy.

"Pretty Polly!" said Dane, going to the cage.

The parrot blinked at him.

"How-de-do!" screamed Polly. "Polly wants sugar! Ha, ha, ha! I wonder if there's anything to eat in this study? Ho, ho!"

"Hallo! He's heard somebody say that lately," grinned Kangaroo.

Billy Bunter smiled a sickly smile.

"I—I may have made a remark when I came in," he stammered. "You—you see, I was jolly peckish after my journey," said Billy Bunter confidentially. "I've got a good healthy appetite."

"Polly wants sugar. I wonder if there's anything to eat in this study? Blessed if this is the way to look after a guest! Rotten!" said Polly.

"Ahem!" said Bunter.

"That ass D'Arcy doesn't seem to know that a fellow gets hungry. Ha, ha, ha!" screamed Polly. "Rotten show I call this place!"

"Oh, do you?" said Kangaroo wrathfully.

"I—I didn't say that," said Bunter, in alarm. "The parrot has got it wrong. What I said was, it's a jolly ripping place."

"Lot of silly idiots watching an elephant," went on Polly. "Biggest idiot of all is D'Arcy! What a rotten show! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem!" said Bunter.

"Call Gussy in," grinned Clifton Dane. "He would like to hear Polly saying these pretty things."

"I say, you fellows, that blessed parrot's got it all wrong!" said Bunter. "Of course, I shouldn't make remarks like that about my host. But perhaps it would be better not to let D'Arcy hear him. He mightn't understand."

"Or he might," grinned Dane.

"Ahem! You see—"

"The fellows are coming here, any—"

way," said Kangaroo, chuckling. "We're holding a committee of ways and means in this study."

"Polly wants sugar!" shrieked the parrot. "What a rotten show! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, shut up that beast somehow!" said Bunter, alarmed.

Clifton Dane shook his head.

"Can't," he said. "Polly never shuts up. Hallo, here come the fellows!"

The Terrible Three came into the study, and the chums of Study No. 6 followed them in. They stared at Billy Bunter. Arthur Augustus coloured a little. He had completely forgotten the existence of his guest. As he had not really asked Bunter to visit him at St. Jim's, however, there was some excuse for him. Billy Bunter had invited himself to the school, having long ago made up his mind to pay another visit to the hospitable juniors of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I hope you are gettin' on all wight, Buntah."

"He seems to be!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yes, thanks!" said Bunter. "I was hungry, you know, so I'm taking just a little snack. All the same, I'm ready for tea when you are."

"Pway offah our guest some welfeshments, Kangy, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Right-ho!" said the Cornstalk.

Kangaroo opened the cupboard door. As it happened, the cupboard of the end study had lately been replenished, and was well supplied.

"We've got a cold fowl and a steak-pie," said Kangaroo. "Which do you prefer, Bunter?"

"Ahem!"

"Hallo, the fowl's gone!" exclaimed Kangaroo, staring into the cupboard.

"I—I was hungry—" stammered Bunter.

"Well, there's a steak-pie. My hat! That's gone, too!"

"You see," murmured Bunter, "I thought I might as well have a snack, as you fellows were so busy with that blessed elephant."

The St. Jim's juniors looked at him. A fellow who could polish off a cold fowl and a steak-pie, and then go on eating tarts, was a dangerous rival to Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn had always been supposed at St. Jim's to hold the record for achievements of that sort. But it was evident that he would be a bad second to Billy Bunter in a gastronomic competition.

"But if you're going to have tea, don't put it off on my account," said Bunter. "I'm quite ready."

"Bai Jove!"

"Rotten show I call this!" screamed the parrot.

"Gweat Scott!"

Even Billy Bunter had the grace to turn red. He blinked at the parrot with a look that was very far from amiable.

"I wonder if there's anything to eat in this study! He, he, he!" screamed Polly.

The juniors burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Well, you've found something to eat, Bunter, so it's all right."

"Oh, really—I say, you fellows—"

"That fellow D'Arcy is an ass! Polly wants sugar!"

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

"Weally, Buntah—"

"I trust you don't think I made that remark," said Bunter hastily. "Of course, I'm far too—too well-bred to say what I think when I'm a visitor—"

"What!"

"I—I mean I never said anything of that sort," stammered Bunter. "That parrot is a beastly idiot."

"Polly wants sugar! I wonder if there's anything to eat in this study! That fellow D'Arcy is an ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that is your opinion of me, Buntah—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, drawing himself up in a very stately way.

"B—but it isn't!" stammered Bunter.

"I—I—"

"The pawwot must have heard you speakin'."

"Perhaps he heard somebody else speaking," suggested Tom Merry, pouring oil on the troubled waters, as it were. "You know Levison once taught him a lot of things to cause trouble, and he might have been at his tricks again." "Yaas, wathah! It's quite poss," said D'Arcy mollified.

"Levison," said Bunter. "That's the chap who used to be at Greyfriars, and was sacked from our school. He's simply full of rotten tricks, I can assure you."

"Then I withdraw my remark, if you assuah me that you did not make those insultin' remarks," said D'Arcy.

"Oh, really—"

"That's all right," said Tom Merry hastily. "The question is, what are we going to do to raise the funds for the benefit? Figgins & Co. have raised three pounds ten—"

"And raised Cain in the process," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Yes. But they've got the tin, and that's the chief thing. If Figgins & Co. raise three quid and a half, it's up to us to raise at least four quid for the honour of the School House."

"Hear, hear!"

"Raising money for a fund—eh?" said Billy Bunter. "Perhaps I may be able to help you, you fellows."

"Any good ideas will be welcomed," said Tom Merry politely.

"They generally fall on me if there's anything of the kind going on at Greyfriars," explained Bunter. "I've got a head for business, you know. The fellows all rely on me. I got up concerts, and amateur dramatic performances, and that kind of thing. I had the leading part in arranging a performance of a Shakespeare play the other week for the benefit of some destitute children. You can't do better than come to me for advice. I'm the very chap you want."

"Ahem!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Billy Bunter generously. "I'll take the whole matter in hand and run it for you from start to finish, if you like. All you fellows will have to do will be to obey my directions. What do you think?"

CHAPTER 10.

Polly Causes Surprise!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked fixedly at Billy Bunter.

He had asked them what they thought, but they did not tell him what they thought. It would not have been polite to a guest.

But their looks spoke volumes.

Billy Bunter, however, was too short-sighted to notice it, and he was too busy with the last remaining tart to think of looking at the faces of the St. Jim's juniors. He went on munching the tart in a state of complete and perfect satisfaction.

If Billy Bunter had been a St. Jim's fellow, he would have been bumped on the spot for his astounding cheek.

But he wasn't, so the juniors let it pass.

"Thank you very much!" gasped Tom Merry, as soon as he recovered his breath. "You're very kind, Bunter!"

Bunter did not disclaim it.

"The fact is, it's my intention to be kind," he said.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Anything I can do I shall be glad to do in return for the feed you're going to stand me, if for nothing else," said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And really, though I say it myself, you can't do better than place the whole matter unreservedly in my hands," said Bunter cheerfully. "What do you say?"

"Couldn't think of twoubling you, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ahem! I really don't know what to say," murmured Tom Merry. "Only—only we don't want to take advantage of your kindness, Bunter."

"No trouble at all," said Bunter, finishing the last tart and sighing slightly over the empty plate. "Look here, I've got a suggestion to make. Suppose you give a ventriloquial entertainment?"

"A which?"

"Where are we to dig up the giddy ventriloquist?" said Kangaroo.

Billy Bunter patted himself on the chest.

"I'm your man!" he said.

"You?"

"Bai Jove, Buntah is a wotten ventriloquist, I—I mean, a wippin' ventriloquist!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I memebah his playin' a wotten twick on me—I mean, a vewy clevah twick—"

"I'm quite at your service," said Bunter. "I shouldn't charge you any fees. And I will undertake to bring the house down. The fellows at Greyfriars are simply enthusiastic about my ventriloquism. Wharton and Nugent sometimes beg me to come into their study and give them a show."

"Do they really?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter emphatically. "Is that ginger-beer in that bottle, Noble?"

"Yes," said Kangaroo.

"Good! I'm thirsty!"

Kangaroo poured out the ginger-beer. There was nothing left to eat in the study, so Bunter naturally considered that it was time to begin to drink.

"Give us a specimen of what you can do in the ventriloquial line," said Tom Merry, in a state of doubt as to how much of Bunter's assertion was fact, and how much was gas.

"Certainly," said Bunter, blinking through his big glasses.

There was a sudden yell from the parrot's cage. Clifton Dane had covered it with a cloth, as the only way to stop Polly talking. From under the cloth came, or seemed to come, the voice of the parrot.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Polly wants sugar! Get your hair cut! Ha, ha, ha! Screech!"

Clifton Dane jumped up.

"That blessed parrot again!" he exclaimed. "He generally shuts up when I put him in the dark. Polly, you cheese it!"

"Yah, yah! Cheese it yourself, cocky!"

The juniors simply jumped. The parrot had a wonderful way of repeating everything he overheard, but he had never been known to originate replies before. His retort to Clifton Dane astounded the Canadian junior.

"My hat!" gasped Clifton Dane.

"Polly, you cheeky beast!"

"Go and eat coke yourself! I'm not going to shut up for you! Clear out!"

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther
Calling!



Hallo, everybody!

I hear a man hopped twenty miles on one leg to win a wager. A "hop-timist."

A vase containing castor oil buried by the Egyptians has been dug up. Evidently they didn't like it any better then.

The Head's gardener often has forty winks. A nod-job man.

"Can you give an example of coolness?" asks a reader. Well, there was the chap who, seeing that the ship was sinking and that all the boats were full, went up to the captain and asked if he would teach him to swim!

As the deaf man said, I never believe a word I hear.

We much appreciate the B.B.C.'s special talks during classes. Mr. Linton often spends the whole lesson tuning in.

By the way, I saw two men giving each other black looks in Wayland. Yes, they were niggers.

The Wayland Courier announces: "Complete Stock of Clothes Stolen"—From Our Own Correspondent. He'll be feeling the draught!

Story: "This pair of shoes will last you a lifetime," said the salesman. "I'll take them," said the customer.

Get your hair cut and boil your face in oil!"

"Oh, my aunt!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Clifton Dane tore the cloth off the cage. Polly the parrot blinked at him out of one eye. Clifton Dane stared blankly at his pet. Polly was full of surprises, but this was certainly the biggest surprise of all.

"Look here, Polly—" gasped Dane.

"Can't do it! Put on a mask!"

"Wh-a-at!"

"Or a fire-screen, or something, if you want me to look. Your face worries me! Ha, ha, ha! Take it away and bury it!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The juniors were all gathered round the parrot's cage now in unbounded amazement.

Billy Bunter was forgotten. The Greyfriars ventriloquist grinned and finished the ginger-beer.

"The—the blessed bird is a giddy wizard!" gasped Blake. "He can't have been taught those things!"

"Wathah not!"

"Yah! Go and eat coke! Where did you dig up those features, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove!"

Clifton Dane covered up the cage again. He was astounded.

"Yah, yah, yah! Lemme out. I couldn't go home in the dark, you ass!"

"Oh, great Scott! The beastly bird's a beastly magician, that's what he is!" exclaimed the Canadian junior.

"Chuck him out of the study while we're having our jaw," said Dane.

"And I'm confident you will come back here for the next pair," added the salesman.

"I like to see Chinese jugglers spinning plates," says Gore. Seeing China "in a whirl"?

A scientist remarks that wealth can be a powerful intoxicant. We're not feeling the least bit inebriated in this study at the moment!

I hear Trimble gave a lame excuse to his Form-master. He simply hadn't a leg to stand on.

"When run down, keep a note of your pulse beats," warns the school medico. And, of course, the number of the car that ran you down.

Gore thinks boxing might be a profitable profession. He would first "take the count" and then "count the takings."

Then there was the paperhanger who stuck to his job.

Skimpole turned up for footer practice the other day with a stop watch. "Whatever's that for?" asked Tom Merry. "You told me to time my kicks, Merry," replied Skimpole, "so I have brought a watch!"

How's this: "What a wonderful gorge that was at Cheddar," said the motorist. "What!" exclaimed his companion. "We only had an egg on toast!"

Get ready: "To a geologist, a thousand years is nothing," said Zigg. "Great Scott!" gasped Zagg. "I lent one a fiver this morning!"

Last: "I'm sure you could spare another half quid a week," said the comedian. "Impossible!" replied the producer. "I'm saving up to get a decent comedian!" Your "turn" next, chaps!

"I've never known Polly taken like this before."

He carried the cage out of the study and placed it in the passage, and came in again and closed the door. The juniors had no sooner sat down than there was a sound of scratching at the door.

"Lemme in!" came the voice of the parrot through the keyhole. "I'm not going to stay out here, you silly ass! Open this rotten door!"

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

"I'll Christopher Columbus you, if you don't open this door! Do you think I'm going to stay out here, you ass?"

"He must have got out of his cage," said Blake.

"But he couldn't," said Dane, in bewilderment. "It's fastened."

"Well he has; he's scratching at the door."

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"Do open this door, fathead, or I shall have to fly round and get in at the window!" said the parrot's voice.

