

"The Swot!" and "The Greyfriars Gymnasts!" THIS WEEK'S BEST SCHOOL YARNS—Inside.

The GEM

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SWOTTING
TO
MUSIC!

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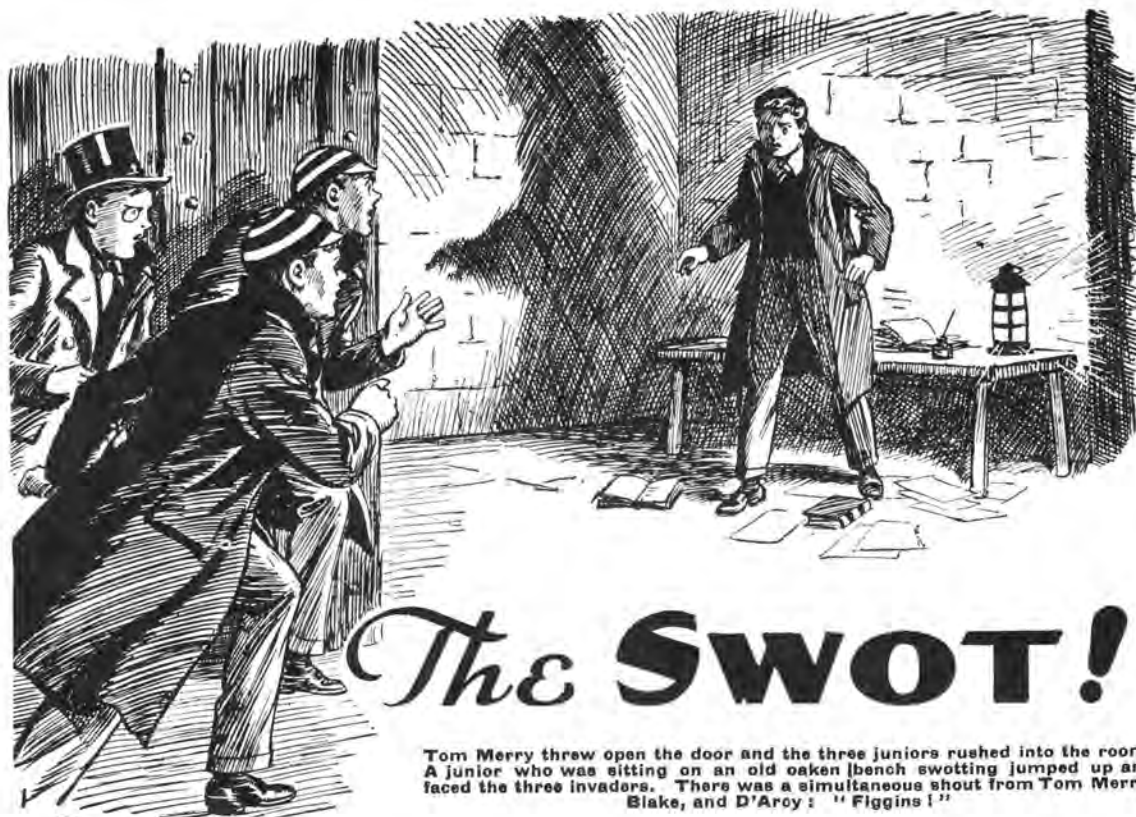
EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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THE ST. JIM'S JUNIOR WHO HAD TO BE "KIDNAPPED" BY HIS TEAM TO PLAY IN A FOOTBALL MATCH!



The SWOT!

Tom Merry threw open the door and the three juniors rushed into the room. A junior who was sitting on an old oaken bench swotting jumped up and faced the three invaders. There was a simultaneous shout from Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy: "Figgins!"

CHAPTER 1.

Simply Astounding!

"NOT Figgins!"
 "Yes, Figgins!" said Tom Merry solemnly.
 "Oh, rats!"
 "Yaas, wats!"
 "Impossible!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's news was received with utter incredulity. The crowd of School House fellows to whom he had imparted it chuckled in chorus. Tom Merry was grinning himself. The news was indeed surprising, and Tom Merry had been incredulous at first.

"Who told you?" demanded Blake of the Fourth.

"I had it from Kerr."

Blake shook his head.

"It's one of Kerr's little jokes, then—one of his blessed Scotch jokes. Of course, it's impossible. Figgins is an ass—but he's not such an ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have always regarded Figgy as an ass—in fact, as sewerol sorts of an ass—but I weally do not considah that he is such an ass as that!"

"Must be off his giddy rocker, if it's true," chuckled Herries of the Fourth. "Not that I believe it. Kerr was pulling your leg!"

"It's the giddy limit!" said Monty Lowther. "Anybody but Figgins."

"Not Figgins. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I know it's funny," agreed Tom Merry. "But it's true. He's going to

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take in his name to Mr. Ratcliff this afternoon. To-day's the last day."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ratty will think he is joking."

"Blessed if I can swallow it," said Blake. "Figgy oughtn't to be allowed to make such a giddy ass of himself. What are Kerr and Wynn thinking about? Why don't they stop him?"

"Yaas, wathah! It's a chap's duty to see that a pal doesn't play the giddy goat!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

By

Martin Clifford.

"Yes; we do that for Gussy," remarked Blake. "Lots of times we've chipped in to stop him playing the giddy ox!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"And Kerr and Wynn ought to do as much for Figgy. Why, it'll be the joke of the term. What chance can he have?"

"Nix!"

"Less than nix!"

"Hundred per cent less than nothing!" said Monty Lowther. "Why, what does Figgins know about Horace, for instance?"

"You should hear him construe Caesar," grinned Blake. "He just scrapes through. And Caesar to Horace is like moonlight unto sunlight, and water unto wine, as Shakespeare says in—"

"Wasn't that Browning?" grinned Herries.

"No, it jolly well wasn't!" said Blake warmly. "It was Shakespeare."

"Browning—"

"Shakespeare—"

"Tennyson, you asses!" said Monty Lowther, laughing. "But blow Shakespeare and Browning and Tennyson! What about Figgins? I think a deputation ought to wait on Figgins from all the Lower School, and politely request him not to play the giddy ox!"

"Ha; ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should be quite willin' to be chairman of the deputation—"

"I can't quite swallow it yet," said Blake, shaking his head. "Let's go and see Figgins. We'll reason with him. Of course, he's only a New House bouncer—but I don't like to see Figgins looking for trouble in this way. Figgy is a good sort, though he's an ass."

"It will be a standing joke for the rest of the term, if he really enters," Manners remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kerr and Wynn ought to be ragged for letting him do it," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "He won't listen to us! But we'll see him, and try our eloquence on him."

"Good wheeze!"

And Tom Merry & Co. walked across the old quadrangle of St. Jim's, bent upon doing their best with Figgins.

They were really concerned about Figgins.

If Figgins was not pulling the leg of the school generally, he must certainly

A POWERFUL LONG YARN OF FOOTER, FUN, AND SCHOOL ADVENTURE, FEATURING GEORGE FIGGINS AS THE SWOT.

be off his rocker, or so the juniors regarded it.

Figgins had his qualities. He was chief of the New House juniors, their leader in all their alarms and excursions against the School House; and Tom Merry & Co. of the School House at St. Jim's admitted that he was a foeman worthy of their steel.

Figgins was as brave as a lion, and generous to both friend and foe. He could swim and run and box and row—and he was a splendid forward, and almost equally good as a back. He was a jolly good fellow all round. But in the scholastic line, Figgins was not distinguished.

His best friend would never have said that old Figgins was the fellow to enter for a difficult examination with any chance of success.

It was the last thing that anybody would have expected of Figgins. He hadn't a taste for that kind of thing. He was the kind of chap who cannot breathe quite freely indoors. On the footer field or on the river or the running track he was in his element. But in the class-room he did not shine.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, to which Form Figgins belonged, did not regard him as a promising pupil. He was industrious and painstaking, and that was all. He had often expressed an opinion that things would go on much better at all schools if Latin and German masters were put into a sack and dropped into the North Sea.

And now—

It was enough to take one's breath away. The Bishop's Medal was a much-sought-after distinction. The examination was confined to juniors—and many were the ambitious "swots" who sweated over their books for the purpose of having a "shot" at the Bishop's Medal. The examination was yearly, and there were generally nine or ten entrants. The subjects were "stiff," decidedly so. Fellows like Levison of the Fourth, or Brooke, or Manners of the Shell, had a good chance. But Figgins—

What could have induced Figgins to do it—if he was really going to do it—was a mystery.

He was not as a rule ambitious of distinctions of that kind.

To win a race or a footer match—Figgins had ambitions of that kind. But to win an exam—that wasn't in his line at all.

Of course, there was no telling what a fellow could do until he really tried. Figgins might turn out a "dark horse." But it wasn't likely.

"Bai Jove! I wonder whether old Figgy is hard up?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked suddenly, as if he had found the explanation. "They give ten guineas in cash along with the Bishop's Medal, you know."

"My hat!" said Blake. "I'd rather raise a subscription for Figgy than let him swot for that exam, if it's the giddy guineas he wants. He will burst something if he swots over Horace."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be in the papers," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Shocking fatality at a Public school! Unhappy junior found lying dead upon a volume of 'Horace.' Death due to fatty degeneration of the brain."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr and Wynn of the Fourth were

standing in the doorway of the New House when the School House juniors arrived there. Kerr and Wynn—the famous "Co." of the New House—were looking a little less cheerful than usual. Perhaps they were worried about that sudden, new and unexpected departure of their great chum Figgins.

"Hallo! What do you want, you School House bounders?" demanded Kerr a little gruffly.

"Is it true, Kerr?" sang out all the visitors at once.

"Is what true?"

"About Figgins?"

"Yes!" growled Kerr. "Didn't I tell you, Tom Merry? Figgy's going to put his name down this afternoon, when Ratty comes in."

"But what's the matter with him?" asked Monty Lowther. "Is it insanity, or a weird sense of humour?"

"Oh, rats!" said Kerr crossly. "Don't bother!"

"I suppose we can see Figgins?" asked Blake. "You haven't got him in a strait-jacket yet, have you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's in the study," said Kerr, "writing a letter, I believe. You can

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*When George Figgins decides to enter for a stiff exam the Chums of St. Jim's think he is joking—for Figgy has never been distinguished in the Form-room. But the long-legged leader of the New House was never more serious. He is determined to prove that he can shine as a scholar as well as on the playing field.*

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go up if you like. No larks, you know, or we'll come and chuck you out on your necks."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"No larks!" said Tom Merry solemnly. "Come in, you fellows!"

And the School House juniors walked in, and ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form passage, and thumped on the door of George Figgins' study.

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins Doesn't Like It!

FIGGINS was seated at his study table. He had a sheet of paper before him on a blotting-pad, and a pen in his hand. Kerr had said that Figgins was writing a letter, and that certainly had been Figgy's intention when he sat down at the table. But, as a matter of absolute fact, Figgins was chewing the handle of the pen, apparently as an aid to composition.

Three words had been written on the sheet, and they were "Dear Cousin Ethel." And there Figgins had stopped, at a loss for words.

Then came the thump on the study door. Figgins started, and hastily put his hand over the sheet of paper.

"Come in!" he muttered.

The door opened, and Tom Merry & Co. marched in. Figgins had expected some New House fellow or other, and he jumped up in surprise at the sight of the

School House crowd. His first thought was that it was a raid. One of the little "alarums and excursions" that enlivened the existence of the rival Houses of St. Jim's. And he picked up a big ebony ruler in a very significant sort of way—thus leaving the letter, with the three written words, unconcealed.

Tom Merry waved his hand amicably.

"It's all right, Figgy!" he exclaimed. "We're here as friends—no need for that ruler."

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

Figgins grinned rather awkwardly and laid down the ruler.

"All serene," he said. "What's wanted? You fellows will excuse me; I—I'm rather busy now!"

"Workin' up for the exam alweady, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

Figgins coloured.

"Not yet," he said.

"That's what we've come to see you about," said Jack Blake. "Is it really true, Figgy?"

"Is what true?" asked Figgins irritably.

"About your entering for the Bishop's Medal," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, it is."

"You're not pulling our leg—eh?"

"No, fathead!"

"Then what does it mean?" asked Blake. "You've got about as much chance of getting the medal and the ten quidlets—"

"Guineas, deah boy!"

"Shut up! Quidlets, as the man in the moon—rather a smaller chance, if anything," said Blake. "Do you know that Brooke of the Fourth has entered?"

"Never mind Brooke!"

"And Levison—"

"Blow Levison!"

"And Kerruish—"

"Hang Kerruish!"

"And some more chaps—"

"Confound the chaps!"

"Ahen!" said Tom Merry. "Figgins, old man, we don't understand. We only want to know, you know. In this exam they spring Horace on you—giddy Horatius Placcus, wild and untamed, and—"

"I know they do!" said Figgins crossly. "Why shouldn't I mug up Horace as well as any other chap?"

"Ahen! No reason why you shouldn't, excepting that you couldn't. Figgy, old boy, we are quite alarmed about you!"

"That way madness lies!" murmured Lowther.

"If you start swotting for this medal you'll have brain fever, or burst a boiler, or something of the sort!" said Tom Merry seriously. "Then what shall we do without you, Figgins? The New House will go to pot, and we shan't have anybody left to rag. Think of us, Figgy, before you do this dreadful thing."

"Yaas, we'll eat a little, Figgy, deah boy!"

"I'm much obliged to you for your good advice," said Figgins, as calmly as he could. "I know you think me an ass—"

"He's a giddy thought-reader!" whispered Lowther.

"I know you think I can't do anything but row a boat, or kick a football, or whack a cricket ball with a bat," said Figgins bitterly. "Yes, I know that. But there may be other people—people with more sense than you—who think

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(that I can do something with some sense in it.)

The juniors stared at him.

"Isn't there any sense in scoring a goal, then?" demanded Blake warmly.

"I mean, something that requires brains as well as muscle," said Figgins. "I think I've got a chance of bringing it off."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And I don't see that it matters to you chaps, anyway!" said Figgins bluntly.

"We've come over as your friends—as your sorrowing friends," said Monty Lowther. "We're sorry to see you on the road to Colney Hatch in this way. And we really didn't believe it; we wanted it to be confirmed, straight from the horse's mouth—ahem!—I should say, from the donkey's mouth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins pointed to the door.

"I dare say you're very funny," he said. "But I'm rather busy now, and I've no time for your funniness. Would you mind getting out?"

The visitors exchanged glances.

"Ahem!—certainly!" said Tom Merry. "Don't mind our little jokes, Figgy. If you're really going in for the medal, we wish you luck!"

"Yaas, wathah! I'm only sowwy that impossibilities cannot happen for your sake, Figgins."