The juniors looked almost scared. There was something utterly amazing and uncanny in the parrot making those remarks.

Clifton Dane ran to the door and opened it. He staggered as he looked out into the passage. The cage was still at a distance from the door. It was closed, and the parrot was in it.

"He's not here!" yelled Dane.

"What!"

"He's still in his cage!"

"Rot!"

"Look for yourselves!" yelled Dane. There was no doubt about it. The parrot was still in the cage, a dozen feet from the door, and the cage was securely fastened. Who, or what, had scratched at the door and screeched through the keyhole?

"Well, this takes the bun!" said Herries.

"The giddy place must be haunted!" said Blake.

"He, he, he!"

They all turned towards Billy Bunter as he chuckled. A sudden suspicion shot into all their minds at once.

"Bunter! Was that you?" roared Tom Merry.

"He, he, he! You asked me to give you a specimen of ventriloquism!" grinned Bunter. "What do you think of it? He, he, he!"

CHAPTER 11.

A Knock for Knox!

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly at Billy Bunter.

They understood now, but they were still amazed. Those wonderful remarks from the parrot had been the work of the Greyfriars ventriloquist.

"So it was you?" gasped Blake.

"Yes, rather! He, he, he!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Bai Jove, it's weally wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are weally a vevy clevah ventriloquist, Buntah! I couldn't have done that!"

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The fat junior smiled a smile of fat self-satisfaction.

"I'm a jolly clever chap in a good many ways," he said modestly. "But I'm best at ventriloquism. What do you think of my giving a show—hey?"

"Not a bad idea," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I say, you got the parrot's blessed croak to a 'T'. Can you always imitate voices like that?"

"Yes, rather—any old voice I've heard once!" said Bunter. "It's a gift, you know."

"Doesn't require brains," murmured Monty Lowther. "That accounts."

But Billy Bunter did not hear that remark of the humorist of the Shell.

"Come along, and let's go over and see Figgins," said Blake. "It will be funny to spring a giddy ventriloquist on him!"

"Good egg! Come on, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was quite willing to get into the limelight. He rose from his chair, and accompanied the juniors from the study. Knox of the Sixth met them in the lower passage as they were about to leave the School House.

The prefect frowned at them. Knox was very much annoyed that the row in the woodshed had not been followed by canings all round. He was looking for further trouble with the Terrible Three, and he found it.

"Hallo! Who's this?" he demanded, as he glanced at William George Bunter.

"A visitah of mine, Knox," said D'Arcy with dignity.

"Indeed! Have you got permission to receive a visitor here?"

"Buntah awwived wathah suddenly—"

Gr-r-r-r!

The growl of a dog close by Knox's heels made the prefect jump. He spun away in a great hurry, his face flushing with anger.

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"Herries!" he roared. "You've been warned about having that bulldog of yours in the House! You—"

"My bulldog isn't here!" growled Herries.

"I heard—"

Knox broke off as he glanced round in search of the bulldog. There was no dog to be seen.

Gr-r-r-r!

The door of Mr. Railton's study was half-open, and the growl proceeded from the Housemaster's room.

Knox looked in.

"Mr. Railton—"

But the study was empty. From under the table came the sound of a deep and ferocious growl.

"You dare to say that your dog is in the House, Herries!" shouted Knox. "Can't you hear him growling under the table in your Housemaster's study?"

"Oh, rot!" said Herries.

Herries had been startled for a moment, but a wink from Billy Bunter reassured him. He understood that the Greyfriars ventriloquist was responsible for that very lifelike growl.

"Take your dog out at once, Herries!" rapped out Knox.

"My dog's in his kennel," said Herries.

"You can hear him growling under the table,"

said the prefect, as another

deep and savage growl

came from under the table-

cover, which reached nearly

to the floor, and hid from

sight the space under the

Housemaster's table. "You

can hear him distinctly.

There is no other dog

about the place but yours

with a growl like that! Get

him out at once, and take

him away!"

"My dog isn't there!"

said Herries.

"Why don't you take

him away, Knox?" asked

Cutts of the Fifth, coming

along and looking into the

study. "You're not afraid

of a bulldog, I suppose?"

"He's a savage beast!"

growled Knox. "You take

him out, Cutts, and I'll

report the young rotter for

letting him into the

House!"

"No, thanks!" said Cutts

promptly.

Knox hesitated a few

moments, and then went

into the study, and stooped

to raise the edge of the

table-cover.

Gr-r-r-r!

The growl was so ferocious

that Knox jumped

back, knocking over a chair

in his hurry.

There were several books

piled on the chair, and they

were scattered on the floor.

Mr. Railton came back to

his study at that moment.

He stared at the prefect

in amazement.

"What on earth are you

doing, Knox?" he asked.

"What could possibly have

induced you to enter my

study and knock that chair

over? What is the matter

with you?"

There was a chuckle from

Knox was their special enemy, and they could have hugged Billy Bunter at that moment. Knox panted.

"Herries' bulldog is under your table!" he exclaimed. "I was going to drive him out."

"Oh," said Mr. Railton, "that alters the case! Herries, you know very well that you have been forbidden to bring your dog into the House! You will take—"

"My dog isn't there, sir," said Herries.

"Indeed! Have you seen him, Knox?"

"I heard him, sir. He was snapping round my feet, and then he bolted into this room," said the prefect.

"My dog isn't there, sir!"

"Well, well, whatever dog it is, take it away!" said the Housemaster.

"Very well, sir!"

Herries came into the study and lifted the edge of the tablecover and looked under, then he rose again and shook his head.

"There isn't any dog there, sir," he said.

"What!"

"He's lying, sir!" said Knox furiously.

Mr. Railton frowned and stooped down himself and glanced under the



Crash! Kerr pulled rather too energetically at the picture. The chair fell down on the carpet. The picture bonneted Kerr and the frame c

table. There was certainly no dog there—nothing at all but a wastepaper-basket.

The Housemaster rose and looked sternly at the angry prefect.

"There is no dog there, Knox," he said coldly.

"Wh-what!"

"You may look for yourself if you choose."

Knox did look. He almost fell upon the floor when he satisfied himself that there was no dog in the study. He gazed round him in bewilderment.

"But—but I distinctly heard a dog growl, sir!" he gasped. "These juniors heard him, too! They must have seen him!"

"Did you boys see a dog here?" asked Mr. Railton.

"No, sir!" chorused the grinning juniors.

"Did you hear a dog growl?"

"A dog, sir? Certainly not!"

Knox clenched his hands.

"They're not speaking the truth, sir! They—"

"On the contrary, they are evidently speaking the truth, as there is no dog here," said the Housemaster icily. "You are mistaken, Knox. I cannot imagine how you could have thought of such a thing, but you have evidently

done so. Please replace those books you have so clumsily upset and leave my study."

Knox, in a state of mingled bewilderment and fury, piled the books on the chair again and left the study. In the passage he glared at the juniors furiously and then strode away. He realised that he must have been tricked in some way, but in what way he could not guess.

Tom Merry linked his arm in Bunter's and marched him out of the School House, chuckling.

"It's great!" he murmured. "Bunter, old man, you're worth your weight in jam tarts!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Poor old Knox! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" grinned Blake. "Let's spring him on Figgins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter paused as the party passed within sight of the school tuckshop—the little establishment kept in a corner of the quadrangle by Dame Taggles.

"Come in here, you chaps!" he said. "I'm going to stand a feed!"

And, without waiting for a reply, Billy Bunter rolled into the tuckshop, and the School House juniors followed him.

CHAPTER 12.

"Fowl" Play!

TAGGLES was in the tuckshop, talking to Mrs. Taggles and confiding to her his opinion of Tom Merry & Co. Taggles had not yet got over his experience with the elephant in the Head's garden. He had dried himself, and was none the worse for his adventure, so far as that went, but his temper had suffered.

"Wot's the school coming to? That's wot I want to know?" Taggles was saying. "Bringin' wild hefephants hinto the place! If I was the 'Ead I'd flog 'em every day, that I would—fust thing in the mornin' to take some of the 'igh spirits out of 'em, and then agin at dinner-time, an' then agin at bed-time, jest to keep 'em in horder! That's wot they wants, Mrs. Taggles—and that's wot they'd get if I was 'eadmaster!"

"Then it's jolly lucky for us that you're not 'eadmaster, Taggy, old man!" grinned Tom Merry, as the crowd of juniors came in.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Taggles snorted. But Mrs. Taggles smiled. Mrs. Taggles found her best customers in Tom Merry & Co., and so she did not quite share her worthy husband's feelings towards them.

"Now, you fellows, what will you have?" asked Billy Bunter hospitably.

"My deah chap, we can't allow you to stand the feed when you're our visitah," said Arthur Augustus. "It's up to us."

Bunter shook his head. "Not at all, old fellow; this is my treat. Now, what

will you haave? I'll begin on this pie myself."

And he began.

"My word!" murmured Kangaroo. "After a cold fowl and a pie—this beats Fatty Wynn hollow! Greyfriars can't make much profit out of Bunter if he has a free run of the larder."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Got over your ducking, Taggy, old man?" asked Blake sympathetically.

Taggles sniffed.

"Which I ain't," he said. "And as for the young raskils that bring wild hefephants hinto the school, I'd larrup 'em, I would! Huh!"

"It was for your sake, Taggy," remonstrated Lowther.

"Huh!"

"This is Taggles, our honourable and esteemed porter," Lowther explained to Bunter. "It's his birthday to-morrow—and he's just a hundred—"

"I ain't!" roared Taggles. "I'm sixty-five!"

"And we're all so fond of him because he's so good-tempered," added Lowther. "He loves us dearly, we're the giddy apple of his eye—only he won't let on about it. He goes to the Head with pretty stories about us because he's so fond of us. Don't you, Taggles?"

"Huh!" grunted Taggles.

"Walk up, you fellows!" said Bunter.

"Don't be backward in coming forward. Pile in—it's my treat!"

"Weally, Buntah, I cannot allow it. It's my treat!" said D'Arcy firmly.

"Not at all, D'Arcy, old fellow—it's my treat!"

"Well, if you insist—" said D'Arcy.

"As a matter of fact, I do!" said Bunter firmly.

"Vewy well, then; you shall have your way, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus graciously.

"That's right," said Bunter. "Roll up, you chaps! There's one thing you can do for me, though, D'Arcy. I forgot to bring my purse with me—I left it in my study, as it happens; and Penfold borrowed my last bob as I came out. You can lend me a couple of quid, if you like, and I'll send you a postal order for it. I'm expecting a postal order at Greyfriars from a titled relation, but it hadn't come when I started."

Arthur Augustus coughed. If he had stood the feed, it might have come to ten shillings or so, so it was considerably more expensive to let Billy Bunter stand it. However, the swell of St. Jim's was generous to a fault, and he was in funds. He passed a couple of pounds to Billy Bunter, and they disappeared into the fat junior's waistcoat pocket.

"Thanks!" said Bunter airily. "I'll send you that postal order immediately I get back. Now, pile in, you chaps! It's my treat!"

"Is it?" murmured Blake. "Anyway, we'll pile in."

And they did.

Orders rained upon Dame Taggles, and Taggles himself was called upon to lend a hand in serving. The shop was crowded, and the juniors were all giving orders at once. Billy Bunter performed wonders—wonders that would have put Fatty Wynn at his best quite in the shade.

But even Billy Bunter had to slacken speed at last. Dame Taggles had been called out of the shop to attend to some household business, and Taggles was supplying the wants of the juniors, and jotting down the items with a stub of pencil on a sheet of sugar-paper. The school porter's face was a little more amiable. Goods at the school shop were

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The cord snapped and he fell back off the chair and sat lame came down about his neck. "Ow!" he roared.

not sold at low prices, and the business was doing very well just now. Hence the clearing of Taggles' manly brow.

"I don't think I'll tackle that fowl," said Billy Bunter, pushing back a cold chicken on a dish. "It's been in stock a bit too long, I think."

"Puffetly fresh, Master Bunter," said Taggles, who had been eyeing Bunter's gastronomic performances in great wonder.

"Nearly talking, you mean," said Bunter.

"Look 'ere," said Taggles, nettled, "that there's a jolly good fowl—"

"Rot!"

Taggles jumped clear of the floor.

The reply came from the fowl in question, and Taggles was naturally surprised.

"My heye!" said Taggles, looking at the fowl in amazement. "My heye! Blessed if I didn't think—"

"Oh, you can't think!" said the fowl.

"Wh-what?"

"Go home!"

Taggles backed away from the fowl, with an expression of astonishment and terror in his face that made the juniors yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the matter, Taggy?"

"Didn't you 'ear it?" gasped Taggles.

"That there fowl! It was a-talkin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I told you it was nearly talking," said Bunter. "Now it's quite talking!"

"My heye! I never knowed anythin' like it! I—"

"Oh, you're squiffy!" said the fowl. Taggles staggered back, and came into violent contact with a pile of tinned goods, and brought them to the floor.

Mrs. Taggles came quickly out of her little parlour as the tins of lobster and condensed milk came to the floor with a crash.

"What are you doing, Henry?" she asked sharply.

"My heye!" gasped Taggles.

"Upsetting the shop!" said Dame Taggles, with acerbity. "You had better let the gin alone before you come in here!"

"I ain't touched a drop—not for an hour or more!" spluttered Taggles. "Maria, that there fowl—that dead fowl—is a-talkin'!"

"Nonsense! It's quite fresh!"

"Talkin' in words, I mean—talkin' to me!"

Mrs. Taggles gave him a withering look.

"You'd better go and lie down and sleep it off!" she said sharply. "You're no use here!"

"I tell you I ain't touched a drop for an hour or more!" shouted Taggles.

"And that there fowl was a-talkin'!"

"Don't be silly, Henry!"

"He can't help it, ma'am!" came from that surprising fowl. "He was born silly!"

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Taggles.

"There you are!" yelled Taggles. "You can 'ear it now yourself, Maria! Oh, my heye! The 'orrible thing's 'anted!"

"I think we're about finished here," said Billy Bunter cheerfully. "I'll put a few doughnuts in my pocket, in case I get peckish. How much does the bill come to, please?"

"Oh, my heye!"

Mrs. Taggles was gazing at the fowl with wide eyes, apparently incapable of speech.

Bunter rapped on the counter.

"How much?" he asked.

"Oh, my heye! Two pun' fifteen

shillings and threepence!" gasped Taggles.

"Dear me!" said Bunter thoughtfully.

"The two quid won't cover it, after all. I'll tell you what, D'Arcy—you can settle this bill and I'll put it all on the postal order I'm going to send you from Greyfriars. That all right?"

Without waiting for the astonished D'Arcy to reply, Billy Bunter rolled out of the tuckshop.

D'Arcy fixed his monocle in his eye and gazed after him blankly.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

Blake chuckled.

"Jolly expensive guest yours, Gussy!" he remarked. "You couldn't afford to have many of 'em, unless your pater sends you a regular shower of fivers. Pay up and make pleasant."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus paid up, and did his best to look pleasant. He had had a fiver from his guv'nor that afternoon, and he now had exactly four shillings and ninepence left out of it. Billy Bunter was undoubtedly a most expensive guest.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus again, as he put the small remains of his fiver into his pocket. "Bai Jove!"

And the juniors followed William George Bunter from the tuckshop, and they bore down on the New House. For the moment the necessary arrangements in connection with Taggles' benefit were forgotten, and the juniors gave all their attention to the "springing" of the Greyfriars ventriloquist upon Figgins & Co.

CHAPTER 13.

Kill That Wasp!

FIGGINS & CO. were in their study, in the New House, in a state of great satisfaction with themselves, and with things in general.

As Figgins remarked, there was no doubt that the New House was taking the biscuit this time.

Three pounds ten shillings had been raised for the benefit fund by the scheme of the New House chums, and Figgins & Co. took the liberty of doubting whether the School House fellows would succeed in raising anything like it.

"As a matter of fact, it will be a New House benefit," said Figgins. "The School House kids will have to fall back on a subscription, and you know how that kind of thing works out. Fellows won't give something for nothing."

"No fear!" agreed Kerr.

"Of course, I hope they'll raise something, as we want to give Taggles a really good testimonial," said Figgins.

"But they can't do it."

"They can't," agreed Fatty Wynn. "I say, Figgins, it hasn't been decided yet how the cash is going to be spent, has it?"

"Not yet."

"Well, I've got a suggestion to make," said Wynn. "I've been thinking it over, and I think I've hit on a really good idea to please all parties."

"Pile in," said Figgins cordially. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—"

"Why not stand Taggles a feed?" said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, I know it's a bit out of the usual to have a school porter to a feed, but, after all, it's his birthday, and I suppose we're not snobbish. The best of that idea is that we can all be at the feed, and—"

"But this is Taggles' benefit, not Fatty Wynn's benefit," grinned Kerr.

"Well, you ass—" argued Fatty.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Tom Merry & Co. presented

themselves. Billy Bunter came in with them. Figgins & Co. looked inquiringly at their visitors.

"Raised the fund yet?" asked Kerr, with a grin.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We've got an idea for that," he said. "But we've brought over a friend to show you. You remember Bunter, who came over with the Greyfriars football team?"

"Oh, yes!" said Figgins. And the Co. shook hands with Billy Bunter.

The Greyfriars junior blinked at them.

"Jolly glad to see you fellows again!" he said. "Hope I shall see you all at Greyfriars some day. My old pals there will welcome you like anything. I've just been standing a feed in the tuckshop. I wish you'd been there!"

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn. "I wish we had!"

"Always feel thirsty after a feed," said Bunter casually, with a glance at a bottle of ginger-beer on the table.

Fatty Wynn had brought in that bottle of ginger-beer for his own special delectation that afternoon, but the Welsh junior was nothing if not hospitable. He went to the cupboard for a glass, poured out the ginger-beer, and Bunter accepted it gratefully.

There was a sound of a buzz in the study as Fatty closed the cupboard door.

"Hallo, you've let that wasp out!" said Bunter.

"Wasp!" said Figgins. "There's no wasps here."

Buzzzzzz!

"Bee, then," said Bunter carelessly. "I'm rather shortsighted, and I can't see him. I suppose he won't sting—eh?"

Buzzzzzz!

"Br-r-r-r-r!" said Figgins, as the buzzing came close to his ear, or appeared to do so, and he whirled a book in the air. "Clear off, you beast! I don't like wasps!"

"Can't see him," said Kerr, looking round.

Buzzzzzz!

"Jolly well hear him!" said Fatty Wynn.

The buzzing was close to Fatty Wynn's head, and the fat Fourth Former gave a jump, and spun round, waving his hands wildly.

"Gerroff! Gerroff, you beast! Ow! I almost felt him on my neck!" exclaimed Fatty. "I hate wasps! Drive him out of the window with that book, Figgins!"

"I would if I could see him," said Figgins.

The School House fellows grinned. The Greyfriars ventriloquist had not been long in getting to work in Figgins' study.

Buzzzzzz!

Figgins glanced round, looking very excited. The buzzing always seemed to come from behind his head, and he could not see the obnoxious wasp, or bee, whichever it was—if it was either.

"Blow the thing!" exclaimed Figgins.

"It will sting one of us in a minute! Can any of you fellows see it?"

"I can't," grinned Tom Merry.

"Wathah not!"

Buzzzzzz!

Figgins caught up a cap, and twisted it in his hand to use as a weapon, and looked for that irritating insect with deadly intent.

The buzzing was up by the ceiling now, and Figgins scanned the ceiling in search of the wasp.

"It's behind the picture," said Fatty Wynn.

"I'll have him in a minute!" said Figgins. "You stand on a chair and

(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,
Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! In a little over a week now Easter will be here, and very welcome the holidays will be, eh? I expect many of you are making plans to go on hiking and cycling trips, and very enjoyable they can be, too.

Tom Merry & Co. happen to be rather fortunate this Easter, for, as things turn out in next week's great yarn, they are booked for a treasure-seeking trip abroad! But I mustn't tell you too much about that yet, or I shall spoil your appetite for Martin Clifford's next story, which is called:

"CLUE TO A FORTUNE!"

It tells how Tom Merry, when he goes scouting in Rylcombe Woods with his chums, becomes involved in a mysterious and thrilling adventure, and how Tom, in helping a fugitive Italian to outwit his deadly enemies, becomes possessed of a document which is the clue to a fortune!

The chums of St. Jim's little know then the far-reaching effect the document is to have on future events—that it is to cause them to take the treasure trail against enemies who will stop at nothing to get their hands on a hidden hoard on a lonely isle in the Adriatic!

This gripping story, chums, is one that is equal to Martin Clifford's best-ever effort—and that's saying a lot! So look out for it next Wednesday.

"LUCKY LOVELL!"

This is the final yarn in the ripping Rookwood series dealing with the excitement which has been the outcome of the theft of the Head's notecase. Not a little of the excitement has fallen to Arthur Edward Lovell, and it is fitting that he should be "in at the death," so to speak, when the long-lost wallet is found.

As a matter of fact, it is lucky for Lovell that he is, for Trouble-hunter No. 1 of Rookwood is in more trouble than he can manage when he has a lucky stroke!

These two great yarns, together with our humorous features, the Jester's prize selection of jokes and "Just My Fun,"

complete another tip-top number. Don't forget to book your GEM in advance.

WORK THIS OUT!

By the way, I heard a cute little problem the other day. See if you can solve it. A snail is at the bottom of a well ten feet deep and wants to get out. Each day he crawls up two feet and slips back one foot. How long will it take the snail to climb out of the well? If you can't work it out you will find the solution at the end of this chat.

LIGHT BLUES v. DARK BLUES!

I wonder how many of my readers are going to the Boat Race on Saturday? This is London's finest free show—always a thrilling race and a test of honest endeavour which never fails to attract thousands of spectators.

The stage is now set for the eighty-fifth struggle between the old rivals of the river, Oxford and Cambridge, and, as usual, there is much speculation as to which crew will win. Can Oxford break their long sequence of defeats—twelve in a row? Not since 1923 have they won a race—the only post-War victory to their credit. The present summary of results stands at forty-three victories for the Light Blues and forty for the Dark Blues, one race being a dead-heat.

A CLOSE FINISH!

The dead-heat occurred in 1877, and it was one of the most memorable races ever held on old Father Thames. Oxford were winning when the two crews reached Barnes Bridge. The Dark Blues had the bend of the river in their favour, and the race seemed all over bar cheering. But it was at this stage that fickle Fate took a hand. The Oxford bow's oar snapped in half, and he was a passenger for the rest of the race. In consequence, Cambridge overhauled their rivals fast and drew level with them right on the finishing post!

PEN PALS COUPON
4-4-36

WATERLOGGED!

Perhaps the most amazing Boat Race was the one in 1912. When the crews took the water it was bitterly cold and snowing, and a gale made the river very choppy. It was blowing so hard that the start had to be signalled; a voice couldn't be heard. The two boats got under way, but they were soon shipping water. By the time Harrod's was reached Cambridge were waterlogged, and they sank. Oxford struggled on to Chiswick before they shared their rivals' fate. The Dark Blues refloated their boat and finished the course; but the umpire declared "No race." It was re-rowed later, and Oxford won by six lengths.

Cambridge hold the record time for the four and a quarter miles course from Putney to Mortlake. In the 1934 race they clocked 18 mins. 3 secs.! If the Light Blues can get within a minute of that time on Saturday they ought to be assured of victory for the thirteenth time running.

CATS ON VELVET!

Cats are having a happy time in Shanghai now. Nothing so common as the cat's-meat man calling with their daily rations! High-class catering has been arranged for them, with special restaurants to provide breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners, and special messengers to deliver the meals. If pussy would like a nice steak for dinner his mistress just orders it in advance, and promptly on time it arrives.

Several of these restaurants have been opened solely for the provision of cats' meals, and a varied menu, to suit all feline tastes, is provided!

THE FATEFUL MESSAGE!

Nearly nine years ago Captain Charles Nungesser and Francois Coli started out on their ill-fated attempt to fly the Atlantic, never to be seen again. What happened to the two French airmen was never known, but recently light was thrown on the mystery in a very curious way.

An angler was fishing off Bone, Algeria, when he hooked a seven pound bream. On opening the fish he found inside it a bottle, which contained a message in pencil. "Explosion in reserve tank," it ran. "Trying to alight. Latitude 17, longitude 47.—Coli."

PUZZLE SOLUTION.

Nine days is the answer to that snail problem. Did you get it right? You see, the catch is that the snail reached the top of the well on the ninth day, so it didn't slip back a foot.

TAILPIECE.

Teacher: "How many seasons are there in the year?"

Johnny: "Two, sir; football and cricket!"

THE EDITOR.

Emanuel Mazaraki, 477, Glenmore Road, Edgecliff, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia; bell ringing, stamps.
Alan Maskell, 17, Oram Street, Shepparton, Victoria, Australia; stamps, outdoor life.
Leslie Clarke, 62, Britannia Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich; stamps.

George Martin, 24, Weldon Street, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; age 16-18; snaps.

Peter O'Connor, 12, Anthony Street, Glasgow C.3; age 12-14; cricket, photography; France, Italy.

J. Crockett, 14, Pyramid Street, Liverpool; age 15-16; British Empire, U.S.A.

(Continued on page 22.)

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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 D. Beech, Bay Mount, Hillside Road, Fish Hoek, Cape Town, South Africa; girl correspondents; age 14-16; Guiding, sports.

pull the picture aside, Kerr, and I'll stand on another and give him an awful whack the moment I see him."

The School House juniors crowded in the doorway, watching the proceedings with great interest. Figgins and Kerr mounted upon the chairs on either side of the picture. The buzzing was still continuing. Kerr suddenly dragged the picture aside, and Figgins smote the wall with a mighty swipe.

Bang!

"Got him! I bet you! Hallo——"

Crash!

Kerr had pulled rather too energetically at the picture. The cord snapped, and Kerr fell back off the chair, and sat on the carpet, with the picture on his head. Fortunately there was no glass in the frame; it was a framed oleograph. The oleograph bonneted Kerr, and the frame came down about his neck.

"Ow!" roared Kerr.

The School House juniors burst into a roar. The sight of Kerr sitting on the floor with the picture-frame round his neck struck them as funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!" gasped Kerr. "Oh!"

Figgins stepped down from his chair, and gazed at his chum in astonishment.