"Oh, clear out!" said Figgins crossly. The good-tempered, good-natured Figgins, who was always cheery and genial, was cutting up rusty.

"I suppose you've got a reason for this, Figgy?" Blake asked.

"Yes, I have!"

"May an old pal ask the giddy reason?"

"No."

"Oh!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You will excuse me, Figgins, I have just caught sight of that lettah. If you don't want people to see your lettahs you should not leave them lyin' open on the table, you know. It's wathah too late to covah it up with your fist," added Arthur Augustus, as Figgins, flushing crimson, placed his hand again over the letter. "I am sowwy that I saw it, as it was not intended for my eyes; but now that I have seen it I must beg to be allowed to ask you a question."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins.

"I was not aware," said D'Arcy, with great dignity, "that you had a cousin named Ethel."

"I haven't," said Figgins.

"Then I pvesume that it is to my Cousin Ethel that you are w'itin' that lettah?" said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"You can presume what you like," growled Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins, I have remarked before that you seem to considah Miss Cleveland wathah as your cousin than as mine!"

"Oh, bosh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eye gleamed behind his eyeglass.

"I came here as a fwiend, Figgins," he said, in measured tones. "But if you chawactewise my remarks as bosh I shall have no wresource but to give you a feafhul thwashin'."

"Oh, get out!"

"I wefuse to get out. I have a wight to an explanation—"

"Will you take that lunatic away, or must I chuck him out on his neck?" asked Figgins, looking round.

"We'll take him away," said Tom Merry.

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Merry, laughing. "Come on, Gussy, and—"

"In the cires, unless Figgins apologises—"

"Kim on!" said Blake, taking his noble chum by the arm. "This way to the door. Good-bye, Figgins, and don't forget to tie a wet towel round your head when you begin swotting. And when brain-fever sets in—"

"Cheese it!" growled Figgins.

"I wefuse to go until—"

Arthur Augustus had no time to finish. Tom Merry took the other arm, and Blake and Tom between them walked the swell of St. Jim's out of the study. The other fellows followed, Figgins watching them go with a frowning brow. When they were gone he slammed the door after them, grunted, and sat down to his letter again. He chewed the handle of the pen for some time, and then succeeded in starting;

"Dear Cousin Ethel,—I have taken your advice, and I'm putting my name down to-day for the Bishop's Medal. I'm going to work hard for it, and I hope—"

Then the chewing of the pen-handle started again, and lasted quite a considerable time.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. had descended the stairs, Arthur Augustus still expostulating. But his comrades did not listen to his expostulations, and he was marched out of the New House by main force, and across the quadrangle.

Then the news spread.

And all St. Jim's, when they heard that Figgins was entering for the Bishop's Medal, expressed their surprise on the subject with prolonged chuckles.

Some fellows refused to believe it, and went over to see Figgins about it; but Figgins was "sporting his oak" now, and there was no admittance for curious investigators.

The news was true. Figgins, who was generally supposed not to be able to scrape through Caesar without a crib, was going the whole hog with a vengeance; or, as Monty Lowther expressed it, Figgins, the champion duffer of the Fourth, was going the whole giddy unicorn. And the St. Jim's fellows agreed that wonders would never cease.

CHAPTER 3.

The Scoffers!

"COME in!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House at St. Jim's, laid down his pen somewhat impatiently. Mr. Ratcliff was not a good-tempered master—indeed, he was decidedly the reverse. He was a thin, sour man, with an almost perpetual frown, a troublesome liver, and consequently, a troublesome temper.

Figgins entered the study.

Mr. Ratcliff's expression did not relax at the sight of Figgins. He did not like Figgins. The free-and-easy junior was really not likely to please the sour and suspicious Housemaster.

"Well," rapped out Mr. Ratcliff, "what is it, Figgins? I am busy!"

Figgins stood hesitating, his cheeks very red.

"If you please, sir—"

"Kindly come to the point."

"I want you to put my name down, sir."

"What do you mean? For what?"

"For the Bishop's Medal Exam, sir!" blurted out Figgins.

Then he stood with scarlet cheeks, wondering what the Housemaster would think, and what he would say.

Mr. Ratcliff was evidently astonished. He swung round a little in his chair and looked fixedly at Figgins. Figgy felt his face growing redder and redder under the penetrating gaze of the Housemaster.

"The Bishop's Medal!" Mr. Ratcliff exclaimed at last.

"Yes, sir. This is the last day for entering."

"I am aware of that. I am only surprised that you should think of entering at all!" said Mr. Ratcliff enappishly. "What are your qualifications for such an examination?"

"Not many, I—I'm afraid, sir; but I'm going to work hard!"

"That will be quite a new line for you to take, I think, Figgins. You are not, I believe, a credit to your Form in classics."

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"I think it is absurd for you to enter for this examination. You will have no chance whatever, from your record in the school!" said the Housemaster harshly. "You will simply bring ridicule upon your House by an absurd attempt, which can only end in ridiculous failure."

Poor Figgins was the colour of a beetroot now. He had expected his Housemaster to be surprised, but he had not expected an outbreak like this. He suspected, however, that Ratty's personal dislike of himself had something to do with it, and Figgins, modest and unassuming fellow as he was, had plenty of determination. He had come there to have his name put down for the Bishop's Medal Exam, and he meant to have it put down. Mr. Ratcliff's remarks made him uncomfortable, but none the less determined.

"I am sorry you don't think I have a chance, sir," said Figgins at last.

"Do you think you have any yourself?"

"I hope so, sir."

"Then you are very sanguine!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with bitter sarcasm. "I think you should not enter. I do not like the boys of my House to record failures, especially egregious and ridiculous failures, such as yours will be. It is bad for the House, and not at all to the credit of the Housemaster. I therefore advise you to think no more of this."

And Mr. Ratcliff picked up his pen, and turned back to his writing as if the affair was wholly disposed of.

But it wasn't. Figgins was silent for a moment or two, but his purpose had not wavered.

"You may go!" said Mr. Ratcliff, half-turning his head.

"If you please, sir, I'd rather you put my name down!"

"What!"

"I prefer to take my chance with the exam, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff gave the junior a terrific look. That Figgins would have the nerve to persist in the face of his displeasure had not even occurred to him. Figgy was standing upon his rights, and he meant business, though his manner was very respectful.

"You mean that you wish to enter this examination against my advice?" asked the Housemaster angrily.

"I wish to enter it, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff gnawed his lips.

"I cannot forbid you to do so, Figgins, as the examination is open to

all boys in the Fourth and the Shell, but I disapprove entirely."

"I am sorry for that, sir."

"But it makes no difference to your decision?" asked the Housemaster sharply.

"I think I'd like to try, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Ratcliff, compressing his lips. "You may enter, if you choose to do so against my wish; but I shall not forget this, Figgins! I will put your name down. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Figgins quitted the study and closed the door after him. His face was very glum as he went down the passage. Kerr and Wynn met him at the end of the passage with inquiring looks.

"Name down?" Kerr asked.

"Yes."

"Ratty nice about it?"

"About as nasty as he could be," said Figgins. "He as good as ordered me not to enter, but I stuck to it. I've left him awfully ratty. He thinks I shall make a fool of myself, and count another failure in the House record."

"Well, it's no business of Ratty's, anyway," said Fatty Wynn. "Go in and—and win, Figgy!"

Figgins smiled bitterly.

"You chaps think just the same about it as Ratty does!" he said. "You don't think I can do anything but slog a cricket ball or kick a footer about!"

"Well, exams aren't exactly in your line, Figgy, old man," said Kerr awkwardly. "I'm sure I wish you luck!"

"Heaps of it!" said Fatty Wynn. "Besides, you never know what may happen. The other chaps in the exam may turn out rank duffers."

Figgins smiled grimly.

Fatty Wynn meant to be comforting, but there really was not much comfort in the way he put it.

"Well, I think I have a chance," said Figgins; "and I'm going to slog my hardest, anyway, and win if I can. I don't see why I shouldn't be good for something more than a footer match. My people would be awfully pleased if I pulled it off. Why shouldn't I?"

"Of course! Why shouldn't you?" agreed Kerr, as heartily as he could.

Figgins grunted, and they sauntered out into the quadrangle together. Fatty Wynn led their steps in the direction of the tuckshop.

The dusk of evening was falling on St. Jim's, and the tuckshop was lighted, and the cheery illumination gleamed out on the old elms. There were School House fellows in the tuckshop, and a loud laugh was heard when they spotted Figgins & Co. approaching. It was Levison of the Fourth, himself an entrant for the Bishop's Medal, who spotted them, and sang out:

"Here comes the medal-pincher!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Listen to 'em!" growled Figgins. "I must say this is encouraging! The whole blessed School House making fun of me, and my own chums thinking that I'm playing the giddy ox!"

"Well, you are, you know!" said Fatty Wynn. "I—I—I mean, of—of course, we're going to—to believe in you, and—and back you up! Ahem! We—"

"Oh, rats!" growled Figgins.

Then there was a sudden burst of melody from the tuckshop. Four or five fellows had burst into a tune, with



"Keep out, you wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, raising the soda siphon menacingly. "I shall swamp you if you— Bai Jove!" Swoosh! went the soda-water as Redfern & Co. rushed in to the aid of Figgins & Co. Redfern caught it full in the face and staggered back.

appropriate words—probably written by Monty Lowther—for the occasion:

"Don't play the goat, George Figgins—don't play the goat!"

Don't play the giddy o-ox!

You'll only get a licking; you will be licked—

Licked right out of your so-ocks!"

Kerr and Wynn chuckled—they could not help it; but George Figgins' face was crimson. Figgins evidently did not appreciate Monty Lowther's humorous efforts.

"The silly rotters!" growled Figgins. "I'm not going to stand this cheek from the School House! It's bad enough to have my own pals doing the Job's comforter business! Back me up, and we'll soon stop their squalling!"

And Figgins rushed into the tuckshop. Kerr and Wynn followed him loyally.

Monty Lowther was seated upon a high stool at the counter, and Herries and Digby of the Fourth were standing near him. Levison and Gore were also there. The odds were against the New House trio; but Figgins was too exasperated to think of odds.

He rushed right at Monty Lowther, caught hold of him, and yanked him off the high stool. As Monty Lowther was just refreshing himself with a glass of ginger-beer after his tuncful efforts, the result was disastrous.

Swoosh! came the ginger-beer over Lowther's face and neck, and the glass dropped to the floor and smashed into fifty pieces.

Monty Lowther was on the floor the next moment, roaring.

"Ow! Fathead! Yow! Groogh! Rescue!"

Digby, Herries, and Gore rushed to his aid at once, and Kerr and Wynn

piled in instantly, and there was a wild struggle. Levison quietly slipped out of the tuckshop. Rough-and-tumble tussles were not in his line when he could avoid them. But four School House fellows remained to deal with Figgins & Co., and numbers told.

Lowther had clutched hold of Figgins, and was rolling on the floor with him, with great damage to the clothes of both the juniors.

Gore had closed with Fatty Wynn, and they were wrestling furiously; and Digby and Herries collared Kerr.

In two minutes the three New House juniors were on their backs on the floor, and four School House fellows were sprawling over them, pinning them down and chortling victoriously between their gasps.

CHAPTER 4.

Rivals at Grips!

MONTY LOWTHER grinned cheerfully down at Figgins as the chief of the New House writhed under him. Figgins was furious, but Lowther was quite good-tempered.

Herries had lent him a hand in getting Figgins under, and now Lowther was seated on his chest, and the long-limbed junior was helpless.

"Lemme gerrup!" Figgins murmured sulphurously.

Lowther shook his head.

"Not this evening," he said genially. "Some other evening."

"You—you School House rotter—"

"Shush!" said Lowther. "Look at my face! See the ginger-beer you've wasted? What do you mean by rushing at me like a wild bull simply because I was exercising my vocal gifts?"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I—I—I'll pulverise you!" panted Figgins.
 "Shush!" said Lowther chidingly.
 "Now, don't be ratty—I'm not going to hurt you. I'm going to sing you a song instead."

"Look here—"
 "Don't play the goat, George Figgins—don't play the goat!" sang Lowther, while his companions roared with laughter.

Figgins struggled desperately to release himself. Lowther had to exert his strength to keep him down, and so the next line came in spasmodic jerks.

"D-d-do-o-n't p-p-play th-the g-g-g-gid-d-d-d-y o-o-o-x!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Let me up!" howled Figgins.
 "Shush!"

"I'll smash you! I'll— Rescue, New House!" yelled Figgins, in a hope that some fellows of his own House might be within hearing.

"Give me a glass of ginger-beer, Mrs. Taggles, please!" said Monty Lowther.

Mrs. Taggles was regarding the scene in alarm from behind her little counter.
 "What for, Master Lowther?" faltered the good lady.

"I'm going to give it to Figgins!"
 "Don't give it to him, Mrs. Taggles!" roared Figgins. "The beast wants to swamp it over me!"

"Shurrup!" said Lowther. "I suppose one good turn deserves another, doesn't it? Buck up with that ginger-beer, Mrs. Taggles, please!"

Mrs. Taggles shook her head.
 "Rescue, New House!" shouted Figgins again.

An eyeglass gleamed in at the door, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced over the scene in surprise and amusement.

"Bai Jove! Is that a game?" he asked.

Lowther nodded.
 "Yes; we're playing at ragging the New House bounders," he said.
 "Figgins rushed in where angels fear to tread, and now he's getting it in the neck. Will you hand me a soda siphon,

Gussy? Mrs. Taggles is neglecting me!"

"Oh, Master Lowther—" murmured Dame Taggles.

"With pleasuah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, crossing towards the counter. "Do you like sodah, Figgy, deah boy?"

"You—you rotters! Rescue!" howled Figgins.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen of the New House looked in. They had heard Figgins' cry for rescue, and rushed across at once.

"Keep 'em out, Gussy!" shouted Lowther.

Arthur Augustus ran back to the door, with the soda siphon in his hands.

"Keep out, you wottahs!" he exclaimed, raising the siphon menacingly. "I shall swamp you if you— Bai Jove!"

Swoosh! went the soda-water as Redfern & Co. rushed in. Redfern caught it full in the face, and staggered back; but Lawrence and Owen were upon Arthur Augustus in a moment, and the soda siphon was whirled away by Owen, while Lawrence bumped the swell of St. Jim's over upon the floor.

"Yawwooh!" roared D'Arcy, as he went down. "Bai Jove! Help!"

Swoosh! Swish! Owen turned the siphon upon the swell of St. Jim's, and Arthur Augustus rolled over madly in the midst of a swamping shower of soda-water.

"Gawwoogh! Stoppit! Chuck it! You'll wuin my clothes! Gweat Scott! Ow!"

"Yow!" roared Lowther, as the grinning Owen turned the siphon upon him, and a stream caught him under the ear.
 "Yow-ow!"