"Well, you are clumsy!" he ejaculated.

"Ow!" roared Kerr. "Do you think I did it on purpose, you fathead? The rotten cord broke, you chump! It was you who hung the picture, you burler!"

"Sorry!" grinned Figgins. "Jolly lucky that picture wasn't a thousand-guinea Rembrandt, like the one in the Head's study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you killed that beastly wasp?" growled Kerr, as he scrambled up and detached the picture-frame and the fragments of the oleograph from his person.

"Yes, rather! I'm not a clumsy ass!" said Figgins. "Look here——"

Buzzzzzz!

Figgins started. He had evidently not killed the wasp.

Kerr chuckled.

"You haven't killed him!" he said. "Who's a clumsy ass now? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!" said Figgins. "He's got a charmed life—the beast! I'll swear I hit him fair and square!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the School House juniors.

Figgins glared at them. His temper was rising.

"What are you School House fat-heads cackling about?" he demanded.

"Go on!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "We're waiting to see you slay the jabberwock!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Buzzzzzz!

"The—the beast!" gasped Figgins. "I'll smash him, if it takes me all the afternoon! I'll squash him! I'll spifficate him! I'll——"

Figgins jumped as the buzz sounded close to his ears, and swept the cap round furiously.

"Yaroooo!" yelled Fatty Wynn, as the weapon caught him on the side of the head. "Yah! Oh, you frabjous ass! What are you hitting at me for?"

"Sorry!" panted Figgins. "I'm trying to get at that wasp!"

"Ow! You've nearly busted my napper—you ass! Ow!"

"Oh, blow your napper!" howled Figgins, as the buzzing started again.

"Hang your napper! Go and boil your

silly napper in oil! I'm going to smash that wasp!"

Buzzzzzz!

Figgins made a wild dive in the direction of the buzz, and swept a vase from the mantelpiece. There was a crash in the fender.

"Looks more like smashing up the happy home, doesn't it?" grinned Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling!" howled Figgins.

"You're worse with your cackling than that rotten wasp with his rotten buzzing! Shurrrup!"

Buzzzzzz!

"I—I—I'll smash that wasp, if I wreck the whole blessed study!" gasped Figgins, whose blood was up now. "You watch me! Can you see him, Fatty?"

"Ow! I can't see anything. You've nearly stunned me."

"Oh, rats!" Figgins flung down the cap and caught up a poker as a more effective weapon. "If I get a swipe at the beast with this he won't buzz any more!"

Buzzzzzz!

"Stand still, Kerr!" shouted Figgins excitedly. "He's buzzing round the back of your head. He's settling down on your shoulder, I think. Stand still, while I fetch him a swipe!"

"You dangerous lunatic!" roared Kerr, dodging away. "Keep that poker away from me!"

"Ass! I should have had him then if——"

"Fathead! Chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Go it, Figg! Wait till he settles on Fatty Wynn's nose, and then go for him with the poker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll have him yet!" said Figgins breathlessly, pursuing that incessant buzzing round the study. "I can't even see the beggar, but I can hear him all the time! Ha! Now he's behind the clock! I've got him——"

Crash!

It was only a cheap American clock, not made to be roughly used, or, indeed, to be used at all. But if it had been the best kind of clock of the best English manufacture, it would not have withstood that terrific swipe from Figgins.

"Oh, you ass!" yelled Kerr, as the ruins of the clock rattled down into the grate. "You have done it now!"

"Never mind the clock—I've settled that wasp!" said Figgins, gasping for breath.

Buzzzzzz!

Figgins jumped.

"Blessed if he hasn't got away again!" he muttered. "Blessed thing must have nine lives. I've killed him twice, at least."

The buzzing went towards the window. Figgins made a swipe after the sound, and there was another sound that drowned the buzzing—the sound of smashing glass. The poker was through a pane.

Crash, crash!

"Oh crumbs!"

Kerr and Fatty Wynn hurled themselves upon their excited chum, and dragged the poker away from him by main force. There was a sound of buzzing dying away in the distance outside the window.

Buzzzzzz!

"Lemme alone!" yelled Figgins. "I'm gonna kill that wasp!"

"He's gone!" yelled Kerr. "And you've broken the window, you fat-head! You'll have to pay three bob for that pane. Stop it!"

"Well, he's gone!" panted Figgins. "I've driven him out, anyway. He must have been hurt, too; I'm sure I hit him once, at least."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the School House fellows.

Figgins glared at them.

"Look here, if you chaps can't do anything but cackle like a set of silly jays, you can buzz off!" he roared.

"Haven't you had enough buzzing?" asked Monty Lowther innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins caught up the poker again and made a rush towards them. Tom Merry & Co. crowded down the passage with Bunter, laughing loudly. And as they emerged into the quadrangle Blake clapped Billy Bunter on the back.

"Spiffing!" he exclaimed. "You're the man for our money! Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we're going to give a ventriloquial entertainment to raise the fund for Taggles' benefit, and William George Bunter is going to be the principal performer."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, when are you going to have tea?"

They looked at him. After that tremendous feed in the tuckshop the juniors had not proposed to have tea at all; and how Billy Bunter could possibly stow anything more away until at least some hours had elapsed was a mystery.

"Tea?" said Tom Merry faintly.

Bunter nodded.

"I'm getting rather peckish!" he remarked.

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean, we're just going to have tea," amended Tom Merry. "Gussy, old man, take your guest away to Study No. 6 and feed him. He must be simply perishing with hunger—ahem!—and we'll get ready for the show."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "This way, Buntah, deah boy."

And the remains of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's fiver were expended in providing yet further refreshment for William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

CHAPTER 14.

Bunter in the Limelight!

REDFERN came into Figgins' study about an hour later. The shades of night were falling fast, as the poet observes, and the lights were on in the New House. Figgins & Co. were beginning their preparation. Redfern was grinning. He had a sheet of paper in his hand, which appeared to be the cause of his merriment.

"Well, what's the joke?" demanded Figgins.

"You are, I fancy!" said Redfern. "Didn't you have a hunt for a wasp this afternoon and smash things in the study?"

"Yes," growled Figgins.

"Weren't those School House bounders here, with that fat chap Bunter from Greyfriars?" pursued Redfern.

"Yes. What about it?" asked Kerr, puzzled.

"Did you kill the wasp?" asked Redfern, still grinning.

"No," growled Figgins. "The brute got away. I think I damaged it, though."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling about?"

demanding Figgins, whose temper was still a little edgewise. "If you've come here to cackle like frying bacon, you can clear."

"Ha, ha, ha! Sure you damaged the wasp?"

"Well, I think I did. If Kerr had kept still when it settled on his shoulder, I should have made a sure job of it," said Figgins, with a snort.

"Ahem!" grinned Redfern. "I'm not surprised that the wasp wasn't killed. You see, this paper lets in some light on it."

"Eh! What are you jabbering about?" asked Figgins crossly.

"Look!" Redfern held up the paper. The chums of the New House read it with amazement. It was an announcement of an entertainment to be given that evening in the School House at St. Jim's for Taggles' benefit.

"GRAND ENTERTAINMENT!"

"At 8 p.m. precisely, in the Fourth Form Room. Tom Merry & Co. will have the honour to present

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER
(of Greyfriars),

the famous ventriloquist. Imitations of voices, cries of birds and fishes, growls of lions, tigers, zebras, New House kids, and other wild animals.

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER
(of Greyfriars),

THE WORLD FAMOUS
VENTRILOQUIST,

imitates the buzzing of a wasp to perfection! Admission, 6d. Reserved seats, 1s. All proceeds to be devoted to the fund of the Great Benefit.

ROLL UP!

in your hundreds, thousands, and millions!

P.S.—Roll up!!!

Figgins & Co. read that striking announcement, and read it again. Then they looked at Redfern and one another. They turned very pink. Figgins dimly understood now why it was that he had not succeeded in killing that troublesome wasp in his study. One line in the precious announcement had evidently been specially inserted to enlighten Figgins on that subject.

"Well, my hat!" said Figgins, at last. "So that fat boulder is a ventriloquist, is he? Now I come to think of it, I believe I've heard something of the sort before."

Redfern chuckled.

"So had I, but I'd forgotten," he said. "Seems to be a pretty good ventriloquist, too, by the way he's taken you follows in."

"He'd have taken you in, too,"

growled Figgins. "Of course, I wasn't thinking anything of the sort. If I'd known it I should have guessed."

"Go hon! And if you'd guessed it you'd have known, I suppose," suggested Redfern.

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins, as the Co. chuckled. "I wish I'd known. I'd have booted those School House bounders out, and their precious Falstaff along with them. Like his cheek to come ventriloquising in my study! I suppose it's up to us to go to this rotten entertainment as it's for the benefit. Of course, it will be tosh."

"Better go, though," said Redfern. "Every tanner helps; though it seems an awful waste to present the fund to Taggles."

"Just what I was thinking," said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "My suggestion was to stand a big feed with the fund, and let Taggles come. What do you think, Reddy?"

"Rotten!" said Redfern politely. "It's getting near eight now, and we'd better rout out the fellows. Better promise thick ears to all the fellows who don't go; we must rally round to back up the fund. The School House chaps lined up to help us with that giddy circus, you know."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "One good turn deserves another. We'll all go."

And Figgins & Co. left their preparation where it was, and set energetically to work to marshal the New House juniors and shepherd them over to the School House.

Before eight o'clock sounded from the old tower of St. Jim's, Figgins & Co. and most of the New House juniors were in the Form-room. Figgins had promised dire punishment to all fellows who failed to rally round at that critical moment, and New House fags had been seen dashing to and fro in a state of great excitement, trying to borrow sixpences of one another.

The Fourth Form Room had been prepared for the entertainment.

Two rows of seats were numbered and reserved for the superb individuals who wanted to pay a shilling instead of sixpence, but there did not appear to be a run on them.

Several members of the School House Co. were in the Form-room, keeping order and showing fellows to their seats. Billy Bunter was not yet to be seen. Billy Bunter had presented a difficulty almost at the last moment. He could not possibly appear on the stage in public without evening clothes; and as he had not foreseen anything of this kind, of course, he had not brought dress clothes with him.

"Oh, you can go on as you are!" said Tom Merry. "After all, you're going to appear as a ventriloquist, you know, not as a tailor's dummy!"

Bunter shook his head.

"Must have evening clothes on an occasion like this," he said. "I suppose one of you fellows can lend me a dress suit?"

Tom Merry looked perplexed.

"We could lend you one easily enough," he agreed. "But the trouble is, how on earth could you get into it? You're rather—ahem!—rather plump, you know."

"Gussy's got piles and piles of dress clothes," said Blake. "You can do as you like with them," he added.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come up to the dorm, and I'll show you all Gussy's clothes, and you can see what you can do," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, deah boy—"

Blake led Billy Bunter up to the Fourth Form dormitory, apparently not hearing the murmured expostulations of the dismayed swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus followed him in a state of great trepidation. The elegant junior's dress clothes were the pride of his heart; their cut and their fit were famous. To think of Billy Bunter's huge limbs being thrust into his elegant clobber was simply appalling. Arthur Augustus was well known to be the politest person that, as Monty Lowther expressed it, ever polited. But his politeness was strained almost to breaking point by this fearful emergency.

Blake, with a generous hand, laid out D'Arcy's dress clothes on the bed. Billy Bunter looked at them, and blinked at them through his big glasses. "You'll nevaah get them on, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus.

"I'm afraid not," agreed Bunter; and D'Arcy's face brightened up. It fell again as Billy Bunter went on: "But I'll try. I don't mind how much trouble I take to please you fellows, especially as you're going to stand me another feed before I go!"

"Oh!"

Bunter stripped off his own clothes, which fitted tightly to his rotund figure, though they were half a dozen sizes larger than D'Arcy's. Then he essayed to thrust a very fat leg into D'Arcy's elegant evening trousers.

Arthur Augustus trembled.

There was a long, rending sound.

D'Arcy opened his eyes, which he had closed in horror. The inevitable had happened. Billy Bunter had exerted all his strength to get those bags on, and they had burst.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost in tears.

"The bags are no good for me," said Billy Bunter, with undiminished cheerfulness. "I might make my own bags do, though, if the coat will go on. I'll try."

"It's puttin' you to a fearful lot of trouble, Buntah, deah boy!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Not at all!" said Bunter.

He essayed with the coat. There was an ominous sound, and the elegant evening coat split up the back.

Bunter shook his head.

"No go!" he said. "Still, I'll do my best! I'll try the rest!"

Arthur Augustus shrieked.

"No, you jolly well won't, you wottah!"

"Eh?" said Bunter, blinking at him.

"I—I mean, it wouldn't be any good, you know!" stammered D'Arcy, crimsoning. "I say, I've got an idea, you chaps. Fatty Wynn has evening clothes, and they're newish to Buntah's size. We can bowwow them."

"They're nearer," said Tom Merry, "but they're not up to Bunter's measure, I fancy. Fatty might have something to say about it."

"That's all right. The New House chaps are all in the Form-room, and you could bowwow the things without mentionin' it to Fatty. You can explain afterwards that it was the only thing to be done, in the cires, you know."

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily.

"Why didn't you think of that before, Gussy? I'll cut over to the New House at once."

And Blake departed on his errand.