The siphon gurgled in an expiring manner; it was exhausted. The New House juniors were already piling in to the rescue of Figgins & Co., and Owen dropped the siphon and joined them.

Lowther, Herries, Digby, and Gore fought desperately; but the odds were now heavily against them.

One after another they were thrown out of the tuckshop, and rolled on the ground outside.

Arthur Augustus was the first to go, and as he sprawled helplessly on the ground his comrades came tossing out, one after another, sprawling over him and over one another.

There was a chorus of gasps, yells, and roars.

"Yawwooh! Help! Gewwoff!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Gerroff my chest!"

"Keep your blessed elbow out of my eye!"

"Ow! Wescue!"

The New House juniors crowded the doorway of the tuckshop, yelling with laughter. The School House fellows scrambled up, untidy and breathless, and crimson with exertion and fury.

Figgins waved his hand to them.

"Come back!" he said. "Come on—we're waiting for you!"

"You uttah wottahs! I shall give you a feahful thwashin'! Back nie up, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

And the swell of St. Jim's rushed fiercely to the attack.

He was promptly collared and hurled forth, and he gave a loud yell as he went spinning along the ground.

By this time the alarm had spread, and School House juniors were running up on all sides. New House fellows were also arriving, and there was every prospect of a general battle, in which the tuckshop would be reduced to rack and ruin.

"Have the bounders out of that!" shouted Jack Blake.

"Come on!" roared Tom Merry.

"Back up, New House!" shouted Figgins.

Kildare of the Sixth, captain of St. Jim's, came striding from the direction of the School House, as the rival juniors closed in combat. The uproar had reached him, and he had thoughtfully brought a cane with him. At the same time Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, arrived upon the scene from another direction.

The two prefects exchanged a glance, and, without wasting time in words, they started restoring order.

Slash, slash, slash!

Whack, whack, whack!

With great impartiality, they lashed and whacked at every junior within reach, and there were loud yells of anguish from the recipients.

The combat ceased as if by magic, and the juniors ran and dodged hither and thither to avoid the lashing canes.

In one minute or less the ground was clear, excepting for a few scattered caps.

Kildare and Monteith exchanged a grin, and went back to their Houses.

"Ow!" groaned Monty Lowther, as he came into his study in the School House. "Ow! I've got a cut across my arm, and another across my back, and another—"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "we should have licked the New House. But what was the row about?"

"Figgins got his rag out," said Lowther, chuckling. "He's touchy about that blessed exam, you know. Came for me like a giddy wild elephant."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Poor old Figgins! I say, you chaps, if he cuts up rusty about it, better not chip him."

"Oh rats!" said Lowther warmly. "Must have our little joke. I'm thinking of doing some comic paragraphs on the subject for the next number of the 'Weekly.'"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Oh, ring off, Monty! Poor old

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Figgins will have enough to worry about if he's really going to swot for that exam. You've been over last year's papers, Manners—it's jolly hard, isn't it?"

"Jolly hard," said Manners, with a nod. "I don't know that I shall pull it off this year—but as for Figgins, he hasn't an earthly!"

"Not a ghostly!" agreed Tom Merry. "But we'll give him a quiet time while he's trying, you know. That's only playing the game. Now, Monty, don't chip him any more."

"Oh, br-r-r!" said Monty Lowther discontentedly.

To the mind of the humorist of the Shell, a joke came before anything else, and he had foreseen unamuse possibilities of fun in Figgins' strange and unaccountable conduct.

"Come, Monty, what do you say?"

"Rats!" said Lowther, laughing.

"Now, look here—"

"My hat! I'd better go and wash this blessed ginger-beer out of my neck!" said Monty Lowther.

And he quitted the study.

CHAPTER 5.

Music Hath No Charms!

FIGGINS started. It was the day after the row in the tuckshop. Figgins was at work in his study.

Kerr and Wynn had kindly left him the study to himself as he wanted to swot—and Figgins was swotting.

The light that burned in the study showed out over the dusk of the quadrangle, and showed all who cared to know that Figgins was swotting for the Bishop's Medal Exam.

Clink!

There was the sound of a pebble on his window, and Figgins started. He guessed that it was some chipping from the School House fellows. Chipping he did not mind in itself, but he did not want his studies interrupted and his time wasted. He crossed to the window and looked out into the dusky quadrangle.

"Who's there?" he called out.

"Us!" came back the cheery voice of Monty Lowther.

Figgins frowned as he blinked down in the dusk. He could make out the forms of four juniors, and he saw that they all had musical instruments. Jack Blake had a flute, Manners a violin, Monty Lowther a kettledrum, and Digby a tin whistle.

"Look here," called out Figgins, "clear off, like good chaps! I'm hard at work!"

"We're going to back you up," explained Lowther. "This is my band. You will work over so much better to music."

"I tell you—"

"It will cheer you up, you know, and make you feel no end better," remarked Jack Blake. "We shall also sing appropriate words."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I come down to you, you'll get hurt!" roared Figgins, his temper beginning to rise.

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast," replied Lowther. "We'll give it a chance, anyway. Strike up!"

The band struck up.

They played one of the latest swing tunes from New York, but as the instruments did not agree with one another in time or tune, it might just as easily have been any old tune.

WHEN THE GHOST WALKED—



Football Fan (waking up and seeing ghost with ball and chain): "Go on, you idiot, shoot!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Stoffel, 61, Forest Road, Barkingside, Essex.

Figgins put his fingers in his ears and yelled:

"Stop it! Clear off!"

Blare! went the band.

"Will you go away?" shrieked Figgins, as there came a momentary pause in the music.

"We're helping you," said Lowther.

"We're doing this out of kindness. It isn't often the biggest duffer in the school goes in for an exam. Naturally, we want to celebrate the occasion."

"We'll play slow time, if you like!" chuckled Blake. "It will keep pace with your construing."

"It would have to be slower than a funeral march for that," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Better give Figgins something jolly and buck him up."

"Start again," said Digby.

Blare!

Figgins stepped away from the window. It was really too bad, and he was utterly exasperated. The juniors did not take his candidature for the Bishop's Medal with the slightest degree of seriousness, and so they had no thought of doing any harm by ragging him. But to Figgins, whose "swotting" was a very serious matter indeed, the blare of the band was quite a different matter. He felt that every hour's study he lost decreased his chances—probably not very good in any case.

Blare, blare, blare!

Figgins hurried out of the study and sped into the nearest bath-room, and returned in a couple of minutes with a large can of water.

Then he stepped to the window, keeping the can out of sight.

The band was playing away merrily.

Figgins raised the big, heavy can to the window-sill, and before the band could guess what was coming, he tilted it forward.

The water shot out in a swooping stream, and descended in a flood upon the unhappy bandmen.

Swoosh!

"G-r-r-r!"

"Oh! Ow! I am drenched! Ow! Oh!"

"Yarrop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins from

the window. "How do you like that? Do you want any more?"

The drenched bandmen glared up at him furiously.

"You ungrateful beast!" shouted Lowther. "This is the last time I'll try to help you with your studies!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "You look wet!"

The raggers did look wet—and they felt wet, too. They shook their fists up at Figgins' window, but they could do no more: there was no way of getting at Figgins. And they were drenched from their heads almost to their feet, and the cold evening wind was making itself felt.

With sulphurous remarks concerning Figgins, the bandmen beat a retreat across the quad, followed by a yell of laughter from Figgins' window.

Figgins returned to his table in a much better humour. The laugh had done him good, and cleared away some of his depression.

He wired into Horace with increased keenness.

And for the rest of that evening he was not worried by any further raggings from the School House.

CHAPTER 6.

Cousin Ethel's Visit!

EVEYTHIN' weady—what?" Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage in the School House was presenting an unusual aspect of tidiness, cleanliness, and festivity. This was a clear indication, of course, that an unusual visitor was expected.

The visitor was already in the Head's house, staying with Mrs. Holmes, but she had consented to come to tea in Study No. 6.

Needless to say, the unexpected visitor was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's charming cousin, Ethel Cleveland.

Ethel was expected at any moment, and the Co. were ready.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, the owners of Study No. 6, were looking very neat and clean and tidy. Arthur Augustus specially being a perfect picture of elegance.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—had a nice, newly brushed look, and their hair was very tidy and neat.

"All here—eh?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, exceptin' Ethel."

"No more chaps coming?" asked Tom.

"I did not want too big a crowd, deah boy. I asked Kangaroo, but he has gone out on his bike with Dane and Glyn."

"Any New House chaps?"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I weally did not think it necessary to ask any New House chaps, Tom Mewwy."

"I was thinkin' that Figgins—"

"It's all right," Blake remarked. "I've asked him."

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon his chum with a frigid stare.

"You have had the awful cheek, Blake, to ask Figgins to come ovan here and meet my cousin?" he asked.

Blake shook his head.

"Certainly not!"

Arthur Augustus looked relieved.

"Oh, that's all wight, then?" he said. "But you remarked that you had asked him, Blake."

"I haven't asked him here to meet

your cousin." Blake remarked. "I've asked him here to tea."

There was a chuckle in Study No. 6. All the juniors knew of Figgins' desire to seek the company of Miss Cleveland, for some reason best known to himself, and they all sympathised with Figgy. Arthur Augustus, however, seemed to be a little obtuse, or else obstinate upon the point.

"You have asked that New House boundah to tea, Blake?"

"Yes, I suppose I can ask a chap to tea in my own study if I like, can't I?" said Blake, in astonishment. "Of course, I shouldn't ask a fellow to meet your cousin without consulting you. It would be a cheek. But I suppose I can have a friend in to tea?"

"You know perfectly well, you ass, that Figgins cannot come to tea without meeting Cousin Ethel, and Cousin Ethel is coming to tea."

"Yes. That's what you'd call a coincidence, isn't it?" said Blake, with a nod. "These coincidences will happen, you know; they can't be helped."

"In the cires, Blake, I must ask you to request your friend Figgins to postpone his visit—"

"Rats!" said Blake cheerfully.

"I shall be sowwy, Blake, to thwash you just when we are expectin' a lady visitah, but, in the cires, I considah that—"

"You'll do some considering under the table if you don't ring off!" said Blake. "Now, shut up, and butter the toast!"

"I wofuse to battah the toast! I wofuse—"

"Ring off, for goodness' sake!" said Horries. "Bump him over, and sit on him!"

"You uttah wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus indignantly, shaking a wrathful fist at Horries across the table. "I—"

"Good-afternoon!"

It was a sweet and gentle voice at the doorway.

Cousin Ethel looked into the study.

Arthur Augustus, taken by surprise, remained as if petrified for a moment, his clenched fist extended across the table towards Horries' grinning face.

Then he suddenly dropped it to his side and swung round, his countenance turning a bright crimson as he met Cousin Ethel's glance.

"G-g-g-good-afternoon, deah gal!" he stammered. "I—I—I—"

"So good of you to come," said Blake. "Chuck it, Gussy; you can finish your gymnastics afterwards!"

Arthur Augustus almost choked.

"Weally, Blake, I—I— Ethel, deah gal, I feah that you saw me in a wathah suspicious attitude. I—I was showin' Hewwies how to—to—to—"

"How to play the giddy ox!" said Horries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Hewwies—weally—Ethel, I—I— Hallo, Figgins, deah boy! How do you do?"

Arthur Augustus was quite grateful to Figgins for entering at that moment.

Figgins seemed a little surprised by

the warmth of his greeting, but he was pleased by it.

"Pway sit down, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, dragging up a chair to the table. "Here you are!"

And in his confusion and agitation, Arthur Augustus placed Figgins' chair next to Cousin Ethel's, a thing he had certainly never intended to do. He saw his mistake as Figgy sat down—as Figgins very promptly did.

"Figgy, deah boy, pewwaps you'd wathah be neawah the fire—"

"Not at all," said Figgins affably. "This is quite comfy."

"Sure you're not in a dwaught there?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

"Quite sure, thanks."

And Arthur Augustus gave it up. Tea proceeded very merrily, the juniors vying with one another in attending to Cousin Ethel, and looking after her requirements. If Miss Cleveland had eaten one quarter of the things her hosts wanted to help her to, she would have put Patty Wynn of the New House quite in the shade.

"By the way," Blake remarked presently, "Figgy's got some news for you!"

Figgins flushed as Cousin Ethel's eyes turned upon him.

"Blake means that I've entered for the Bishop's Medal," said Figgins.

"Yes; I'm so glad!" said Ethel. "I knew that already," she added, in her frank way. "Figgins wrote and told me—didn't you?"

"Yes," said Figgins. "I only wish I could have told you that I thought I had a look in."

"But you have a good chance," said Ethel, "and you will work hard. And all your friends will help you and back you up to work hard for the exam."

The juniors looked at one another rather curiously, and Monty Lowther turned a little pink. Certainly, so far, their efforts in connection with the matter had not been exactly directed towards backing Figgins up.

"Ahem!" murmured Blake. "We—we—we're going to, of course!"

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"Of course, we all wish Figgy luck."

"Yaas; we all wish he could perform impossibilities and things, ha Jove!"

"Excepting me!" grinned Manners.

"I'm in the exam myself, you know, so I can't quite hope that Figgy will pull it off. I hope he'll be second."

"Thanks!" said Figgins. "The same to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cousin Ethel's opinion that Figgy had a chance for the exam made a curious difference to the point of view of the juniors. They had not thought of taking Figgy seriously before. But if Cousin Ethel took him seriously, there was certainly no reason why they should not. They all had a very deep respect for Ethel's judgment.

When tea was over, Arthur Augustus rose to walk with his cousin to the Head's house. Figgins rose with the same object.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass gleamed at the New House junior.

"Coming as far as the door, Figgy?" he asked politely and significantly.

"Ye-es," murmured Figgins.

And the juniors stood up and said "Au revoir" to Cousin Ethel, and she walked away with Arthur Augustus and Figgins.

And at the door of the School House Figgins had to say

good-bye, comforted, however, by the knowledge that Ethel was staying the night with Mrs. Holmes, and that he might see her on the morrow.

Figgins went off disconsolately to the New House, and Arthur Augustus escorted his cousin through the dusky quad towards the Head's private entrance.

"I want to speak to you, Arthur," Cousin Ethel said, slackening her pace.

"Yaas, deah gal?"

"It's about that examination."

"Oh, Figgins!" said D'Arcy carelessly.

"Yes. You don't think he has much chance?"

"Well, he's wathah a duffah, you know. And it's a vewy hard exam. I don't weally feel sure that I should pull it off myself if I entahed."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"But Figgins may succeed if he works hard—"

"Swottin' isn't much in his line, deah gal."

"His father would be very pleased, and it would be a good thing for Figgins in the school, too. I suppose you all help him as much as you can when he studies, and see that he is not interrupted by pranks, or anything of that kind?"