He returned in five minutes with a bundle of clothes. They were not quite so elegant as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's, but they were very much nearer Bunter's size, which was a more important point. With a squeeze, Bunter got into them. He had selected the best of D'Arcy's evening shirts, and borrowed D'Arcy's best diamond stud for the occasion. Arthur Augustus helped him to dress, and he was finished soon after eight.

There was a sound of stamping feet from the Form-room.

The room was crowded with the audience now, and the audience were eager for the performance to begin.

"All ready?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, quite!" said Bunter.

"Come on, then!"

And the chums of the School House led the elegant Bunter downstairs.

CHAPTER 15.

The Great Entertainment!

THE Form-room was crowded. School House and New House had rolled up loyally to support the benefit fund; and a good many seniors had come in, curious to see the Greyfriars ventriloquist. Kildare, Darrell, Rushden, and Langton of the Sixth had kindly taken reserved seats, shelling out whole shillings with great liberality. And a whisper ran through the room that the Head himself had promised to look in to show his approval of the object for which the junior fund was being raised.

Billy Bunter met a sea of faces as he entered by the upper door, but he was not in the least disconcerted. Billy Bunter was not afflicted with nerves, and he had too good an opinion of himself to be easily put out. Stage fright might easily afflict fellows who were doubtful of their powers; but William George Bunter was not in the least doubtful of his powers—quite the reverse, in fact.

"Gentlemen—" began Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

"I have the honour of presenting William George Bunter, the famous ventriloquist—"

"Bwavo!"

"Mr. Bunter has already given

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samples of his gifts—especially in the imitation of the buzzing of a wasp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will now proceed to give an entertainment."

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry sat down.

"Rats!" came a voice from the back of the room.

Tom Merry & Co. looked wrathful. It was Levison who spoke. Levison had paid his sixpence to come in in the hope of being able to "rag" the entertainment.

"Order!" shouted Blake. "Any cad interrupting will be chucked out on his neck."

"Yaas, wathah! Levison, you are a wottah!"

"Rot!" said Mellish. "Audiences are allowed to express an opinion about the show, I suppose."

"Order!"

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. It was evidently Levison's object to rag the entertainment, and spoil it if he could. Billy Bunter knew Levison well enough as he had been an old Greyfriars boy, and had been "sacked" from that school. But Billy Bunter fancied that he was quite equal to Levison. So long as the cad of the Fourth remained in the room the entertainment was exposed to risk, and Billy Bunter promptly made up his mind that Levison should not remain.

Kildare had risen to his feet, and he frowned severely at Levison.

"Be quiet!" he exclaimed sternly.

"You should know better than to interrupt like this, Levison."

"Oh, rats!"

Kildare jumped.

It was Levison's voice—if it was not Levison that had used it—and the captain of St. Jim's turned crimson with anger.

"Go and eat coke, Kildare!"

"What! You cheeky young rascal!" shouted the captain of St. Jim's. And he made his way through the crowd towards Levison.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" demanded Levison. "I—I didn't say anything."

"You won't say anything more—that's a cert!" said Kildare grimly. "Come out!"

And he gripped the cad of the Fourth by the collar in an iron grip. Levison roared and clung to the form.

"Leggo!" he roared. "I—I didn't do—"

"Come out of that!"

Kildare dragged Levison from his hold, and picked him up and carried him bodily to the door of the Form-room.

The audience shouted approval.

"That's right, Kildare!"

"Chuck him out!"

There was a bump in the passage. Levison rolled on the floor and yelled.

"Ow. ow! I—I didn't—"

Kildare shook a warning finger at him.

"If you come in here again you'll be licked," he said.

"I've paid for admission!" yelled Levison. "I'm not going to pay a tanner for nothing."

"You should behave yourself, then," said Kildare; and he closed the door of the Form-room, leaving the infuriated Levison growling in the passage.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction. The intended ragger had been got rid of, and only a few fellows suspected that the ventriloquist had had a hand in it.

Dr. Holmes came in a few minutes

later and took his seat, and then the performance commenced.

There was no doubt that Billy Bunter of Greyfriars was a clever ventriloquist. He did imitations of bird calls, and made them proceed from different parts of the room, and he imitated the cries of animals to perfection.

He held a conversation with a person supposed to be shut up in the Form-master's desk, and it was done so well that many of the fellows believed that there was somebody squeezed into the desk, and weren't satisfied till they had looked.

"Bai Jove! It's jolly clevah, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus confided to his chums. "I couldn't do all that, you know."

Than which there was no higher praise!

"Gentlemen," said Billy Bunter, "I will now hold a conversation with someone outside the window."

"Hear, hear!"

The Form-room windows were opened, on account of the heat. Billy Bunter, at the other end of the room, was at a considerable distance from the window. He called out to a supposed person outside:

"Are you there?"

The juniors listened for the reply.

"Yes; here I am!" came back a voice.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Blessed if I couldn't have sworn that that voice came through the window!"

"Buntah didn't even move his lips, bai Jove!"

"It's wonderful!"

Bunter was staring blankly at the open window through his big glasses. There was an expression of surprise on his fat face.

"Are—are you there?" he repeated.

"I told you so once, fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the audience.

"Wh-what are you doing?" called out Bunter.

"Looking in at a set of silly asses!"

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry, with a warning glance at Bunter.

That kind of badinage was not exactly in taste when the Head and the prefects were present. Dr. Holmes' brow was seen to wrinkle slightly.

"I—I say!" gasped Bunter.

"Oh, don't you say anything!" came a squeaky voice from the window.

"You're the biggest idiot of the lot! Go and eat coke!"

"I—I—"

"Oh, go home! Tell all the duffers to go to bed and shut up!" came the voice from the window. "Tell Kildare he's an ass!"

"Dash it all, that's rather too thick!" exclaimed Kildare, turning red.

"Go easy, Bunter, old man!" whispered Tom Merry. "You can't say things like that, you know. Kildare's head prefect. Be more careful."

"I—I—" stuttered Bunter.

"Kildare's an ass, and they're all asses!" came the voice from the window.

Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"I do not approve of this kind of thing," he said icily. "I regard it as disrespectful."

And he moved towards the door.

"I—I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't say all that. I hadn't started!"

"What!"

"Oh, really, you know—there's some villain outside the window playing a rotten trick!" Bunter stuttered. "I swear I never said a word of it!"

"My hat!"

There was a rush to the window. But



Bunter essayed to put on the coat. There was an ominous sound, and the elegant evening jacket split up the back. "No go!" he said. "I'll try the rest." Arthur Augustus looked dismayed. They were his clothes! "No, you jolly well won't!" he shrieked.

whoever it was who had been there had disappeared.

"It must have been that rotter Levison," said Bunter. "He was turned out, you know, for not behaving himself."

"Oh!" said the Head.

"Please sit down, sir!" said Tom Merry, in distress. "It was a rotten joke of somebody outside in the quad, sir, that's all."

The Head nodded, and sat down again. Jack Blake made a sign to his chums and left the Form-room quietly. He was going scouting, and if there was an unexpected voice at the window again Blake would know to whom it belonged—with painful results to the owner.

Billy Bunter recovered himself.

He began to hold that conversation with an imaginary person outside the window, and it proceeded quite successfully for several minutes till he asked the question:

"Who are you, my friend outside?"

Quite an unexpected answer came:

"I'm the only fellow present who isn't a silly chump!"

"That wasn't me!" roared Bunter, as the Head frowned again. "It was that rotten joker!"

"It's too bad!" exclaimed Tom Merry, jumping up. "It's some rotter trying to muck up the entertainment."

Then there was a sudden uproar outside the window.

Biff, biff! Thump, thump! Bump! Crash!

"Yaroo! Ow, ow! Yah, yah! Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

"Blake's got him!"

The uproar outside the window was simply terrific for some moments. Blake had evidently captured the practical joker, caught him in the act, and was convincing him that it was no time for practical jokes.

A voice was heard raised in anguish.

"Ow, ow, ow! Leggo! Leggo my ears! Yah! Oh, you beast! Yow!"

"Levison!" roared Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump, thump, thump!

A couple of minutes later Jack Blake came back into the Form-room with a smiling if somewhat flushed countenance.

"It's all right!" he said. "There won't be any more practical jokes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake was right; there were no more interruptions. The entertainment went on without a hitch after that, and concluded with great success. Quite an ovation greeted Billy Bunter when he made his final bow.

"Hurrah! Bravo! Bravo, Bunter!"

"Jolly good show!" said Figgins heartily.

"Yaas, wathah—simply wippen!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Very good indeed!" said the Head,

giving Billy Bunter a benevolent smile.

"I must say you are a very clever ventriloquist, Bunter. Very clever indeed!"

"Yes, sir," said Bunter. "Quite so, sir!"

"Ahem!" murmured the Head.

"Perhaps in the circumstances, sir," went on Bunter cheerfully, "you wouldn't mind giving me a note to my headmaster, explaining to him that I stayed on here to help in a charitable performance. You see, sir, I ought to have got in before calling-over, but, as a matter of fact, I shan't be in before eleven now."

The Head looked at him fixedly for a moment.

"I couldn't refuse to help these chaps out, you know, sir, especially as they're going to give me a feed before I go," said Bunter.

"I will give you the note," said Dr. Holmes at last.

"Thank you very much, sir!"

And when Billy Bunter—after another tremendous feed—left St. Jim's he carried that note in his pocket, to save him from the justifiable wrath of the headmaster of Greyfriars.

The juniors walked down to the station with him in a crowd. Billy Bunter had his peculiar little ways, but he had certainly been a great use to the School House fellows. The takings at the ventriloquial entertainment had amounted to three pounds ten shillings, the same as the amount raised by Figgins & Co. And as one of Figgins' sixpences had turned out to be a bad one the score was really on the side of the School House.

Billy Bunter had been well worth feeding, as Monty Lowther remarked.

The juniors saw him into the train and shook hands with him all round, and Billy Bunter promised that he would pay them another visit soon. And they gave the Greyfriars ventriloquist a cheer as the train rolled away.

"Jolly clever chap!" remarked Fatty Wynn, as the juniors walked back to St. Jim's. "Got a really good taste in grub, too; I like a fellow who hasn't a rotten fairy appetite. Rather a tight squeeze in those clothes, though—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter for the owner of the clothes," said Fatty Wynn, with a grin. "I noticed that the coat had burst under both arms. I suppose one of you chaps lent them to him."

"I lent them to him," said Blake blandly.

"Then you'll have to get 'em sewn up before you wear 'em again!" chuckled Fatty Wynn. "It wasn't safe to let that porpoise get into them!"

"Oh, I shan't want to wear them!" said Blake calmly. "You see, they weren't mine—I borrowed them to lend to him."

Fatty Wynn roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! I shouldn't like to see the owner's face when he knows that!"

"Got your pocket-mirror with you, Gussy?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Lend it to Wynn!"

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn. "What are you getting at? What is Gussy to lend me his silly pocket-mirror for?"

"So that you can see the face of the owner of those clothes," said Blake calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn's face was a study.

"Why, you—you—you—" he spluttered out at last. "Do you mean to say that you had the awful nerve to borrow my clothes—my evening clobber—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wanted 'em big enough for a porpoise," explained Blake gently. "As you were the only porpoise at St. Jim's—"

"We did it for the porpoise," said Lowther.

But Fatty Wynn did not listen to Monty Lowther's pun; he made a wild

rush at Blake, and Blake fled, and half-way back to the school the fat Fourth Former gave up the chase. He had done almost as well as Billy Bunter at that last feed, and he was not in a condition for a running match.

CHAPTER 16.

A Surprise for Taggles!

"YOUNG raskils!" said Taggles. That remark was made by the crusty old gentleman as the Terrible Three came towards his lodge on the following morning, before lessons.

The chums of the Shell looked very bright and cheerful in the morning sunshine, and they had their best smiles on. They raised their hats to Taggles and bowed, all in a row.

"Good-morning, Taggles!"

"Huh!" grunted Taggles.

"Many happy returns of the day, Taggles."

"Huh!"

"How does it feel to be 101?" asked Monty Lowther affably.

"I ain't 101!" yelled the exasperated Taggles. "I'm sixty-five to-day—and well you know it!"

"Shush, Lowther!" said Tom Merry chidingly. "You're wanted, Taggles!"

"Huh!"

"Will you step into the House with us?" said Tom Merry sweetly. "We've got a little surprise for you, Taggles—a little surprise on your birthday."

"I'll report yer!" said Taggles.

"We're going to heap coals of fire on your head!" exclaimed Manners.

"Shush, Manners! Come on, Taggles! It isn't a joke this time; it's real business. Honour bright!"

"I ain't comin'!" said Taggles.

"Must!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Now, Taggles, old man, are you going to walk, or shall we have to carry you?"

"I'll report yer!"

"Must carry him, then!" said Tom Merry. "Lend a hand—all together!"

"Ow! 'Ands horf!" roared Taggles.

"You young rips! I'll report yer!"

But Taggles was not heeded. The chums of Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. came to the help of the Terrible Three, and Taggles was lifted fairly off his feet and carried into the lecture hall.

The Hall was crowded.

There was a shout from the swarm of juniors as Taggles, breathless and furious, was set upon his feet.

"Hurrah! Many happy returns, Taggles!"

Taggles blinked at them. He did not understand yet; but he was beginning to see that it was not, after all, a rag.

Mr. Railton, the School House master, was present, and that sedate gentleman could not, of course, have been suspected of taking part in anything so disorderly as a rag.

"Many happy returns, Taggles!" said Mr. Railton, with a benevolent smile.

"Same to you, sir, I'm sure!" mumbled the confused Taggles.

Mr. Railton smiled more widely.

"Taggles, I am sure you will be pleased to know of the estimation in which the junior boys of this college hold you."

Taggles looked doubtful.

"I have been requested by Tom Merry, as head of the junior committee, to make the presentation," continued Mr. Railton.

"I—I—I—" stammered Taggles.

"The juniors have raised a fund for your benefit, Taggles," said Mr. Railton. "My heye!"

"The sum of seven pounds has been raised by the united efforts of both Houses," said Mr. Railton benevolently. "There has been no time for the purchase of a birthday present, but the juniors consider that the cash will be equally acceptable to you, Taggles, to be expended as you think fit."

"Seven quid?" gasped Taggles. "My heye!"

"I have, therefore, much pleasure in presenting you with this purse containing seven pounds, as a mark of appreciation on the part of the junior boys of this college," said Mr. Railton.

Taggles took the purse like a man in a dream.

He opened it, and there were seven pound notes inside. The many and varied coins collected by the juniors had been changed into pound notes for the purpose of the presentation.

"My heye!"

That was all Taggles could say in his astonishment and gratification.

(Continued on page 23.)

PEN PALS.

(Continued from page 17.)

John Nicholson, Blanquita, 10, The Crescent, Maidenhead, Berkshire; overseas; stamps; age 12-17.

R. T. Staples, 58, Marmora Road, Honor Oak, London, S.E.22; "Nelson Lee Lib."

Melvin Pustejovsky, P.O. Box 167, Moulton, Texas, U.S.A.; stamps, coins, films, sports.

Takezo Shinoda, 4868, Oi-Kanoezuka Machi Shinagawaku, Tokyo, Japan.

Stephen T. Parry, Brynawel, Tynybedw Terrace, Treorchy, Glam., S. Wales; sports; age 13-16.

Bruce Smith, 35, Fitzreal Street, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12; age 14-15; cricket, swimming.

R. Jeffreys, 358, Brockley Road, Crofton Park, London, S.E.4; age 13-18; sports; overseas.

Marge Martin, 24, Weldon Street, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; age 18-21; sports, photography, music.

E. B. Page, Overpart Post Office, Durban, Natal, South Africa; stamps, cycling.

Miss P. Stocks, 46, Holly Road, Thornton Lodge, nr. Huddersfield; girl correspondents; age 20-24; dancing, swimming, films.

Jack Brown, 73, Elm Grove Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; pen pals.

Fred McAndrew, 25, Southill Road, Bournemouth; overseas; match brands.

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Eric Jubb, 409, Wellfield Street, Warrington, Lancs.; overseas; stamps, conjuring, postcards.

Joshua Shenker, Jaffa Road, Jerusalem, Palestine, wants pen pals.

Miss Joy Hancock, 9, Haslemere Avenue, Marton, Blackpool, Lancs.; girl correspondents; overseas; sports; age 18-20.

Arthur A. Pappadopoulos, Yama moto dori, 2, chome, Np. 45, Kobe, Japan; stamps, photography, shooting.

Allan Russell, Heaslop Terrace, Annerley, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; age 16-18; stamps, photos, cigarette cards.

Bruce Bratchie, Craighall, Moorland Avenue, Great Crosby, Liverpool, 23; age 12-16; stamps; overseas.

Alex Walton, 29, The Ravine, Shiregreen, Sheffield, 5; companion papers, etc.

Bertie Mandelbrote, Forest Road, Oranjezicht, Cape Town, South Africa; stamps; age 11-15.

Lance J. Kennett, 3, Milner Street, Prospect, South Australia; pen pals, France especially.

Allan Ferguson, 230, Maitland Road, Mayfield, Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia; age 11-12; stamps, model trains, photos.

G. C. Madden, 456, Macquarie Street, South Hobart, Tasmania, Australia; stamps.

Miss Betty Phillips, 110, Cameron Street, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia; girl correspondents; age 16-19; Grides, films, sports.

Patrick Manackjee, St. Patrick's High School, Moulmein, Burma, India; age 15-16; stamps, sports.

W. W. Atkinson, Bracken Bank, Eldwick, Bingley, Yorks; age 10-12; stamps.

Peter Mash, 22, Glenwood Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex; fossils.

ANOTHER CRIPPING STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS.

THE BLACK SHEEP'S SECRET!

By Owen Conquest



"There was a grey overcoat 'anging in the wardrobe, 'Erbert," said Mr. Poggers, "and I jest cut the lining and slipped the wallet inside to 'ide it." Leggett, hiding under the brambles, gave a sudden start. His heart thumped with the excitement of the discovery he was making.

A Tick in Trouble!

LOVELL snorted. Jimmy Silver frowned. Raby and Newcome grinned. In those various ways were the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth Form affected by the sudden sight of Albert Leggett.

Leggett of the Modern Fourth was a "tick."

All Moderns, of course, were more or less ticks from the Classical point of view. But Leggett really was a tick. He was a shady, shifty sort of fellow, little liked in his own House.

Coming down the footpath through Coombe Wood, Jimmy Silver & Co. sighted Leggett standing under a tree near the footpath. He was talking to a fat, red-faced man, who wore a bowler hat at a very rakish angle, and had a cigar in the corner of his mouth.

A Rookwood man—even a Modern tick like Leggett—ought not to have been in conversation with Mr. Googe. Mr. Googe had a reputation that could almost have been cut with a knife. He was reputed to know exactly what the inside of Latham Prison was like.

Had Mr. Manders, Leggett's House-master, seen him talking to Googe, there would have been something like an earthquake. Fortunately for Leggett, only the chums of the Classical Fourth saw him.

Leggett did not see them. He was talking very earnestly to Googe. Matters of deep import, apparently, had caused the cad of Manders' House to meet Mr. Googe in the secluded shades of Coombe Wood.

Passing a dozen feet from him,

Jimmy Silver & Co. could not help seeing him. Neither could they help hearing his voice as they drew near:

"I can't manage it—not this term. Look here, Googe—"

Googe was heard to give a grunt.

Arthur Edward Lovell slowed down.

"Hold on!" he said. "You see that tick—"

"Yes; come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"No bizney of ours," Raby pointed out.

"Isn't it?" snorted Lovell, coming to

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**One pound was the sum Albert Leggett needed to save himself from disgrace—and then the black sheep of Rookwood learnt a secret worth nearly fifty times that amount!**  
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a stop. "Leggett's a Rookwood man. You know what he's up to—backing horses with that reptile Googe. Googe could be run in for it."

"Are you going to run him in?" inquired Newcome, with sarcasm.

"Don't be an ass! I'm going to kick Leggett! You fellows may as well kick Googe while I'm kicking Leggett—see?"

The sound of voices on the footpath caused both Leggett and Googe to look round.

Leggett crimsoned at the sight of the Classical juniors. Googe gave them a

stare, grunted, and walked away into the wood.

Lovell turned from the path and crossed over to where Leggett stood under the tree. His friends followed him. The Modern junior looked like a fellow who had struck serious trouble.

"You tick—" began Lovell.

"Shut up, old man!" said Jimmy Silver. "Look here, Leggett, you ass, if you can't be decent, you might have a little sense. You'd be sacked if you were seen with that greasy bounder Googe!"

"I know," muttered Leggett. "I had to see him. I say, Silver—"

He broke off, eyeing the captain of the Fourth furtively.

"What?" asked Jimmy.

The fact that Leggett evidently was in trouble of some sort disarmed Jimmy. "Uncle James" of Rookwood had a kind and tender heart.

"I—I'd like to speak to you," muttered Leggett.

"No charge," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"You soft ass," snorted Lovell, "he means that he'd rather speak to you alone, to pull your leg, when your friends ain't on the spot to stop him. He wants to get something out of you. He'd like us to clear."

Raby and Newcome chuckled, and Jimmy reddened.

"Oh, ring off, Lovell!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Look here, Leggett, if you've got anything to say to me, cough it up, sharp!"

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Leggett drew a quick, quivering breath. Jimmy's chums, if not Jimmy, had guessed that he would have preferred to speak to the captain of the Fourth alone. There was no chance of that, however, and Leggett made up his mind to it.

"Well, look here, Silver," he muttered, "I'm in a beastly scrape! I—I owe that man some money—"

"I guessed that one!" said Jimmy dryly.

"He's dunning me for it!" muttered Leggett.

"I guessed that one too. He looked it, and so did you."

"Well, I—I—I—" Leggett stammered. "I—I say, be a sport, and—lend me a quid to keep him quiet for a bit!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

That request came as a surprise to Jimmy, though not perhaps to his chums. Raby winked at Newcome, who grinned. Arthur Edward Lovell gave an emphatic snort.

"I'll square at the end of the term!" muttered Leggett. "I—I'm really in a scrape! I don't know what that man will do if I don't pay him something on account!"

Jimmy gave him a look. He could feel for a fellow who was down on his luck, even if it was due to his own dingy rascality. But lending him money to pay a gambling debt was quite a different matter.

"You worm!" said Jimmy. "Come on, you chaps! That fellow makes me feel ill!"

"I'm going to kick him!" said Lovell.

"Oh, come on!"

But Arthur Edward Lovell made a stride at Leggett, who backed away hastily. Jimmy caught his chum by the arm and dragged him to a stop.

"Cut, Leggett!" he snapped.

Albert Leggett did not need telling twice. He cut, vanishing through the trees at a rapid run. He did not look like getting a "quid" from Jimmy Silver, but he did look like getting a kick from Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell gave a roar of wrath.

"Leggo my arm, you cheeky ass! I tell you—"

"Chuck it, old man—"

Lovell wrenched his arm away. Jimmy made a grab at him, but he dodged, turned, and sprinted after Leggett.

"Lovell!" yelled Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell did not heed. He vanished through the wood after Leggett. They disappeared, both going strong. The three Classics were left staring after them.

"Oh, the ass!" said Jimmy.

"Well, a kicking will do Leggett good," remarked Raby. "The more that tick is kicked the better. Come on. Leave him to it."

And the three juniors walked on down the footpath to Coombe Lane, and Lovell was left to it.

Pie for Mr. Poggers!

"IT'S like this 'ere—" said Slog Poggers.

"Oh!" breathed Leggett.

He stopped suddenly.

That husky voice reached his ears clearly through the thickets that were gleaming with the green of spring. And through interstices of the bushes he had a glimpse of the speaker.

No wonder he stopped! In the distance behind him, Arthur Edward Lovell was crashing in pursuit. But a dozen Lovells would have been preferable to a meeting, in a lonely wood, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,468.

with the burly, piggy-eyed man whose voice came to his ears.

Mr. Poggers had made himself fairly well known at Rookwood School, and in its vicinity.

Leggett had covered quite a distance from the footpath. He had hoped to shake off Lovell. But the rustling and crashing behind him told that the indignant Arthur Edward Lovell was still in pursuit. Guessing that Arthur Edward was guided by the sounds he made, Leggett ceased to run, and crept.

Creeping silently, he hoped that Lovell would be thrown off the track. But Leggett's luck was out. So far as Lovell was concerned, his strategy was good; but creeping through the thickets, he almost crept on Slog Poggers.

Luckily Poggers' husky voice reached him in time, and he stopped, while still screened from sight.

He breathed hard. The rustling and trampling behind was coming nearer. Slog Poggers was in front, and not alone; there was somebody else, with whom he was talking. In desperation, Leggett crouched on the ground, under cover of a mass of brambles, and kept as silent as a hunted rabbit.

"Like this 'ere," Mr. Poggers was saying, "I'm going to tell you, 'Erbert. 'Cause why, I want your 'elp, and if you says 'arves, then 'arves it is." "Give it a name, Slog," came another voice.

Loud rustling from the thickets drew Mr. Poggers' attention.

"'Ere, you 'ear that, 'Erbert?" he asked.

"I 'ear it, Slog," answered 'Erbert.

"I don't want nobody to see me 'ere," said Mr. Poggers. "I tell you, 'Erbert, I'm being 'unted something cruel, and all for nothing so far—I ain't made a bad sixpence out of it yet."

"'Ard luck!" said 'Erbert sympathetically.

Leggett, hidden in the brambles, heard Mr. Poggers rise to his feet from the log upon which he had been seated. He trembled in terror of the footpad spotting him. This was the man who had robbed Dr. Chisholm of his note-case, and had waylaid Mr. Manders half a dozen times.

Leggett dared not stir. He could hardly have moved now without attracting Slog Poggers' attention.

But Slog, listening to the rustling and crashing that approached, gave no attention to the mass of brambles near at hand.

Slog was listening uneasily.

The Latham police were seeking very earnestly for Slog Poggers, and he had found a good deal of difficulty of late in keeping out of their reach.

Suddenly Leggett heard an exclamation from Mr. Poggers.

"That young rip!"

He had seen Lovell.