Arthur Augustus stammered a little.

"Well, as a mattah of fact, deah gal, he's been wathah wagged about it," he admitted.

Cousin Ethel's face became very serious. Probably she had guessed that already.

"Arthur, don't you think that is a shame, when Figgins is trying to do serious work for the first time?"

"But it's all wot, you know. He can't do it."

"But he is trying."

"Yaas, he's twyin'," admitted D'Arcy.

"Then isn't it a shame that he isn't given a chance?"

"Yaas, I suppose it is," agreed Arthur Augustus. "If we considahed the thing seriously, of course, we should back him up."

"Then consider it seriously. You like Figgins, don't you?"

"Ah—er—ahem—yaas, I suppose so!" said Arthur Augustus, rather taken aback by the question. "He is wathah a cheeky ass in some things, but he is a jolly good chap. A chap can't weally help likin' Figgins, somehow."

"Then why not take it very seriously, and back him up, and see that all your friends do, Arthur? It would be generous, and like you."

"Any old thing," said Arthur Augustus, "if you weally think I ought—"

"I think it would be kind and generous of you!"

"Done!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Aftah all, miwacles have happened before, so why shouldn't Figgy bwing off the exam, pewwaps? Anyway, I'm goin' to wally wound him, and I'll see that the othah chaps back up, too, and wally wound old Figgins."

And Cousin Ethel's face was very bright as she bade her cousin good-night, and went into the Head's house.

Arthur Augustus was looking unusually serious as he made his way back to Study No. 6. It was impossible for Arthur Augustus to refuse anything asked by a feminine tongue, and Ethel had made him see quite clearly that it would only be the decent thing to help old Figgins now that he was struggling with a heavy task; but Arthur Augustus was a little doubtful about how the other fellows would look at it.

However, he made up his noble mind

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on one point—whatever the other fellows did or didn't do, he was going to keep his word to Cousin Ethel, and rally round old Figgins.

CHAPTER 7. Rally Round!

TOM MERRY & CO. were finishing the ginger-beer and nuts in Study No. 6 when Arthur Augustus returned. The serious look upon his aristocratic face attracted attention at once as he came into the study.

"Wherefore that pensive brow?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus did not reply for the moment. He assumed his favourite attitude when about to lay down the law—standing with his back to the fire, with his eyeglass between finger and thumb of his right hand.

The juniors all looked at him curiously. It was evident that something of unusual importance was coming.

"Get it off your chest!" said Blake. "Can't you see we're on giddy tenter-hooks?"

"I have somethin' to say to you chaps."

"Pile in! Life's short," reminded Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Order!" exclaimed Blake. "For goodness' sake don't interrupt, or this will last all the evening. Gussy, old man, cut the cackle, and come to the hoes!"

"It's about Figgins. I wegard Figgins as a vewy decent chap, and a wathah deservin' chap."

"Figgys is all right," said Tom Merry, in wonder. "What next?"

"Figgins is entwain' for a vewy difficult exam. I considah that Figgins has a wight to be wegardad sewiously."

"Oh!"

"My hat!"

"Great pip!"

"Rot!"

"Rubbish!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and looked round upon the juniors with a very severe glance.

"Yaas," he said emphatically; "that is my point of view. I must admit that it did not stwike me until Ethel mentioned it."

"Oh, did Ethel say so?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, that alters the case," agreed Blake. "Of course, Figgys is only playing the giddy ox, and we can't possibly take him seriously, though."

"I wegard it as bein' up to us to take him sewiously and help him," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Of course, he is an ass—I'll admit that. But he is a wathah decent chap, and though he is only a New House boundah, he is weally one of our pals, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes; that's all right!"

"Well, when a pal of ours is up against somethin' specially hard, I wegard it as our duty to wally wound him."

"Not a bad idea," said Tom heartily. "Let's rally round Figgins and back him up."

"But there's such a blessed lot of fun in Figgys enterin' for an exam!" said Lowther. "It's worth whole comic papers to us."

"Lowthah, I say it is up to us to wally wound Figgins," said Arthur Augustus, with great firmness. "I twust you are goin' to wally wound with the wext?"

Lowther grunted.

THE WRONG "WRITE"!



Would-be Reporter: "But, sir, I can write about anything."
Editor: "Good! Then right about turn—the door's just behind you!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Horton, 68, Wallows Road, Dudley Fields, Brierley Hill, Staffs.

"Oh, I'm on," he said, "if you all think so!"

"After all, there may be a millionth part of a chance that Figgys may pull off the exam, if he swots himself black and blue," said Blake.

"Oh, piffle!"

"I think he might have a ghost of a chance," said Tom Merry. "Of course, Manners will beat him; but he may get in second, if—if he moves mountains."

Manners was looking very thoughtful.

"I don't know that I care much about the Bishop's Medal," he said. "I've bagged lots of their blessed pots and things. It seems a pity to let it go to such a rotter as Levison—that was one reason why I put my name down. But if Figgys is seriously going to hunt for it, I'm blessed if I don't stand out!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, that's rather a lot to do, Manners, old man," Tom Merry remarked. "In my opinion, the medal was a dead cert for you."

"Levison and Brooke both have a good chance," said Manners. "I think very likely I should have beaten them. But, hang it all, I've collared plenty of things, and Figgins has never bagged even a book prize. I'm not going to be a hog. Figgins has never taken anything yet, and I'm not going to stand in his way."

"Well, that's one way of rallying round Figgins!" said Blake, laughing. "Are you going to take your name off the list, then?"

"Yes," said Manners, with a nod.

"Good egg!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I think I'll twot ova to the New House and tell Figgins that we're going to wally wound him."

And Arthur Augustus lost no time. Whatever Arthur Augustus did, he did with all his heart, and he was already enthusiastic over the scheme of rallying round Figgins, and helping him through his examination.

Brimming over with good resolutions and the milk of human kindness, Arthur Augustus came up to the New House with his graceful saunter.

But, as luck would have it, he was spotted just in front of the House by Redfern and Owen, and Thompson of the Shell, and Pratt of the Fourth, and several other fellows; and, mindful of

the row in the tuckshop, these juniors rushed upon him without a word of warning, and seized him and swept him off his noble feet.

Arthur Augustus gave a wild yell as he was whirled into the air. Earth and sky, trees and stars, seemed to swirl about him in wild confusion.

"Yawwooh! Welsease me! Let me down at once, you wottahs!"

Bump!

The New House juniors obeyed, and they let him down—hard.

"Oh ewwubs! You are—ow!—awwain' my twottahs! Lemme gewwup, you wottahs! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No School House tramps allowed on the decent side of the quadrangle!" grinned Redfern. "Run him back to his own House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! You wottahs! I have come ova!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And now you're going back!"

"I came here to look for—"

"Trouble!" chuckled Owen. "And you've found it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in the midst of the yelling New House juniors the struggling swell of the School House was rushed back at top speed across the quadrangle, up the steps of the School House, and dumped down within doors.

With a final yell the New House fellows fled, before a hand could be raised against them, and vanished across the quadrangle again.

Arthur Augustus sat and gasped.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, running down the stairs. "Is that you, Gussy?"

"Gwoo-woogh! Yaas! Gooowh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Have you seen Figgins?"

"I have not seen Figgins! Ow! I was collahed by a gang of young wuffians—ow!—and tweated with gwoss—ow!—diswespect! Gwoogh!"

"Then you haven't told Figgins we're going to rally round him?" chuckled Tom.

"Ow! Blow Figgins! Wow!"

And Arthur Augustus departed in search of a clothes-brush and a clean collar, and Figgins, who was grinding away at Horatius Flaccus, remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that the School House juniors had resolved to rally round him.

CHAPTER 8. The Limit!

A FEW days later Tom Merry of the Shell might have been seen, as they say in the novels—and, as a matter of fact, was seen—to wear a worried look.

It was Saturday, and in the afternoon the St. Jim's juniors were going over to Abbotsford to play the team there.

The junior team at St. Jim's was selected from the best players in the two junior Houses, and Tom Merry was the captain thereof.

Now, although when in heated argument with the New House fellows Tom Merry would maintain that any fellow in the School House could give any fellow in the New House the "kybosh" at footer, he was very particular to secure the services of Figgins & Co. on the occasions when the junior team played outsiders.

On such occasions Figgins & Co. could not possibly be left out. They had their places in the junior eleven as a matter of course when the match was of any

importance, and, as a rule, they were very keen to play.

But a change had come over Figgins. For days now he had been swotting, and, owing to the noble resolution of Tom Merry & Co. to rally round him, he had been allowed to pursue his unusual studies without interruptions or rags.

Figgins had shown an astonishing keenness for study. He stuck to it all the harder because it was against the grain. But the general opinion was that he was overdoing it. He was cutting footer practice for the sake of swotting.

And now, on the day of the Abbotsford match, Tom Merry had a suspicion that Figgins meant to cut it, and stay at home mugging up Latin, instead of playing for St. Jim's.

And the prospect of leaving behind one of his best players brought a worried look to the youthful brow of the junior captain.

When the Fourth Form came out of the Form-room on Saturday morning, therefore, Tom Merry was waiting for Figgins in the passage. The Shell had come out a couple of minutes earlier. Figgins, as he came down the passage, with a book under his arm and a thoughtful expression on his face, found himself stopped by the Terrible Three.

"Halt!" said Monty Lowther. "Stand and deliver!"

Figgins grinned feebly.

"Don't be funny, now!" he said. "I'm in a hurry! I've got time for more swotting before dinner!"

"You're mistake!" said Tom Merry. "You haven't!"

"Yes, I have," said Figgins, in surprise, looking at his watch.

"Not at all! You've got an engagement!"

"An engagement?" said Figgins, staring at him.

"Yes. You're coming down to the footer field to show us what kind of form you're in for this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" said Figgins vaguely.

"You may have forgotten that there's a match on with Abbotsford!" Manners remarked sarcastically.

"Match?" said Figgins. "Abbotsford? Oh, yes! I'm sorry, Tom Merry! I shan't be able to play this afternoon."

Tom Merry looked grim.

"I thought that was coming," he observed. "Well, you're going to play! We can't spare you! Do you want Abbotsford to lick St. Jim's?"

Figgins looked distressed.

"Oh, no! Put Reddy in instead. He's all right!"

"I know he is—right as rain," agreed Tom Merry. "But if your silly wits hadn't gone wool-gathering after Latin conjugations and declensions, and deponent verbs and things, you'd remember that Redfern is right-half already! As he can't be in two places at once, I can't very well play him as inside-right, too. I would if I could, but I don't see how it's to be done."

Figgins smiled.

"I—I was thinking of something else," he said. "You see, I find that blessed swotting for the Bishop's Medal is harder than I thought."

"Go hon!" murmured Manners.

"But I'm determined to bring it off, or, at least, get honourable mention, or bust a boiler!" said Figgins. "I'll run you pretty close, Manners!"

"You won't run me very close," said Manners. "I'm not in it."

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"Your name's down," said Figgins.

"I've withdrawn it."

Figgins whistled.

"I hadn't heard. What did you withdraw for?"

"Sort of decided to, somehow," said Manners. "I'm going in for the Percy Prize instead. Levison and Brooke are your toughest rivals now, and Brooke doesn't have much time for swotting at exams. You've got Levison to beat. The others won't touch Levison."

"Well, I'll try," said Figgins. "Levison will be a hard nut to crack, but he's not your form, and I think I shall beat him if I work hard at it. So, you see, I've got to chuck footer for a bit."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"That's just where you make a mistake," he replied. "You really can't swot for an exam unless you keep fit. If you shut yourself up all the time and get off colour, you can't put your beef into your work. A good game of footer every now and then will make you fit for the swotting."

"I'm sorry—"

"You'll be all right if you help us play Abbotsford. The fact is, Figgy, they're very hot stuff; they've got two or three new men who are reported to be very good players, all ready to spring on us to-day. We can't run risks. I don't mind saying that you are the best inside-right we've ever played. If we leave you out, it may make all the difference."

"Thanks! But—"

"We leave here at two," said Tom Merry; "the motor-coach will be at the gate then. You'll be ready?"

"I can't come."

"What?"

"It's no good," said Figgins. "I can't come. My heart wouldn't be in it, anyway. You must let me off this time."

"Rats!"

"Rubbish!"

"I'm really sorry—but try Lawrence or Owen or Thompson. I shall have really to stand out for once. I'm sorry, but there you are! I've got special reasons for wanting to pass this exam. I can't afford to throw away chances."

"You won't pass it unless you look after your health; and you can't look after your health without taking a proper amount of exercise."

"Oh, my health's all right!"

"Look here, you must come!"

"I can't—I really can't!"

And Figgins, to save further argument, dodged the Terrible Three and darted out of the House. The Shell fellows rushed after him.

"Figgins! Stop a minute!"

"Can't!"

He dashed away like a deer, and disappeared into the doorway of the New House, leaving the Terrible Three baffled and exasperated in the quad.

"Hang it all!" said Tom Merry, as they turned back. "This is rotten! We can't leave him out."

"What's to be done, then?"

"Blessed if I know! But he's jolly well not going to be left behind, if we have to take him by the ears and bundle him neck and crop into the motor-coach!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And the Terrible Three, instead of proceeding to the footer ground, proceeded to call together Blake & Co., and other members of the team, to consult what was to be done in the case of the recalcitrant Figgins.

CHAPTER 9.

Not to be Left Out!

TOM MERRY'S team for the Abbotsford match consisted of seven School House fellows and four of the New House. Figgins & Co. and Redfern represented the New House. The School House members were Tom Merry, Lowther, Kangaroo, Blake, D'Arcy, Reilly, and Herries. The seven, when the matter was discussed, were unanimously of opinion that Figgins could not be left out.

Tom had not called the New House members to the meeting, as he guessed that the measures he had in contemplation might not be approved of by Kerr and Wynn, at least.

"Like his blessed cheek to ask to be left out, I think," growled Herries. "Why, the New House fellows were grumbling at having only four members in the team against our seven. Now one of them wants to stand out."

"Sure, and he can't be allowed!" said Reilly. "If it was any other match it wouldn't matter entirely. Young Mulvaney could be put in. He's in jolly good form. But we've got to put in the best team we can to beat Abbotsford this time."

"He's got to play!" said all the fellows together.

"Yaas. You wemembah, deah boys, that we have agreed to wally wound Figgins. I wegard that as an important point. Figgy is ovahdoin' it. As his pals, who have sworn to wally wound him, we are bound to pwevent him fwom ovahdoin' it. It is our duty as—"

"As ralliers round, or as rally-rounders," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas. It is our duty as wally-woundahs to see that Figgy doesn't ovahdo that beastly swotting. I wecomend stern measures."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "My idea is this—we'll wait till the motor-coach is at the gates, and get Kerr and Wynn and Reddy in it first, in case they feel inclined to cut up rusty; then we'll collar Figgy by main force and drag him in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he won't go quietly we'll sit on him, and when we get to Abbotsford—why, as he's there, of course, he'll play."

"Good egg!" said Blake heartily.

"Yaas, wathah! It is wathah dwastie, but I don't see any othah way. We'll all back you up, deah boy!"

And so it was decided. The juniors went down to the footer ground for a punt-about before dinner, joining the New House members of the team there. When they came off the field, Kerr joined Merry, looking rather anxious and worried.

"I suppose you've heard from Figgy about his standing out?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom.

"I've been keeping him from telling you all the week," said Kerr. "I hoped I should be able to dissuade him, but he's as firm as a rock."

"It's all right," said Tom Merry. "I think we shall see him at Abbotsford this afternoon, after all, Kerr."

Kerr shook his head.

"You don't know how set he is on that blessed exam," he said. "He's putting it before everything else, and he'll be making himself ill with overwork soon. The queer thing is that I'm beginning to believe that he has a chance. I've been through last year's papers with him, and the amount that he has picked

up already is astonishing. I never thought he had it in him. Now that Manners has withdrawn, I think Figgy will very likely pull it off, unless he breaks down before the exam."

There was a chuckle from Levison of the Fourth, who overheard Kerr's remarks.

"Will you take a bet on it?" asked Levison. "I'll give you five to one that I get in ahead of Figgins in the exam!"

"No, I won't," said Kerr disdainfully.

"Make your rotten bets with Mellish or Cutts of the Fifth—they're not in my line."

Levison grinned spitefully.

"Well, I'll take jolly good care that

Manners and Mulvaney, who were going as reserves, also got into the coach. Kerr looked round, but there was no sign of Tom Merry or Lowther or Kangaroo.

"Where are the other chaps?" he asked.

"Oh, they're coming!" said Jack Blake, with a grin.

"Who's playing instead of Figgins?" Kerr asked.

"Ahem! Perhaps Figgy will be playing, after all."

"Oh, no; he's not coming!"

"Pewwaps he may come," smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "In fact, I

stand out, he stands out, and that's all there is about it!"

"Not quite all!" grinned Blake.

"Wathah not!"

Kerr jumped up.

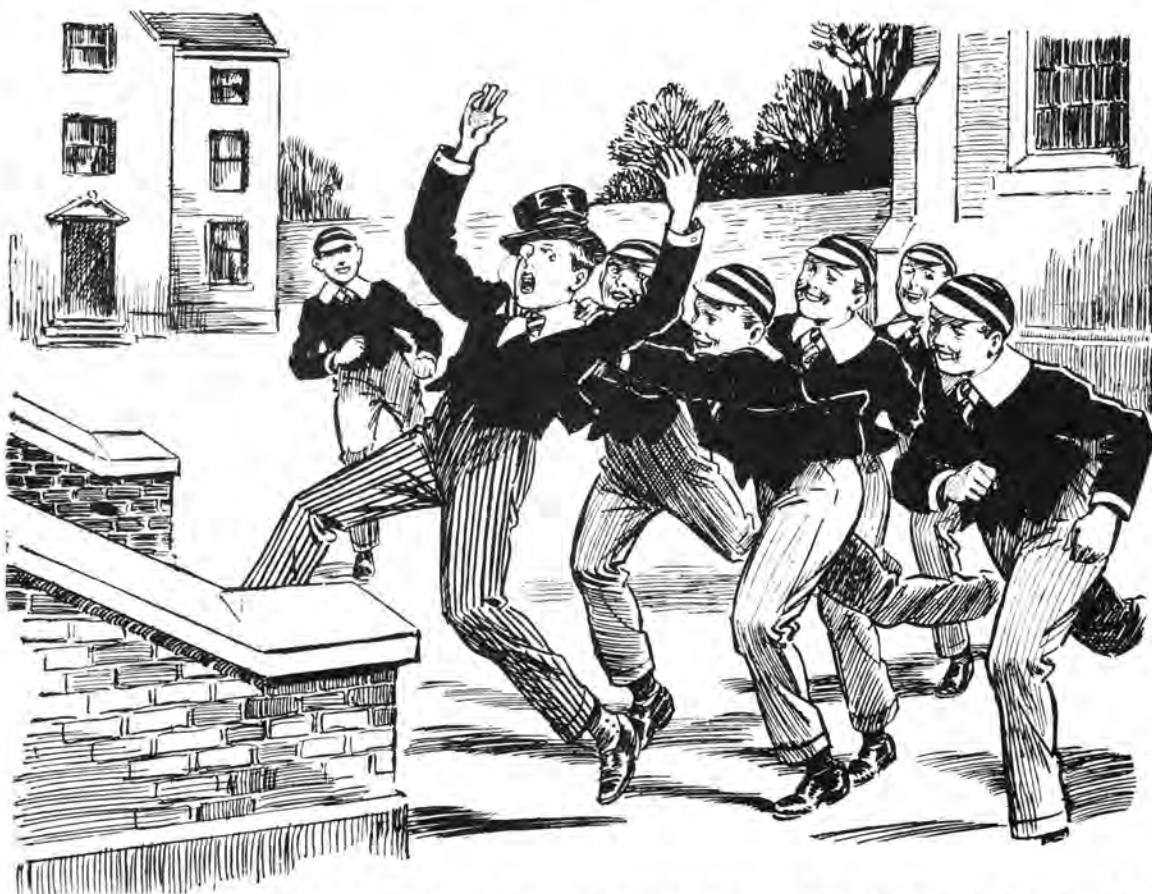
"I think I'll just run back to the New House—"

Jack Blake grabbed Kerr and dragged him back into his seat.

"No, you won't, my son!" he chuckled. "Steady on! You New House kids are staying here. Look out, you fellows!"

"Look here—" shouted Kerr.

"It's no go, Kerr!" said Herries. "Don't let any of 'em get out of the coach, you chaps!"



"Ow! You wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I came ovah to look for—" "Trouble!" chuckled Owen. "And you've found it!" And in the midst of the yelling New House juniors the swell of the School House was rushed at top speed across the quad.

your precious Figgins doesn't have much chance for the exam," he said. "I've been slacking a bit myself, but I could beat Figgins blindfolded, and you know it."

"We shall see," said Kerr, and he walked away with Tom Merry, leaving Levison scowling.

"You don't think you could persuade Figgins to come, Kerr?" the captain of the junior eleven asked.

"I'm afraid not."

"Well, we shall see. The motor-coach will be here at two. You'll be ready?"

"Right-ho!"

And the juniors went in to dinner.

Promptly at two o'clock the motor-coach drew up outside the gates of St. Jim's. Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern went down with their bags, and Reilly, Blake, D'Arcy, and Herries joined them.

wathah fancy Tom Mewwy has gone in to twy to persuade him to come."

"It won't be much good," said Redfern. "I've jawed to him for a steady ten minutes on the subject, but he's as obstinate as a mule!"

"Not a bit of good!" said Fatty Wynn scornfully. "I should never have believed it of Figgy; but he's putting that rotten exam before a football match. Queer, isn't it?"

"Yaas, it's wathah wotten; but Figgy has fwends to look aftah him, you know. It's a case of saviu' a chap fwom himself."

"Shurrup!" said Blake.

Kerr looked at them quickly and suspiciously.

"I say, is there some game on?" he asked. "We can't have any larks with old Figgins, you know. If he chooses to

"What-ho!"

Redfern laughed, and remained motionless in his seat.

"If you've got any dodge for making Figgins come, you're welcome," he said. "School matches come before House rows. Figgins ought to come. I jolly well shan't interfere!"

"Look here, we're getting out!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "Let go my arm, Mulvaney, you beast! Leggo my collar, Herries!"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wats!"

Kerr and Wynn began to struggle, but the School House fellows held them firmly in their seats. Redfern whistled cheerily. Kerr and Wynn, as a matter of fact, were in sympathy with Tom.

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Merry's device, which they now suspected; but they felt bound to stand by their chum. But they had no chance. The School House fellows in the coach outnumbered them, and they were pinned down.

There was a sudden shout from Mulvaney.

"Arrah! Here they come!"

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 10.

By Main Force!

FIGGINS was in his study when Tom Merry and Lowther and Harry Noble entered the New House.

Figgins was looking a little glum as he bent over his books. He had felt that he was bound to devote half-holidays to study, instead of to sport, until the Bishop's Medal Exam was over. His thoughts were with the team who were going over to Abbotsford to do battle for the St. Jim's colours.

But he felt that he had a duty to do, however worrying it was, and he stood by it manfully. The thought had crossed his mind that he might be over-doing it—Kerr had hinted as much to him.

But Figgy felt that was a temptation to leave his books, and he would not yield to it. He was seated at the study table, with a Latin dictionary open before him, a Horace on his left hand, and "Latin Verse" on his right, when the three School House fellows walked cheerfully in.

Figgins turned his head and looked at them dolefully.

"Just off?" he asked.

"Yes, come on!"

Figgins made a weary gesture.

"Don't begin that again, for goodness' sake!" he said. "It's bad enough as it is! I don't know how much I want to come; but I can't, and there's an end of it!"

"That's where you make your little mistake," said Monty Lowther. "That isn't the end of it."

"Just the beginning of it, in fact!" remarked Kangaroo.

"The fact is, you're overdoing it, Figgy!" Tom Merry explained. "As your friends, we can't stand by and let you overdo it, and knock yourself up, and then fail in the exam because you're not fit. That isn't good business. We're going to look after you—especially as we can't possibly spare you from the Abbotsford match."

"Good-bye!" said Figgins grimly.

"We're not going without you!" said Tom Merry bluntly.

"Then you won't go at all," said Figgins.

"In other words, you've got to come, and you can walk or be carried," said Kangaroo, the Australian junior. "That's the whole extent of your choice, Figgy."

"Don't play the giddy ox!" said Figgins impatiently. "Barz off, and let me get to work! It's hard enough, anyway!"

The three School House juniors did not buzz off. They advanced upon Figgins, and Figgins jumped to his feet.

"Get out!" he exclaimed angrily. "You silly asses, do you think you're going to take me to Abbotsford against my will? Are you dotty?"

"No; but you are," said Tom Merry.

"Now, are you coming?"

"No!" roared Figgins.

"Collar him!"

Figgins dodged round the table.

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"You silly chumps!" he panted. "Do you want a scrimmage just before a footer match? I'll call the other fellows in if you don't clear off!"

"The other fellows are all out," said Tom Merry coolly. "Most of them have started for Abbotsford already to see the match. There's hardly a fellow left in the House, and there are plenty of our chaps hanging round the House to come in if we want them. You are coming with us, Figgy."

"I'm not!" yelled Figgy.

"Nuff said!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Have him out!"

Figgins dodged round the table again, with Kangaroo after him. He made a break for the door, but Monty Lowther intercepted him.

"Now, Figgy—yaroo!" roared Lowther.

Figgins' blood was up. He hit out, and Lowther rolled over on the study carpet. But Tom Merry's grasp was upon Figgy the next moment, and he was dragged back from the door. Kangaroo's arm was thrown round his neck from behind; and Lowther, jumping up, collared him also with great energy. Figgins, struggling wildly, was borne to the floor in the midst of the three.

On the floor he rolled and wrestled, but three sturdy juniors pinned him down, and Figgins had no chance. He put up a good fight, however, and the trio were panting breathlessly by the time they had secured him.

"Got him!" gasped Tom Merry at last. "Now, Figgy, are you coming quietly?"

"No!" gurgled Figgins.

"Then we shall carry you."

"Rescue!" yelled Figgins. "Rescue, New House! Res—Goooo-hooooo-grrrrrr!"

Tom Merry stuffed a handkerchief into Figgins' open mouth, and Figgy's yells died away suddenly in a gurgle. Monty Lowther drew a length of whipcord from his pocket and coolly fastened Figgins' wrists together. Figgins was making wild efforts to eject the gag, but Kangaroo tied a string round his head, effectually keeping the handkerchief in place.

The New House junior lay and glared up at his captors in powerless fury.

"Now, walk him out!" panted Tom Merry.

Figgins was lifted to his feet.

Tom Merry took one arm and Kangaroo the other, and Monty Lowther went ahead, and the juniors quitted the study.

Figgins had to walk. When he declined to move his legs, Tom Merry and Kangaroo swung him clear of the floor and carried him. It was more comfortable to walk.

In this guise they descended the stairs, Figgins looking round in vain for succour. In the lower passage there were some fags, and they came running up; but Figgins was rushed out of the House in a twinkling, and outside the New House there were a dozen School House fellows ready to surround him.

Figgins could have drawn the House-master from his study by making a row, and certainly Mr. Ratcliff would have put a summary stop to the proceedings—and he would also have reported the three invaders to their House-master for punishment. But Figgins had no intention of doing that; it was not playing the game.

Outside the New House the crowd of fellows surrounded him, and he was rushed away towards the gates without any casual observers in the quadrangle even seeing Figgins in the throng, so

the fact that his hands were tied escaped notice.

At the gates Tom Merry jerked the handkerchief from his mouth.

"Come on, Figgy; it's all up now, you know."

"Groogh! Lemme go!"

"Lift him in!"

"Rescue!" spluttered Figgins.

The juniors heaved him into the coach. Kerr and Wynn, loyal to their chief, were struggling in the coach; but they were held fast. Figgins went whirling into the coach, and Tom Merry & Co. scrambled in after him.

"Drive on!" shouted Tom Merry.

The motor-coach started.

Figgins, with three or four School House fellows sitting upon him, writhed and struggled helplessly in the bottom of the coach.

The juniors at the gates laughed and cheered as the coach drove away.

The team for Abbotsford were fairly started now, and Figgins was with them.

CHAPTER 11.

Figgins Refuses to Play!

"**L**EMME gerrup!"

Thus George Figgins.

Figgins was wriggling under quite a heap of juniors. The coach was as full as it could hold of fellows who were going to play Abbotsford and fellows who were going to see them do it. Lawrence and Owen and several other New House juniors had jumped in, but they followed Redfern's example, and did not "chip in." Only Kerr and Wynn strove to come to their leader's assistance, and they were firmly held.

"Are you going to be quiet?" asked Tom Merry.

"No!" roared Figgins. "I'm going to get out."

"Then you'll stay where you are."

"Lemme gerrup! I'll pulverise you! I'll—I'll—"

"Go easy!" said Kangaroo. "No good trying to shift me off, Figgins. I'm planted on your manly chest. All the way to Abbotsford, if necessary."

"Gerroff! Gerroogh! Ow!"

"Sit on his head, Hammond. It's soft enough to be comfortable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep off, Hammond, you beast! Look here, you rotters! Help me, Kerr! Back up, Fatty! Reddy, lend a hand!"