"'Ere, 'Erbert," came Mr. Poggers' husky whisper. "It's only a schoolboy—one of them Rookwood rips what got hold of me and got that there coat off me when I had it in my 'ands. I know 'im! I been jest longing for a chance to give him a 'iding! This 'ere is pie!"

Leggett grinned breathlessly.

"Keep your 'ead down," went on Mr. Poggers. "Don't let him spot you. He's coming this way, and I want to get 'old of him."

There was an assenting grunt from Herbert.

Leggett listened. Lovell was drawing nearer. Now that he could neither see nor hear Leggett, Arthur Edward was rather at a loss. But he was coming in the right direction, though he was not, perhaps, likely to stumble on

the spot where the tick of Manders' House lay in cover.

Lovell was a stickler. He had told his chums that he was going to kick Leggett—and he was going to kick Leggett!

The more annoyed Lovell got, the more determined he got.

He tramped on savagely.

"Oh, here you are!" he gasped, as he spotted a figure crouching by a tree, and grabbed at it before he knew what it was. "You— Oh! Great pip!"

Lovell jumped back as he saw that it was not Leggett, but Slog Poggers.

In company with his friends, Lovell would have been glad to fall in with the man who had "pinched" the Head's wallet. Alone, even the headstrong Arthur Edward realised that Slog was too large an order for him.

He backed promptly, but as he did so, another man, hitherto unseen, reached out and dealt him a smack on the side of the head.

"Oooogh!" spluttered Lovell.

That unexpected smack sent him staggering.

Before he could right himself, Mr. Poggers was on him. He grasped Arthur Edward in sinewy hands.

"Gotcher!" grinned Mr. Poggers.

"Oh crumbs! Leggo!" gasped Lovell, struggling wildly.

"You pitched into a bloke!" said Mr. Poggers venomously. "Pitched into 'im, and got away that overcoat wot I got off that bony old covey! Strike me pink you did!"

Mr. Poggers was not idle while he was speaking. Holding Lovell with his left hand, he punched him with his right.

It was his slogging capabilities that had earned Mr. Poggers his nickname. Arthur Edward Lovell now had an opportunity of observing that that nickname had been justly bestowed!

Leggett made no sound.

He would not have dared to go to Lovell's help if he had wanted to. And he did not want to. By the time Slog had done with him, Leggett fancied that Lovell would not be feeling like kicking anybody!

Lovell struggled frantically.

Slog Poggers was beating him like a carpet. Herbert, standing by with his hands in his pockets, was grinning.

Lovell struggled and roared. He was getting it hot, and getting it strong. In desperation he backed at Slog's shins.

"Wooooogh!" howled Mr. Poggers, as he got that hack.

He relaxed his grasp on Lovell and hopped.

Lovell did not lose the chance. He fairly bounded away.

"Nail 'im, 'Erbert!" panted Mr. Poggers.

But Herbert clutched too late. Lovell dodged him, and cut off at top speed.

Damaged and breathless, he crashed away through Coombe Wood. Probably Herbert could not have overtaken him had he tried. But Herbert did not try; foot races did not appeal to Mr. Poggers' friend.

"Gorn!" said Herbert.

"Ow!" said Mr. Poggers. He nursed his shin. "Wow! Strike me pink! Wow!"

Lovell got back to the footpath, breathless, panting, perspiring, torn by briar and bramble. Had his friends been still there, he would have rallied them for an attack. But they were gone—and Lovell limped down the path to Coombe Lane—and sighted them again half-way to the school.

He trotted after them and shouted. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome looked

back—saw Lovell, and grinned. Undoubtedly he looked untidy. They waited for him to come up.

"Had a good time?" asked Newcome, with that gentle sarcasm which was one of his little ways.

"Urrrrgh!" gasped Lovell.

And for some time that was all that he could say.

A Startling Discovery!

"**A**CKING a covey!" said Mr. Poggers indignantly.

He sat down again on the log, resting one leg very tenderly in the grass.

"Urt?" asked Herbert.

"Orrible!" said Mr. Poggers.

However, having rubbed the shin and rested the leg in the grass, Mr. Poggers

it turned out that it was a school, packed with young rips like that one I've just been wallopping; and afore I could 'ook it they was on me, chasing a bloke all over the shop."

"'Ard luck!" said Herbert.

"If I hadn't dodged in at an open winder," said Mr. Poggers, "they'd have 'ad me. But it wasn't no good—they 'unted me down inside the 'ouse, 'Erbert. I got into a room upstairs, and 'oped I'd get clear later—but they found me out, and came a-banging at the door."

"I call it 'ard!" Herbert was very sympathetic.

"Well, I knowed then they'd get me and get the wallet back," went on Mr. Poggers, "so what do you think I did, 'Erbert? There was a big grey overcoat 'anging in the wardrobe, with a thick

that there overcoat when I come out of the stone jug."

"Cute!" said Herbert.

"But as it 'appened," went on Mr. Poggers, "I never got as far as the stone jug. They got me all right, and locked me in a room while they sent for a peeler, and not finding the wallet on me, they believed all right that I'd dropped it while they was 'unting me. Then a silly young idjit comes pokin' into the room where I was locked—that same young idjit what I've just wallopped, 'Erbert—and I got 'old of him, and got away."

"Luck!" said Herbert.

"Well, arter that," said Mr. Poggers, "I 'sposed that all I had to do was to 'ang about the school, a-watching for a bloke wearing that grey overcoat, and get it off of him. I shaved off my



"Lovell!" thundered Mr. Manders, grasping the junior's ankles. "I have caught you, and now I will—whoop! Yooop!" Lovell let go of the wall and dropped, and he landed fairly on the Modern master's head. "Urrrrgh!" gasped Mr. Manders, crumpling up.

came back to the subject under discussion.

"I was telling you, 'Erbert," he said. "And we better not 'ang about 'ere too long arter what's 'appened—that young covey what I wallopped might bring a peeler along. We better be moving soon."

Leggett, under the brambles, was glad to hear it. He dared not move till Poggers and Herbert moved.

"Now, as I was a-saying, it's like this," went on Mr. Poggers. "I want your 'elp, 'Erbert, and it's worth your while."

"Give it a name!" said Herbert.

"It's weeks ago," sighed Mr. Poggers, "that I got a wallet, fair packed with notes, off an old covey what turned out to be a schoolmaster. You see, I'd watched him open it in the post office, and follered him, and got him jest as he was going into a garding gate, as I thought. But, strike me pink, 'Erbert,

lining—and I jest cut the lining, and slipped the wallet inside to hide it."

Mr. Poggers glanced round.

"Did you 'ear anything?" he asked.

"Only a spadger!" said Herbert.

Leggett, under the brambles, had given a sudden start. He was quiet again now, though his heart was thumping, between his terror of being found and the excitement of the discovery he was making.

Leggett, like everybody else at Rookwood, had been mystified by Mr. Poggers' pursuit of Mr. Manders, and his repeated attempts to steal his overcoat. Now he was beginning to understand.

Slog, satisfied that that faint rustle close at hand had been caused by a bird or animal, resumed:

"You ketch the idea, 'Erbert? I knowed they'd get me, but I knowed that wallet would never be found where I put it, and the idea was to look for

whiskers, thinking mebber they wouldn't know me agin, and 'ung about. But they knowed me all right when I was seen, strike me pink they did! And the trouble I 'ad, 'Erbert, trying to get that overcoat, you wouldn't believe."

"Looks easy to me," said Herbert.

"So it did to me," said Mr. Poggers sorrowfully. "But it wasn't easy, 'Erbert; it was 'ard! Last week I got that old covey agin, and had him fair and square—and what do you think? Bein' a fine day, he'd come out without his overcoat!"

"It's a 'ard life," said Herbert.

"Course, the bony old covey don't know what I'm arter—but he knows I'm arter him—and now he won't come outside the blinking school at all. Sticks in like a wrinkle in his shell, 'Erbert."

"Full of notes, was it?" asked Herbert.

"Forty or fifty pounds, at least."

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Herbert sat up in the grass. "Gum!" he said. Evidently Herbert was impressed.

"It's 'arves, 'Erbert, if you 'elp me get 'old of it," said Mr. Poggers. "Can't say fairer than that. I always was a square bloke. You ain't known at the school like I am—nobody ain't seen you 'anging about. You ketch my meaning, 'Erbert?"

"I get you," assented Herbert.

"That bony old covey sticks in, jest as I said, but he can't stick in the 'ouse all that time; that stands to reason. They got a big place—gardings and such, inside them walls. You can bank on it that bony old covey takes his little walks inside the walls—and a bloke keeping an eye open, 'Erbert—"

"I get you," repeated Herbert.

"Is it a go?" asked Mr. Poggers eagerly, rising from the log. "You come along of me, and I'll point out the place from the top of the 'ill, and you can walk around and give it squint, see?"

"I'm arter you," said Herbert.

Leggett, hardly breathing under the brambles, made no sound as the two gentlemen of the road shuffled away. For some minutes he heard the rustling in the thickets and the mumble of their voices as they went. Then there was silence.

He crawled out of the brambles at last.

Taking the direction opposite from that taken by the two tramps, he ran. He did not slacken pace till he was in the open lane.

Then he walked away towards Rookwood, his eyes gleaming with excitement from his sallow face.

The mystery of Mr. Manders' overcoat, which puzzled the whole school, was no mystery to Albert Leggett now!

Mystified as the Rookwooders had been by Slog Poggers' persistent persecution of Mr. Manders, nobody had ever thought of connecting it with the Head's lost wallet. Now Leggett knew—the only fellow at Rookwood who did!

Any other Rookwooder who had made that discovery would certainly have reported it at once. If Albert Leggett thought of doing so, he soon dismissed that idea from his mind.

Other thoughts were in Leggett's mind—thoughts that made the colour waver in his cheeks and caused his heart to beat quicker. The cad of Manders' House had no intention of telling what he knew. What Leggett knew was Leggett's secret.

Dropping in on Manders!

"SILVER!"

"Sir!"

"Where is Lovell?"

"Lovell, sir?" said Jimmy Silver questioningly.

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome were coming in at the school gates. Mr. Manders was walking in the quadrangle.

Since his last encounter with Slog Poggers, all Roger Manders' walks had been taken within the walls of Rookwood, as Slog had told his friend in the wood. Never, till he heard officially that Mr. Poggers had been "run in," did Roger Manders intend to take a single step outside the school gates.

Rookwood fellows smiled when they saw Mr. Manders taking his walks in the quad. Really, Manders was hardly to be blamed for desiring to avoid encounters with so hefty a gentleman as Slog Poggers. Still, some of the

fellows said that it was funky of Manders.

The Housemaster was not unconscious of the smiles and nods and winks. They gave a sharper edge to his temper—already sorely tried, and never very good. And the whole thing was Lovell's fault.

But for Lovell's fatheaded intervention, Slog would never have got away on the night of the man-hunt at Rookwood. He would have been safe under lock and key, and Manders free to take his walks abroad as he liked.

Perhaps it was not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Manders entertained quite bitter feelings towards Arthur Edward. He considered that the Head had let him off very lightly by gating him for all the half-holidays that term, instead of flogging him. But he could, at least, see that Lovell received his just punishment if he disregarded that gating—as the unthinking Arthur Edward not infrequently did!

That was why he pounced, rather like a hawk, on Jimmy Silver & Co. as they came in at the gates. Lovell had been out with them—against orders, of course—and one glance at Mr. Manders' face showed that he knew. How he knew was hard to guess, for Lovell had not walked out at the gates—he had dropped over a wall, and joined his friends outside. Neither had he come in with them under the eyes of old Mack. While his friends entered in the usual way, Lovell scuttled along to negotiate a wall at a safe corner.

But Manders, it was clear, knew.

"I have asked you a question, Silver!" he rapped. "Answer me at once! Where is Lovell?"

Jimmy looked round.

"I can't see him, sir," he answered.

"What—what?" snapped Mr. Manders.

"Shall I tell him you want him, sir, when I see him?" asked Jimmy Silver gravely and respectfully.

"Lovell is under sentence from the headmaster, Silver," said Mr. Manders. "He is not allowed out of gates."

"So I've heard, sir," assented Jimmy. "He has been out of gates with you this afternoon, Silver."

"Has he, sir?"

"Answer me directly, Silver! Two hours ago I saw Lovell go into Little Quad, and when I looked for him he was not there. I noticed that you had just gone out. You cannot deceive me, Silver."

Jimmy's eyes glinted.

"Nobody's deceiving you, sir. I'm not bound to answer any master but my own Form-master, or the Head, and I'm not going to."

That reply was more like Lovell than Jimmy. But Uncle James was angry. He felt that it was time to let the meddlesome Modern master know where he got off, so to speak.

"That is impertinence, Silver!" thundered Mr. Manders. "Tell me the truth! Has Lovell been out of gates with you?"

"I shall tell you the truth or nothing, sir!" answered Jimmy, with a disdain he did not trouble to hide.

"Will you answer my question, Silver?"

"No, sir; I won't!" said Jimmy. "I'll answer Mr. Dalton, if he asks me—but it's got nothing to do with Manders' House."

That was a plain statement of fact. As a Modern master, of scientific training, and a whale on mathematics, Mr. Manders ought to have liked plain facts plainly stated. But his expression showed that he didn't.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Manders. "There appears to be no limit to the insolence of Mr. Dalton's boys. I am perfectly well aware, Silver, that Lovell has been out of school bounds, in your company."