Redfern shook his head.

"Can't be did, Figgy. I think you ought to come to Abbotsford."

"Won't you back up your own House!" roared Figgins.

"Not in playing the giddy ox," said Redfern calmly. "It's all right. You'll be glad of it afterwards. It's like taking medicine, you know."

"I won't go to Abbotsford!"

"You're going!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle.

"I won't play when I get there."

"Yes, you will, Figgy. You won't snk. You'll play up like a sportsman," said the St. Jim's junior captain cheerfully.

Figgins relapsed into grim silence. He was in for it now, and there was no escape from the hands of his captors. And the motor-coach was bowling along at a good speed.

"Get off me, you beasts!" growled Figgins at last. "I'll stay in the coach."

"Honest. Injun?"

"Yes!" snapped Figgins.

"Let him get up."

The juniors rose from their seats on various parts of Figgins' person, and

Figgy scrambled up, gasping. He gave the juniors grim looks, to which they replied with pleasant grins, and glumly sat down in the coach. He was silent for a long time, while the fellows round him chatted over the coming match and the school's prospect, in it. Manners took a pocket Horace from his jacket and passed it to Figgy.

"Improve the shining hour, like the giddy busy bee, Figgy, old man," he said.

"Oh, thanks!" said Figgy.

And his face cleared a little as he opened the volume, and was soon deep in the "Carmina," turning the pages continually to refer to the notes at the end, and then blinking back at the text. The other fellows grinned as they watched him. They did not mind Figgy's swotting on the way to Abbotsford so long as he played up when he reached the place.

The coach bowled on through the country lanes, and ran into Abbotsford at last. The school appeared in sight. Tom Merry tapped Figgy on the shoulder, and Figgy came out of Horatius Flaccus with a start.

"We're there, Figgy," said Tom.

Figgy grunted.

"I'm not going to play."

"Stuff!"

"I haven't got my things with me, for one thing!" growled Figgy. "You didn't think of that when you yauked me out of my study."

"Yes, we did," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've brought you some of Kangy's things. They fit you, you know."

"Look here, I'm not going to be ragged into playing if I don't choose to!" said Figgy morosely. "You had no right to bring me here!"

The coach halted before Tom Merry could reply. The St. Jim's fellows swarmed out, and were greeted by the Abbotsfordians. Figgy was the last to leave the coach. He glanced round him as if meditating bolting; but the other fellows were all round him; and Figgy, too, did not want to make a scene before the Abbotsford players.

But his look was still very grim as he walked into the dressing-room in the midst of the St. Jim's party.

"You're not changing, Figgy," said Tom Merry, after a minute or two.

The St. Jim's players were rapidly turning into their football things, with the exception of Figgy. He was standing with a moody brow.

"I'm not going to change," said Figgy doggedly.

"Buck up!" urged Tom Merry.

"I won't, I tell you!"

Tom Merry looked a little nonplussed. It was so unlike Figgy to be sulky, that Tom Merry had not counted upon that. He had not doubted for a moment that, once upon the Abbotsford ground, Figgy would fall into line and play up cheerfully.

"Abbotsford will be waiting for us soon," said Kerr quietly.

"Let 'em wait!" said Figgy.

"Look here, old man—" began Fatty Wynn persuasively.

"Bosh!"

Two or three of the team broke out wrathfully.

"Look here, Figgy, none of your rotten sulks!"

"You've got to play!"

"We'll hammer you if you don't!"

"Faith, lave him out, and put Mulvaney in!"

"Let the sulky brute go and eat coke!"

"Bump him!"

Figgy was grimly silent. He was evidently very "rusty." Some of the fellows were looking very angry now, and closing round Figgy as if to collar him. Kerr and Wynn had not a word to say.

Tom Merry raised his hand.

"Hold on!" he said. "You say you won't play, Figgy?"

"No, I won't!"

"Very well. We'll play a man short—and if we get licked—"

Figgy jumped.

"Man short!" he exclaimed.

"Against Abbotsford? Are you dotty?"

"If we get licked—" went on Tom Merry evenly.

"If!" howled Blake. "We shall be licked to the wide!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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Note the delicate surfaces. You get the flavour of chocolate instantly. By overcoming lumpiness these surfaces make the chocolate more palatable and easy to digest.



"Licked out of our boots!" said Kangaroo.

"Dished and done!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, warhah!"

"If we get licked," pursued Tom Merry, as soon as he could make his voice heard, "then Figgins can answer for it to all the fellows. I'm going to take ten men into the field, and leave Figgins' place open. If he likes to see St. Jim's play Abbotsford without an inside-right, he can. I shouldn't care to be in his shoes afterwards, that's all."

Figgins frowned.

"That's rotten unfair to me," he said irritably. "You'll get licked, as sure as a die, and the school will say it was my doing."

"So it will be your doing!" said Redfern hotly. "By George, we'll make the New House too hot to hold you, if you leave us in the lurch like that. I can tell you!"

"Figgins won't leave us in the lurch," said Tom Merry. "I think I know him better than that. Figgins will take his place."

"I won't," said Figgins.

"Very well. I mean what I say. You fellows ready?"

"Yes, we're ready."

Tom Merry, without another look at Figgins, walked out of the dressing-room, and the team followed him. Kerr and Wynn lingered behind to reason with their chum.

"Figgy, you can't do it, for the sake of the House!" Kerr expostulated.

"You must come, Figgy!" urged Fatty Wynn. "Now, get into your things. Here they are, all ready. I'll help you."

"I've said I'm not going to play, and I won't!" said Figgins, with a doggedness his chums had never observed in him before.

Kerr looked at him very straight.

"You don't mean that, Figgy?"

"I do mean it!"

"Then I've got no more to say—excepting that I'm ashamed of you," said Kerr.

And, with a very red face, Kerr walked out.

"Figgy, old man—" Fatty Wynn urged helplessly.

"You coming, Wynn?" called out Tom Merry.

"Just coming. I say, Figgy—"

"Wynn, you're wanted! They've won the toss."

Fatty Wynn gave Figgins a reproachful look, and hurried out. The team were in the field, and already lining up. Raikes, the junior captain of Abbotsford, had won the toss, and given St. Jim's a stiff wind to kick off against. Blake touched Tom Merry on the arm.

"You don't mean it—about playing a man short?" he said.

"Figgins will come."

"But supposing he doesn't?"

"I think he will. If he doesn't, we must chance it," said Tom steadily. "But Figgins won't find things very pleasant at St. Jim's afterwards if we're beaten."

"You're a man short, Merry," said the referee.

"That's all right," said Tom Merry.

"We're ready to start."

"Not crooked—eh?" asked Raikes.

"Oh, no!"

The Abbotsford captain gave him an odd look. If a member of the team had been crooked, or turned seedy, Tom Merry had plenty of fellows with him to play instead. And why a member of a team should stay out of the forward line at the kick-off was more than

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Raikes could understand. But it was no business of his if the St. Jim's captain chose to play ten men instead of eleven.

Phoop! went the whistle.

The ball ran from Tom Merry's foot.

Figgins had not appeared.

CHAPTER 12.

Play Up!

TOM MERRY had no time to think about Figgins for the next few moments.

The Abbotsford forwards attacked hotly, and soon showed their quality. There was a tussle for the ball in the visitors' half, and it went into touch. As the fellows stood round for the throw-in, Tom Merry spotted a long-legged figure, and smiled.

Figgins must have changed like lightning, for he was on the field now. Tom Merry had judged him well. If the St. Jim's skipper had played a man in his place, Figgins would have gone. But he could not possibly leave the Saints to fight ten against eleven. Not for the sake of a dozen Bishop's Medals would Figgins have let his comrades down.

"Good old Figgy!" said Kerr, greatly relieved.

And Fatty Wynn, in goal, grinned a fat smile of satisfaction.

Never had the aid of Figgins been more required.

The Abbotsford fellows were keen and determined. Their attack was almost incessant. Fatty Wynn, in goal, stood between the Abbotsford forwards and a goal. It was not easy to send the "pill" past him.

But for his sturdy defence, Abbotsford would have scored and scored again in the first ten minutes of the play.

The struggle swayed away into midfield at last, and the ball went into touch; and the St. Jim's defenders had a "breather."

Tom Merry's eyes sought Figgins somewhat anxiously.

Now that he was playing, Tom Merry knew that he would play his best, and work his hardest. But he had neglected all practice for a week, and it was likely enough that he would be a bit off colour, and every little helps the enemy in so close a match.

Figgins' speed, his accurate passing, and his hard shooting, were very much wanted on the St. Jim's side.

And certainly Figgins did not seem to be quite up to his usual form just at first. Perhaps the thought of the exam and the "swotting" he had had to give up haunted him in spite of himself, and affected his game. Certainly he did not seem so useful as usual.

The Abbotsford forwards got away again and launched another hot attack. Raikes passed the ball to the centre-forward, and the latter put it in, in spite of a big effort by Fatty Wynn to prevent the score.

It was first blood to Abbotsford.

For the remainder of that half the Saints made desperate efforts to

equalise, but they exerted themselves in vain.

The whistle went, leaving Abbotsford one to nothing.

It had been a hard half, and the fellows were breathing very quickly as they rested in the interval. Figgins' face was very gloomy.

"I haven't been much good to you, after all, Tom Merry," he said ruefully, as he rubbed his crimson and perspiring face.

"Better luck in the next half," said Tom Merry. "After all, they've only broken their duck."

"Better have put me in!" growled Gore of the Shell, who had come over to look on. "I fancy I couldn't have done worse. Figgins is sulking, and he doesn't want to win."

Figgins heard the words, and his eyes glittered.

He knew that Tom Merry & Co. would not suspect him of slacking because he had been forced to play; but Gore, and fellows of Gore's kidney, would turn naturally to such a suspicion. And if the match were lost, a good deal of blame would fall to Tom Merry for playing an unwilling man. Figgins inwardly resolved that he would play his hardest in the second half.

The teams lined up, and the second half commenced.

The wind was behind St. Jim's now, and it helped them as much as it had hindered them in the first half. Tom Merry & Co. attacked, and Figgins came out very strong.

With a fine forward rush, they brought the ball up the field, the whole forward line passing like clockwork. The leather went out to D'Arcy on the wing, and he ran it along the touchline. He



Like an arrow from a bow Figgins sprang forward and charged the charge and then went to the ground, the ball dropping to St. Jim's fellows frenziedly. On the touchline.

sent it in to Blake as he was tackled, and Blake sent it to Tom Merry just as a half charged him off the ball. Tom Merry captured the ball, and rushed on, and as there was no opening, he sent it out on the right. Figgins gathered it, and sent it farther out to Kerr as he was tackled. Kerr sent it back to Figgins, and Figgins to Tom Merry, and Tom to Figgins again, beating the Abbotsford defence by short and fast passing, and it was from Figgins' foot that it whizzed into goal.

Then the St. Jim's spectators shouted. "Bravo, Figgins!" "Goal! Goal!" "Hurrah!" Kerr clapped Figgins enthusiastically on the back.

"Good man!" he exclaimed. "A bit of luck!" said Figgins. "The whole line deserves credit for that goal!"

And the St. Jim's fellows lined up for the restart with very cheerful faces.

There were twenty minutes yet to play—plenty of time for the match to be won and lost over and over again. Raikes and his men played up hard to regain the lead, and they succeeded at last, Fatty Wynn being beaten by a shot that few goalkeepers could have saved.

Two to one. But St. Jim's were in splendid fighting trim now, and ten minutes later Tom Merry flashed the ball in, beating the Abbotsford goalie hollow.

Two to two! "Play up, St. Jim's!" "On the ball!" "One goal more, Tom Merry!" "Play up! Play up!" Both sides were playing up hard. But the struggle was in the home half,

and Abbotsford had plenty to do to defend their goal. Again and again the St. Jim's forwards attacked, but always the defence was sound.

All the players knew that it was close on time, and they strained every nerve for that last goal. The referee was looking at his watch when Tom Merry sent in a hot shot, and the goalkeeper just caught it and staggered forward to fling it clear. But Figgins' eagle eye was upon him.

Like an arrow from a bow Figgins sprang forward and charged the goalkeeper.

Back he staggered into his goal and fell over, the ball dropping from his hands and rolling into the net. Phceep!

The whistle rang out, while the goalkeeper lay and gasped. There was a frenzied yell from all the St. Jim's fellows on the ground:

"Goal! Goal!" "Figgins! Figgins! Hurrah!"

Right on the stroke of time, George Figgins had won the match for St. Jim's, and his fellow-players thumped him on the back and dug him in the ribs as they came off the ground. Tom Merry's wisdom in playing Figgins was justified now, to the satisfaction of everybody—excepting, perhaps, Abbotsford. And Figgins was grinning joyfully as he came off the field.

"Better than mugging up Latin—what?" Blake bawled in his ear.

Figgins became serious at once. "My hat, I'd forgotten the mugging!" he said. "Never mind. I'll swot at Horace in the coach going home!" And he did.

As the coach rolled homeward in the winter dusk, Figgins was poring over Manners' pocket Horace; but as the other fellows were roaring out choruses, it is probable that he did not put in very much real and serious study during that drive home.

CHAPTER 13.

The Hero of the House!

TOM MERRY'S study was crammed.

The passage outside was swarming with fellows. The St. Jim's juniors were rejoicing. The victory over Abbotsford was being celebrated in tremendous style.

Tom Merry & Co. had pooled funds for the occasion, and quite a raid had been made on Dame Taggles' tuckshop, and everybody had been asked to the feed.

Guests of honour had chairs, stools, or stood up in the study; the rest swarmed in the passage, where chairs and benches and forms had been dragged for their accommodation.

The excitement and enthusiasm was great, and the noise also was considerable. But at a hint from Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, the prefects turned a deaf ear to the noise. The juniors had won one of the toughest footer matches of the season, and it was only natural that they should want to celebrate it with a song and a feed.

Figgins was the hero of the hour. He had won the match for St. Jim's. But while all the juniors were prepared to do great honour to Figgins, the modest and unassuming Figgy was avoiding the public eye.

He was expected to come over with Kerr and Wynn, and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, and the rest of the New House fellows who marched over in a body to join in the celebration. But he didn't come with them.

"Where's Figgins?" was the general inquiry.

"He's going to look in later," said Kerr, a little awkwardly.

"Swotting again?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, I left him with his nose in a Latin grammar."

"Silly ass!"

"Sure he's coming over, though?" asked Tom Merry. "He must come."

"Well," said Kerr cautiously, "he said he would if he could. If he couldn't, he wants you chaps to excuse him."

"Yes; we'll excuse him—I don't think!" said Tom Merry warmly. "The chap who got the winning goal against Abbotsford isn't going to shut himself up and swot while we're celebrating!"

"No fear!"

"We'll fetch him presently," said Tom Merry. "Give him half an hour. Pile in, gentlemen!"

The gentlemen were already piling in, as a matter of fact.

Figgins did not appear, and at last Tom Merry announced his intention of going for him. Blake, Lowther, D'Arcy, and Redfern decided to go with him. There might be occasion to use force, as Redfern thoughtfully remarked. Figgins had to come.

And Tom Merry and his comrades crossed over the dusky quadrangle to the New House, and hurried up to Figgins' study.

Figgins was sitting at the study table, his books before him, poring over them, with a thoughtful and worried look.

He did not look happy. He would have been very glad to be sharing in the jollifications over at the School House, and the silence and gloom of his study formed a very unpleasant contrast to the brightness and gaiety he knew would be going on in Tom Merry's study.

But he stuck grimly to his task. He started in surprise as his study door was flung violently back against the wall and Tom Merry & Co. swarmed in.

Figgins jumped to his feet. "Come on," said Tom Merry. "The feed's going strong! The festive scene is in the ancestral halls of the Shell—"

"And goodly viands load the groaning board!" said Jack Blake.

"And the red wine flows like water," said Monty Lowther.

Figgins grinned.

"Excuse me, you fellows; I'd like to come, but after the time I've lost to-day, I think I'd better not. Leave me here. I must work."

"Come on!" said Redfern. "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow! If pleasure interferes with your work, give up work! Come on!"

"But I—"

"This way," said Blake, taking his arm. "Help him along, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry took Figgins' other arm.

"March!" he said.

And Figgins was extracted from his study and walked down the stairs, hardly knowing whether to laugh or be angry.



goalkeeper. The Abbotsford man staggered back from his hands into the net! "Goal! Goal!" yelled the St. Jim's fellows. Time Figgins had won the match!

"I say, you chaps, I ought to work, you know!" he expostulated.
 "Lots of time for that!" said Monty Lowther. "A feed comes only every now and then, but a chap can always find time for work."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "I've got to swot at Horace! There's a viva voce exam on Horace, you know."

"Horace or no Horace," said Tom Merry, "you're coming to the feed! Shoulder-high, you chaps! Up with him!"

"But I—I say—my work—"

"Blow your work!"

"The exam—"

"Blow the exam!"

Figgins gave it up in despair. He was hoisted upon the shoulders of Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, and marched across the dusky quad and right into the School House.

Up the stairs went the juniors, with Figgins shoulder-high in their midst. As soon as they were spotted in the Shell passage there was a throng round them, all cheering the hero of the Abbotsford match.

"Here he comes!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Figgins!"

"Make way there!" shouted Monty Lowther, as they swayed into the study with their honoured burden.

In the crammed study it was not really easy to make way for the procession. Figgins ducked his head just in time to avoid a crack as he came through the doorway, and the movement made him sway so heavily on the shoulders of his bearers that they stumbled.

There was a yell of warning:

"Look out!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Figgins plunged forward. His bearers and half a dozen other fellows grabbed him at once.

Crash he came down upon the festive board!

"Yaroooh! Ooch!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

There was a terrific crash of crockery-ware as Figgins rolled on the table. He sat up dazedly in the butter, with jam smeared over his face and a jelly clinging to his neck.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped.

There was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, Figgy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why didn't you hold on? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!" growled Figgins, rolling off the table and gaining his feet. "You silly ass! I'm jammy! I'm sticky! I'm buttery and greasy! Groogh!"

"Never mind! It's all in the day's work!" grinned Blake. "You're the giddy guest of honour! Sit down! Here's your chair!"

"I must go and clean—"

"No, you jolly well won't; you'd bolt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'm sticky—I'm jammy!"

"Here's a handkerchief," said Blake, jerking a beautiful cambric handkerchief from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket. "Rub the jam off with that."

"Blake, you—you feahful wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but I'm greasy—I'm buttery, and—"

"Here's Tom Merry's banky," said Blake generously. "If they're not enough, you can have Lowther's—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no escape for the hero of the hour, so Figgins cleaned himself of the butter and jam and jelly as well as he could with the handkerchiefs so liberally supplied by Blake, and sat down to the feed. And in the conviviality that followed, he forgot once more all about Horace and all his works.

CHAPTER 14.

Watchers in the Night!

"F"IGGY'S looking pretty seedy!" Tom Merry made the remark, one morning a week after the Abbotsford match, as the Fourth Formers were coming out after lessons.

Figgins had passed them, without looking towards the Terrible Three, and gone out into the quad, and as he walked away he was reading Latin.

All the fellows who saw him exchanged glances. Well-known swots were sometimes seen to read in the quad, numbling over Latin as they trotted to and fro under the old elms. But Figgins!

Figgins' friends said gloomily that he was going wholly to the bad. And undoubtedly, as Tom Merry remarked to his chums, old Figgy did look seedy.

"Seedy isn't the word!" said Monty Lowther. "He looks sick and solemn as a boiled owl! He hasn't touched a footer since the match at Abbotsford."

"Hardly even a sprint round the quad, I believe," said Manners.

Jack Blake joined them.

"Looks pretty stuffy, old Figgy, doesn't he?" he remarked.

"Just saying so," said Tom Merry. "Lucky the exam isn't very far off, or he'd be ill, I think. He's taking it jolly seriously. I never thought he had it in him. By Jove! If he should pull off the exam we'll give him a stunning ovation!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We'll wally wound him and celebraye like anythin'! And, weally, he may have a chance; Marnah has withdwawn, and I have not entahed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I weally do not see anythin' to cackle at in that remark," said Arthur Augustus. "I'm wathah a demon at things like that when I exert myself, you know. I took up Gweek once, and I learned an awful lot in one aftahnoon: sevewal letahs of the alphabet and somethin' else—I forget what now. I was weally thinkin' of goin' in for this medal, but I'm glad I didn't now. I want to give Figgy a look-in. But he will find Levison wathah hard to beat."

"I suppose Levison has the brains to beat him," Tom Merry admitted. "There's no denying that Levison is clever. But he slacks too much; he hasn't been working for the exam."

"He thinks he can do it without working hard against the other chaps who have entered," Blake remarked; "and he's awfully clever—learns Latin and Greek just as we might learn English. But he may be oversure; it may be a case of the hare and the tortoise over again."

"I hope it will," said Tom Merry. "I'd rather see Figgins win, though Levison is a School House chap."

"Thank you!" said Levison's sarcastic voice behind him. "I'll remember your good wishes, Tom Merry! It's very kind of you!"

Tom Merry turned round and looked the cad of the Fourth straight in the face.

"I mean it," he said. "You've taken enough things; and, besides, Figgy's a

better chap than you are, and I wish him luck."

Levison sneered.

"Well, I've got some time left to swot in, and perhaps I may have a chance," he said sarcastically. "I'll ask the Head to shove me into the First Form among the babes if I let a duffer like Figgins beat me in this exam."

And Levison shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

Tom Merry looked for Figgins after dinner and found him in his study; Figgins was working.

"Got one minute to spare?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"Just one," said Figgins in a tired voice. "What is it?"

"Do you want to play in the match next Saturday against Wayland Ramblers' second team?"

Figgins shook his head.

"No; I asked you to put somebody in my place after the Abbotsford match, you remember."

"Yes, I've done it," said Tom Merry. "I'm giving Owen a chance. But your place is always open to you if you choose to take it."

"Thanks! But not till after the exam."

"Are you cutting the junior House match, too?" asked Tom.

"Yes; I've arranged with Redfern to skipper the team."

"Look here, Figgy, you're overdoing it, you know," said Tom earnestly. "You're losing all your colour, and Fatty Wynn says you're going off your feed."

Figgins smiled faintly.

"Fatty thinks any chap is off his feed if he doesn't eat enough for an army," he remarked.

"I fancy Kerr and Wynn are both anxious about you, Figgy."

"I'm all right."

Figgins turned back to his books. Tom Merry laughed. It was a plain hint that Figgins wanted to be alone.

"There's another matter," said Tom. "While you've been sticking your nose into your blessed books you've been overlooking other things besides football. There's something going on in your House that you ought to keep an eye on."

Figgins looked startled.

"What's that?" he said. "I've been rather out of things lately."

"I don't know how much there is in it," said Tom. "I heard it from Levison—and one never knows whether he's telling the truth. But he says he heard Monteith, your prefect, telling Kildare about some junior in your House breaking bounds at night. It seems that Monteith was coming in late the other night and he spotted a junior getting in at the passage window at the back."

Figgins turned red.

"My hat! Did he?"

"Yes. And he didn't recognise him, and he made a round of the dorms afterwards and found everybody in bed. Now, if there's an idiot on your side playing the giddy ox like that he's running a risk of being sacked, Figgy; and, as junior captain, it's up to you to keep an eye open. You don't want a fellow expelled."

"I don't think there's any danger of that," said Figgins uncomfortably. "We haven't any giddy blades in the New House like—"

He paused.

Tom Merry laughed good-humouredly.

"Like we have in the School House—Levison and Cutts, for example. Well, I thought I'd mention it to you, Figgy. If you've got a chap here asking for

(Continued on page 18.)

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
addressing your letters:
The Editor, The GEM,
Fleetway House, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, Chums! How would you like to possess every copy of the GEM since it appeared in March, 1907? What a grand selection of St. Jim's stories! I imagine most readers would give a lot to have such a complete collection. And as far as I know, there is only one reader who can lay claim to being the proud possessor of not only every GEM which has ever been published, but also all the St. Jim's stories which appeared in "Pluck" in 1906. I received a letter from this reader the other day. He writes:

"I was interested to read in a recent chat of yours that you would like to hear from any reader who had read the very first number of the GEM. Well, here I am. I can not only claim that, but I also read the very first St. Jim's story which I think ever was, and that was 'Jack Blake of St. Jim's,' which came out in the issue of the 'Pluck' dated November 10th, 1906. What is more, I possess at this moment every issue of the St. Jim's stories which ever was, from the first one in 'Pluck' to the last issue of the GEM which came to me this morning. I should be glad to know if any other of your readers can equal this record."

Thanks for your interesting letter, Reader Foster, of London, W.2. I should also be glad to hear from any

other reader who can equal your record. But personally, I think you must be the only reader who has such a grand collection of GEMs.

"GUSSY GOES TO WORK!"

Martin Clifford has been ringing the changes very effectively with the New Year yarns so far, and that's as it should be. The story in this number is on the serious side, but next Wednesday there is a humorous yarn, starring, as you can tell from the title, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Our author is never so funny as when he is writing about the inimitable Gussy, and the theme of his next story gives him plenty of scope to develop many highly amusing situations.

The fun starts when Gussy, deprived by his father, Lord Eastwood, of his usual supply of fivers, decides to show his independence by going to work in his spare time to earn some money. It is just like Gussy to think of such a cranky idea, and the opposition of his chums only makes him more determined to carry it out. So it is that he goes out to look for a job, and, believe me, his adventures are the funniest on record. You'll yell with laughter when you read about the swell of St. Jim's as a paper boy, and later as a barber's

assistant! See that you don't miss the fun.

"THE GREYFRIARS GYMNASTS!"

Harry Wharton & Co., having accepted the challenge of the French schoolboys to a gymnastic contest, have not had the best of luck in their efforts to get in some belated practice at indoor athletics. But most of the Remove, however, are quite confident that they will lick the French boys in the gymnastic display just as completely as they did at cricket. But Harry Wharton himself is not quite so sure. It remains to be seen who is right, and whether the Remove's gymnastic display is equal to the confidence in their ability to lick their Gallic opponents.

Before I close down I should like to draw the attention of readers to the great Greyfriars yarn which appears in our companion paper the "Magnet." "Mutiny on the Firefly!" is a thrill-packed yarn of the sea adventures of Harry Wharton & Co.—telling how they fare when mutiny breaks out in the ship in which they are taking a holiday cruise. This wonderful yarn is on sale now, price 2d. Don't miss it.

All the best, chums!

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest with each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Jack Gallagher, 27, Caledonian Road, Camara, North Otago, New Zealand.

Geoffrey Drayton, Frere Pilgrim, Christ Church, Barbados, British West Indies; age 10-16; stamps, photos, pressed leaves; South America, Asia, Europe.

George Dalton, 27, Foxon Lane Gardens, Epper Caterham, Surrey; age 14-16.

Vernon Harrison, 16, Aberdeen Street, Newtown, Geelong, Victoria, Australia; age 14-16; stamps.

Miss Massy Witherspoon, c/o P.O. Richmond, Queensland, Australia; girl correspondents; age 18-19; knitting, sewing, dancing.

Alan H. Robson, 7, The Gardens, Monk-seaton, Northumberland; age 13-16; overseas; cricket, cycling.

L. H. Grimble, Railway Station Residence, Herell Street, Cootamundra, N.S.W., Australia; age 13-15; stamps, model planes.

K. D. Millership, 80, Third Avenue, Manor Park, London, E.12; age 13-16; stamps, cycling, sport.

Miss Elizabeth Ager, 122, Duke Street, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada; girl correspondents; age 14-17; music, books, sports, films; India and Africa especially.

Reginald Baker, 15, Musley Hill, Ware, Herts. Interested in fish and aquaria.

Miss Peggy Eastlake, Belle Vue House, Tenby, South Wales; girl correspondents; age 13-15.

Desmond Sparling, 87, Brydges Street, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada; age 14-18; stamps, snaps, comic verses.

Miss Dorothy Potter, 35, Linden Drive, Alveston, Derby; age 15-16; Girl Scouts.

Miss Muriel Baker, 30a, Chalsey Road, Brockley, London, S.E.4; girl correspondents; age 14-16; photography, games, reading.

Miss Dulcie Threadgold and Miss Elsie Vaughan, Dunrobin Road, Warradale, South Australia; girl correspondents; age 14-16; Hollywood, South Africa.

Alfred Baker, 255, Burma Road, Penang, Straits Settlements; age 17-19; sports, stamps, photography.

K. Stewart, 379, Danks Street, Middle Park, S.C.C., Victoria, Australia; age 14-16; India, South Africa; newspaper cuttings, photos.

Bill Morrow, 82, Gertrude Street, Geelong West, Victoria, Australia; age 13-16; British Empire; coins, stamps.

Tom Morrow, 82, Gertrude Street, Geelong West, Victoria, Australia; age 12-15; stamps, sports.

Wong Chin Wah, 19, Market Street, Ipoh, Perak, Malaya; stamps, books.

Miss Eileen Potter, 31, Linden Drive, Alveston, nr. Derby; girl correspondents; age 13-15.

Michael Cohen, 2, Henley Flats, Thornhill Road, Green Point, Cape Town, South Africa; age 15-17; stamps, snaps, newspapers; New York particularly.