"Then there's no need to ask me, sir, is there?" inquired Jimmy.

"Where is Lovell now?" hooted Mr. Manders. "I know perfectly well that it is his intention to enter the school surreptitiously, as he left it. I shall take him to his headmaster as soon as I find him. Where is he?"

"Do you think he's out of gates, sir?" asked Jimmy.

"I am assured that he is, Silver."

"Then you can go out and look for him, sir, if you want to take him to the Head!" suggested Jimmy.

Mr. Manders crimsoned. He knew that Jimmy was alluding to the circumstance that he dared not go out of gates on account of Slog Poggers.

Not to catch a dozen Lovells would Mr. Manders have gone out of gates, as Jimmy Silver knew very well.

The Modern master made a stride forward—and Jimmy made a jump back. "Come on, you men!" he said. "Time we got in to tea!"

Stentling round Mr. Manders, the three headed for their House. They went at a trot, leaving Roger Manders breathing wrath.

As the Housemaster stood there, a junior of his own House came in at the gates—rather breathlessly.

It was Leggett of the Modern Fourth.

Leggett had lost no time in getting back to Rookwood from Coombe Wood. As Jimmy Silver & Co. had not hurried on the way, he had arrived very soon after them.

Mr. Manders glanced at him, noticing, with a frown, that he looked grubby and untidy—which was not surprising after his experiences in the wood.

"Leggett!" rapped Mr. Manders.

Rookwood fellows were not expected to come in dusty and grubby and untidy on half-holidays. Mr. Manders was in want of a victim for his irritated temper. Like many another bad-tempered man, he fancied that the wreaking of his irritation was a just severity dictated by a sense of duty.

"Yes, sir!" said Leggett.

He wondered for one terrified moment whether his Housemaster had learned anything of his dealings with Mr. Googe.

"How dare you appear in public in that untidy, indeed disgraceful state?" demanded Mr. Manders.

"Oh!" gasped Leggett. "It—it's not my fault, sir! Lovell was chasing me in the wood, and—"

Mr. Manders' eyes snapped.

"Lovell!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, and—"

"You met Lovell out of gates, Leggett?"

"Yes, sir, in the wood, and—"

"That will do, Leggett. You may go. Brush yourself down at once; do not let me see you again in that state."

"Yes, sir!"

Leggett walked on to Manders' House, and did not grin till his back was to his Housemaster.

It was not by accident that he had let Lovell's name slip. He was not aware that Manders was already on Lovell's track, but he was quite aware how welcome that news would be to him.

Rookwood fellows would have called it sneaking, but Leggett took the view that Lovell shouldn't chase a chap through the wood if he didn't want it mentioned.

Mr. Manders set his lips hard. He knew now. He could not go to the Head, taking a boy of his own House as tell-tale evidence. But he knew now that Lovell was out of gates, and all he had to do was to catch him as he came in.

He walked away quickly to Little Quad. He had no doubt that Lovell had gone out that way, and it was probable that he would come in as he had gone out. If he did, he was going to drop right into Manders' hands.

From the doorway of Manders' House Leggett looked back and grinned again as he saw his Housemaster disappear through the archway into Little Quad. If Manders was after Lovell he was safe away from his House for a time—and Albert Leggett had certain reasons for desiring Mr. Manders to be safe away from his House for a time. He went quickly into the House.

Mr. Manders went into Little Quad. In a certain corner there, behind an angle of the library wall, was a deep recess, where one of the old Rookwood beeches grew. It was exactly the spot that a fellow would have selected for getting out unseen—and Manders had no doubt that it was the spot that Lovell had selected.

He was right! As he turned the corner of the library, with the old beech and the school wall in front of him, he had a sudden back view of a pair of trousers!

They were Lovell's. Having clambered up the wall from outside and clambered over it, Arthur Edward was now holding on, preparatory to dropping within—a drop of about six feet.

Manders had caught him fairly in the act!

With gleaming eyes, the Modern master darted forward. Standing under Lovell, he grabbed at his ankles. Lovell was going to have no chance of disappearing over the wall again.

"Oooohh!" gasped Lovell, taken utterly by surprise by that sudden grasp from below.

"Lovell," thundered Mr. Manders, "I have caught you, and now I will—Whoop! Yooop! Gurrerrrrggg!"

Lovell, in his surprise, let go. He had been about to drop. Now he dropped! Had not Mr. Manders been there he would have dropped on the ground. Mr. Manders being there, he naturally dropped on Mr. Manders.

"Urrrrrrggg!" spluttered Manders. He staggered.

Lovell, for a split second, was actually sitting on top of his head. Manders, naturally, crumpled.

He fairly folded up on the earth, and Lovell sprawled dizzily over him.

"Ow!" gasped Lovell. "Who—what—"

"Urrrrggg!"

Lovell scrambled up. He stared at Mr. Manders. Breathless, gasping, gurgling, the Modern master was strewn at his feet.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Lovell.

"Urrrrggg!"

Mr. Manders sat up dizzily. He was breathless. He was hurt. He grabbed a bony knee which had knocked hard on hard earth. It had a pain in it—a distinct and severe pain.

"You—you—you—" gurgled Mr. Manders. "You—you—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You—you young rascal! You—you—you—"

Manders, with the assistance of a hand on the wall, dragged himself up.

He gave a yelp as he stood, his damaged knee undergoing a severe twinge. He almost hopped. He looked

so dangerous that Lovell backed hastily out of reach.

"You—you—you young rascal!" gasped Mr. Manders. "You have been out of bounds! I shall report this to your headmaster—wurrgh!—as soon as I have—gurrgh!—attended to my injuries—Oooohh!"

Mr. Manders had intended to march Lovell off to his headmaster there and then. But he was feeling in no state now for performing that duty. He was breathless and flustered, stacked with aches and pains, and his damaged knee required attention. Gasping, he limped away to his House.

"Oh crikey!" said Lovell.

And he walked away, with dismaying news for his chums in the end study. Not for the first time he had disregarded his headmaster's sentence—and now he had done so once too often. As a hunter of trouble Arthur Edward Lovell had few equals, and this time it was clear he had hunted it fairly down!

Brought to Light!

WHITE as chalk, Albert Leggett listened.

All was quiet. He stood outside a door on the top landing in Manders' House.

On that floor there were only bedrooms, belonging to various members of the staff who lodged in Manders' House. There was little danger of being spotted there in the afternoon.

It was safe as houses, as Leggett told himself, creeping up the stairs. But the cad of Manders' House had not the courage of his rascality. He was scared at what he was going to do.

But it was quite safe. He whipped

open the door of Mr. Manders' room, whipped in, and silently closed the door behind him.

Had Manders been in the House he would never have dared. But Manders was out of the House; he had watched him going into Little Quad. It looked as if he was after Lovell, and, if he were, he would be busy for some time. Anyhow, he was taking one of his walks in the quad and was not likely to come in yet. Even if he did he would go into his study on the ground floor. There was no imaginable reason why he should come up to his bedroom. It was absolutely safe—and it was not fear of Manders, but fear of what he was going to do himself that made Leggett's face whiten and caused his knees to knock together.

He knew where his Housemaster kept that big overcoat, where Poggers had found it on the night of the man-hunt. He crossed quickly to the tall wardrobe.

He opened it, and the grey overcoat on its wooden hanger was before his eyes! With trembling hands he groped over it.

If the wallet were there it could not be felt through the lining. The description of that notecase had been made known to all Rookwood. Leggett knew that it was small, of slim Russia leather—only the notes in it gave it any bulk. The coat was of thick material and the lining was thick; it was not surprising that Mr. Manders had never discovered so small an article tucked away between material and lining.

Leggett groped in the pockets.

There must be a slit in the lining, from what Slog Poggers had said. But he found no slit. Every pocket was intact.



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He stood with beating heart. Peggors must have been stating the facts. He knew that. And yet— Suddenly he remembered.

That coat had been grabbed off Manders once, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had recaptured it for its owner after a tussle with the thief. Buttons had been torn off it. It had been left with the Housemaid for repair. That was why Manders had gone out once in an old coat, which Peggors had succeeded in snaffling. No doubt Mrs. Moote, in sewing on the buttons, had discerned that rent in the lining, and mended it.

That must be it! The slit had been there, but was no longer there. It was easy enough to make another—it only meant a little delay.

Leggett opened his penknife and cut a gash in the lining.

He groped within.

He caught his breath as his hand came in contact with a smooth surface and emerged with the wallet in his fingers!

It was the Head's long-lost wallet—packed with notes as when Slog Peggors' thievish hands had "pinched" it from Dr. Chisholm.

"Oh!" breathed Leggett.

He replaced the overcoat, and shut the wardrobe door. He stood with the Head's notecase in his hand.

It contained, as he knew, forty-five pounds, ten shillings. One of those pounds was enough to keep Mr. Googe quiet, and give him a breathing-space.

He opened the wallet.

There were banknotes in it and currency notes. The former he dared not touch. It was possible that the Head had kept the numbers. A few of the currency notes—

He stepped to the window to pick them out in the light, but he hesitated to pick them out. Bad as he was, unscrupulous young rascal as he was, something within him seemed to rise up against what he was doing.

And as he stood, there came a sound of footstep on the stairs, and he started and shuddered.

Someone was coming up to the top landing!

One of the masters going to his room. Not Manders—surely not Manders! He dared not think it was Manders!

He listened in terror to the footsteps. He heard a grunting, mumbling sound, like a man in pain. It was Manders—he seemed to be damaged somehow—Manders, coming up to his room!

Leggett's heart almost died within him.

Whatever Manders might think of finding him there, at least he was not going to know the facts. That would have meant the end of all things for Albert Leggett at Rookwood School!

He had a few moments. He pushed up the sash of the window. He snapped the wallet shut, and flung it out with all the force of his arm as far as he could. He heard a sound below as it struck a branch out of his sight. The next instant the window was closed, and Leggett standing with his back to it, as the door opened and Mr. Manders limped in.

"Leggett!" he exclaimed. "Leggett, what are you doing here?"

"I—I—" stammered Leggett.

Mr. Manders glared at him, in equal anger and astonishment. He had come up to his room for embrocation to rub on his damaged knee; but in his angry amazement at the sight of a junior in the room he forgot it.

"How dare you come here, Leggett? What trick have you been playing in my room? What—"

Leggett gasped.

"I—I—I came to—to get away from some fellows, sir. They were going to rag me, and—and I thought there was no harm—"

"No harm!" thundered Mr. Manders. "How dare you, Leggett! I do not believe you! Your statement is absurd! You were about to play some trick—if, indeed, your intentions were not dishonest. You have every appearance of a pilferer, Leggett. Go! Wait for me in my study!"

Leggett went.

He waited for Mr. Manders in his study. It was a long wait and a dismal one. His anticipations were dire. And when Mr. Manders came at last, those anticipations were fully realised.

Perhaps the sharp twinges in his damaged knee caused Mr. Manders to lay it on harder than he might otherwise have done. Certainly he laid it on hard enough. When he was finished Leggett crawled away, almost folded up like a pocket knife.

It was quite a long time before Leggett felt equal to going out into the quad to look for the wallet. And when he looked he did not find it!

(Next week: "LUCKY LOVELL!" In this sparkling story, Lovell, the trouble-hunter of Rookwood, finds more trouble than he can manage—only to have a wonderful stroke of luck! Don't miss this gem, chums.)

FIGGY'S GRAND CIRCUS!

(Continued from page 22.)

Mr. Railton shook hands with the astounded porter.

"I wish you many happy returns of the day, Taggles!" he said. "And may you stay many, many years with us to enjoy the esteem and kind regard of the boys of St. Jim's!"

"Hear, hear!" roared the juniors.

"Bravo!"

"Speech, Taggy!" yelled Figgins.

"Yass, yathah! Speech, Taggy, deah boy!"

Taggles gasped. He blinked at the money and blinked at the juniors.

"My heye!" he said.

For once in his long and chequered career as school porter at St. Jim's, Taggles was in a thoroughly good temper. He was pleased, and very surprised indeed at finding himself pleased.

"Go it, Taggy!" shouted the juniors.

"Which I'm very much obliged to you!" said Taggles with an effort.

"Speechifying ain't in my line, but I'm very thankful that you young gentlemen 'olds me in such 'igh esteem. From your goings-hon I should never 'ave thought it—never!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Which I 'ave only to say that this 'ere proves that even you young gentlemen 'as your good points—ahem!—I—I mean I'm very grateful! And, as I was going to say, I'll report yer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm very much obliged!" said Taggles. "May you all live as long as I 'ave, and be as dutiful and honest as I ham. That's all I can say, young gentlemen."

"Bravo!"

And the juniors cheered Taggles to the echo. They went into the Form-rooms that morning feeling very pleased with themselves; and, for once, Taggles was feeling very pleased with them. And for several days after that Taggles forgot to report Tom Merry & Co.—a very happy result of Taggles' benefit!

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "CLUE TO A FORTUNE!" Just a piece of paper it was, but it was the clue to a hidden hoard on a lonely isle in the Adriatic! Read how, in next week's thrilling yarn, it comes into Tom Merry's hands. Order your GEM early.)



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