Vincent Taylor, 16, Upper Park Drive, Forest Town, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa; age 12-14; stamps, sports, cricket.

L. G. Berman, 498, Edmund Street, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa; stamps, photography.

Miss Helen Dawson, 15, Norwood, East Newport, Pife; girl correspondents; age 12-14; cycling, sports, films; overseas.

H. Beeststone, Glenhurst, 10, Bede Road, Radford, Coventry; age 16-20; sports, stamps, snaps.

Kenneth Buckley, Froyle Cottage, nr. Bentley, Hants; age 14-15; stamps.

David Stewart, 5, Inchinnan Road, Paisley, Scotland; age 15-18; aviation, sport; Borneo, South Sea Islands.

Miss Ena Moore, 130, Church Road, Islington, London, N.1; girl correspondents; age 15 up; films, dancing, music.

John W. Barter, Hawthorne, Moorside Road, West Cross, Mumbles, Swansea, Glam., South Wales; age 14-16; chemistry, swimming, locomotives.

Victor T. Smith, 144, Emily Street, Birmingham, 12; age 13-15; companion papers.

Hugh Bedford, Firecot, Woodlane, Aspley Guise, Bedfordshire; age 13-15; football, cricket, running.

Charles Senior, Pavillon 6, Mearns Kirk Hospital, Newton Mearns, Renfrewshire, Scotland; age 10-18; South West Africa, Russia, Belgium.

G. Fenster, 42, Tudhope Avenue, Berea, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa; age 12-15; China preferably; stamps.

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PEN PALS COUPON

16-1-27

trouble, he may find it sooner or later; and however big a rotter he may be, it comes rough on a chap to be sacked."

"How do you know he's a rotter?" said Figgins irritably.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"Well, a chap must be a rotter who breaks bounds at night, I suppose," he said. "He couldn't go out of bounds for any good, I suppose."

"How do you know he goes out of bounds?"

"I don't know, of course," said Tom, still more surprised. "But I don't suppose a fellow gets out of his House nearly at midnight simply to walk round the quad."

"I—I suppose not," muttered Figgins.

Tom Merry was looking at him very curiously; and Figgins, for some reason, turned very red. A suspicion, natural in the circumstances, came into Tom Merry's mind, but he dismissed it instantly. Old Figgys was not the kind of fellow to be guilty of "pub haunting," or anything of that kind. But Tom Merry's suspicion, momentary as it was, showed in his eyes; and Figgins saw it, and his face, already quite red, grew perfectly scarlet.

"Well, don't be offended, Figgys," said Tom. "I mentioned it because you're junior House captain, and you ought to know. Of course, it's no business of mine, as a School House chap."

"I—I'm much obliged to you, of course," said Figgins haltingly. "But—but I don't think there's anything wrong."

"Right-ho! I'm off! Give my love to Horace!" said Tom Merry.

And, with a cheery nod and a smile, he walked out of the study.

Figgins was deep in Latin again before he had passed the doorway.

But Tom Merry's face was very serious as he crossed the quadrangle. He was so serious and thoughtful that he almost walked into the chums of Study No. 6 as he came into the School House.

"Hallo! Gone to sleep?" asked Blake genially, as he grabbed hold of Tom Merry's arm and brought him to a halt. "Wherefore this worried brow, my son?"

"I was thinking," said Tom.

"More miracles!" sighed Blake.

"When Figgys starts swotting, and you start thinking, I really think the age of miracles has come again! We only want to hear Gussy start talking sense, and then I shall really believe that the end of the world is coming!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I've just seen Figgys, and I told him that yarn of Levison's about Monteith having seen a junior scuttling in at the window at midnight last night; and if I didn't know Figgins so well—"

Tom Merry paused.

"Well?" asked Blake curiously.

"He coloured up so much, I should think he was the chap; only it's impossible," said Tom. "He isn't that kind of ass. But he knows who it is; I'm sure of that. Some pal of his playing the giddy ox, and worrying him at a time when he oughtn't to be bothered. It's too bad if that's the case."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "This is a time for wallyin' round old Figgins, and not for bothahin' him. The chap ought to be ashamed of himself, whoever he is!"

"He ought to be stopped," said Blake, frowning. "Figgys got a hard, uphill fight before him; and if we're going to let him off footer, and his chums are letting him off House matches, too, it's silly rot for someone to bother him with

tricks like that. Perhaps that's what's making him look so badly off colour as well as the work. The chap ought to be mobbed, whoever he is!"

"I was thinking—" began Tom Merry.

Blake nodded quickly.

"I savvy. But it would be a rather serious bizney for us to get out of our House at that time of night to collar him—if we were spotted out."

"Bai Jove! It would mean twouble!"

"We could risk that, for Figgys's sake," said Tom. "I think there's no doubt that it's weighing on his mind. I remember now that Fatty Wynn mentioned that he woke up one night and found Figgys's bed empty. Figgys came in a few minutes later, and didn't tell Fatty what he'd got up for. But, since we know this, I think it's pretty clear. Figgins knew there was a chap breaking bounds, and had been to look for him or stop him."

"I can't believe he's the chap himself," said Blake. "It's not in his line at all. Besides, if he was going to play the roving blade like Cutts of the Fifth, he wouldn't do it at a time when he's working up for a hard exam."

"Of course he wouldn't! It's not Figgins. But he knows who it is, and he's worrying about it, and losing his sleep looking after the silly chump, whoever he is. And for a fellow who works as Figgys's doing now to lose his sleep is a serious thing. No wonder the poor chap is looking like putty!"

"Bai Jove! It's wotten!"

"It's got to be stopped!" said Blake resolutely. "I'll tell you what—we'll take it in turns to watch for the idiot, and collar him the first time he goes out of bounds, and make him believe he's fallen into the paws of a prefect. We'll scare him out of his wits by threatening to take him to the Head, and then let him get away. If that doesn't cure him of breaking bounds at night, nothing will. But I wonder who it is?"

"We shall know if we catch him," said Tom. "It's a go! Suppose you and I start to-night. And if we draw a blank, Lowther and Manners can watch to-morrow night, and Kangy and Herries the night after, till we catch the rotter!"

"Good egg!"

"Pewwaps I had better keep watch, deah boys. It was weally my ideah at the start to wally wound Figgins, you know."

"You can come, if you like," said Tom Merry. "I expect you'll be fast asleep!"

"Wats! I shall make a special point to keep awake!"

"I'll make it a special point to haul you out of bed!" chuckled Blake. "That's all right! We'll be in the box-room to-night—say, at ten."

"I'll join you there," said Tom.

And so it was arranged. The chums of the School House felt that it was the only thing to be done. They knew Figgins's sense of duty, and they knew his regard for anybody who had any claim on his friendship. It was just like Figgins to lose his night's rest, at a time when he needed it badly, in looking after some foolish fellow who was hunting for trouble. Certainly the Co. could not "rally round" old Figgins more effectively than by relieving his mind of such a worry.

And when ten o'clock rang out from the old tower that night, Tom Merry was waiting in the box-room for the two Fourth Formers. They joined him there in the darkness, and ten minutes later the three of them were scudding towards the New House in the gloom,

to keep watch upon the passage window by which the unknown delinquent had left the New House on one occasion, at least—probably on many.

If anyone came out of that window or tried to enter by it during the next two hours, they were ready to collar him, and he would not escape from their clutches without answering most severely for his sins.

CHAPTER 15.

Something Like a Surprise!

THE night was dark and gloomy. Fitfully, through ridges of dark clouds, the moon peeped down upon the old quadrangle of St. Jim's, one minute shedding a silvery glimmer, and then being again lost to sight.

Tom Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy waited patiently.

They were pretty certain that the culprit, if he was coming out that night at all, had not yet come out. The bedtime of the juniors was at half-past nine, and the young rascal would surely allow half an hour to clapse for the coast to be clear before he ventured to leave the dormitory. It was much more likely that he would be later than that he would be earlier than ten o'clock. Indeed, it was quite possible that if he was bound for forbidden haunts outside the walls of St. Jim's, he would not come out until eleven o'clock.

The three juniors swung their arms and tramped to and fro to keep warm. In the old quadrangle it was cold enough, and there was a keen wind blowing. They sheltered themselves as well as they could behind an angle of the outbuildings, in sight of the window they were there to watch. When the moon shone the window glimmered with light, and then was plunged into blackness again.

Half-past ten had chimed out when Tom Merry uttered a sudden exclamation. The window had moved in the glimmer of moonlight, and the lower sash was raised. Then the clouds hid the moon again, and all was invisible.

"Did you see anythin', deah boy?" whispered Arthur Augustus, who had been polishing his eyeglass at that moment.

"Yes; the window opened."

"Then the wottah's comin'!"

"Yes—quiet! If he hears us he'll get back, and we shall have all our trouble for nothing. We've got to collar him. Don't move or make a sound until he's on the ground."

"Wight-ho!"

"Shush!" murmured Blake.

There was a sound of rustling ivy, faint in the stillness of the quadrangle. The three juniors held their breath and listened intently.

The moon glimmered again, and for a moment they caught a glimpse of a dark form clinging to the ivy. Then all was darkness again.

The glimpse had been too brief for recognition to be possible, and the face of the junior, too, was turned to the ivy he clung to. But that it was a junior they had seen—a fellow in the Fourth or the Shell without a doubt.

They heard the light pit-a-pat of feet as he dropped to the ground.

They waited for a moment for the moon to emerge again, confident that when it gleamed they would see the unknown making round the House to get into the open quadrangle, to head for the school wall.

But when the gleam came Tom Merry rubbed his eyes in wonder. They were between the unknown junior and the

open quad—and he could not have passed without their knowing it. But the place was deserted; he was not in sight. The moon was clear for a full minute, but the junior who had descended the ivy had vanished.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "Where is he?"

"He's cut off round the back of the House!" said Tom Merry.

"Then he can't be making for the road," muttered Blake. "He didn't know we were here waiting for him, and he wouldn't go right round the House for nothing. He can't be going out of the gates."

"I don't understand it; but he must have gone round the back of the House. I thought he would pass this way, of course. Blessed if I know what's on! Anyway, after him—and be careful, or he'll dodge us in the dark!"

"It's vewy odd!" said D'Arcy.

Greatly puzzled, the three juniors moved on and passed round to the back of the New House. All was darkness there, and they listened and strained their ears in vain. There was nothing for it but to wait for the moon to gleam out again, and it was a couple of minutes before the clouds rolled on and left the moon clear. Then the light was strong enough, and they looked round them. For a time they saw nothing; but just as the moon was disappearing again Tom Merry spotted a dark figure moving cautiously in the distance, in the direction of the ruined tower.

"There he is!"

Darkness again.

"Where?" muttered Blake. "I saw nothing. Did you see who it was?"

"No; but I spotted him! He's making for the old tower. Come on!" Still more puzzled, the juniors made their way towards the old, ruined tower. They did not need the moon to guide them now—they knew every inch of the way, by day or night. They reached the ruins, treading very cautiously, so as not to alarm their quarry.

It began to look as if the night walker was not going to break school bounds, after all; but the juniors meant to know what he was going to do, and who he was, anyway. It was very mysterious and utterly inexplicable. What a fellow could want in the old ruins at that hour of the night was utterly beyond their powers of guessing.

Tom Merry led the way into the ruined tower. A gleam of light struck upon his eyes, and he halted. There was a faint odour of burning oil.

"He's got a lantern!" whispered Blake.

"Yes; we shall spot him now."

They pressed on. The light glimmered down the old stone steps; they mounted, and reached the stone landing of the first floor. The old oaken door had been shut—they had heard it close softly. A gleam of light came under it.

"Well, we've got him now!" said Blake. "There's no way out of that room, excepting by the loophole—and only a cat could get through that."

"Yaas, wathah! Open the door!" "I—I don't know," said Tom Merry hesitatingly, with his hand on the door. "The chap isn't going to break bounds, after all. I don't know that we've got the right to interfere with him, as it turns out."

"Well, he's a New House bounder, anyway, and we'll bump him for giving us all the trouble," said Blake.

"Yaas. Besides, we've got to know what's goin' on, so that we can tell old Figgins and welieve his mind," said Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Right-ho, we'll go in!"

Tom Merry threw open the door, and the three juniors rushed in.

There was a startled exclamation within.

A boy who was sitting on an old oaken bench jumped up, and swung round towards the three invaders. The lantern burning on the bench gleamed upon his face, and the astounded juniors recognised him, and almost shouted:

"Figgins!"

CHAPTER 16.

Mr. Ratcliff Makes a Capture!

"BAI JOVE!"

"Figgy!"

Figgins it was!

He seemed as astounded as the three School House juniors. He gazed at them like a fellow in a dream.



Figgins swayed so heavily on the shoulders of his bearers that they stumbled. "Look out!" The hero of the hour plunged forward, and came down with a crash on the festive board. "Yaroo!" he roared, as his face went into the jam. "Oooch!"

"You!" he exclaimed. "Tom Merry—Blake—Gussy! What on earth are you doing here at this time of night?"

"What are you doing here—that's the question?" retorted Tom Merry.

"I? Oh, I—"

"So you're the chap Monteith spotted last night getting into a window of the New House?" said Blake.

Figgins flushed.

"Well, I suppose it's no use denying it now," he said. "I'm the chap!"

"But what are you up to?" Tom Merry demanded, in wonder. "What do you mean by getting out of your House at this time of night and coming here? What's the little game?"

Figgins waved his hand towards the oak bench.

The juniors looked. Then they understood.

There were books and impot paper, and pen and ink there. Figgins had a pen in his hand. A Latin dictionary—a delectus—Horace and Virgil!

"Swotting?" yelled Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

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

Figgins' flush deepened.

"There was no other way," he said apologetically. "This exam is a regular twister, and I couldn't—I simply couldn't find time enough for studying in the daytime. There's such a lot of things to interrupt a fellow, and the time's so short to the exam."

"So you've been coming here of a night to study when you ought to be asleep?" Tom Merry asked.

Figgins nodded.

"You ass! Do you think that's the way to get ready for an exam?" said

Tom hotly. "No wonder you've been looking seedy and going off your food. You'll be knocked up before the exam comes round—you'll be in the school hospital instead of in the examination-room, when the time comes."

"I shall be all right."

"Wubbish! It's burnin' the candle at both ends, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a sage shake of the head. "It won't do—it weally won't!"

"I've been putting in a couple of hours every night," said Figgins. "Sometimes only one hour, when I was too fagged to keep it up. It's nice and quiet here for study—no beastly interruptions—no silly asses coming in to jaw, until now—excuse me—"

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Tom Merry laughed. "We'll excuse you," he said; "but you must chuck it, Figgy. It's madness. You'll get knocked up. Do the other fellows know?"

"Not a bit. I've kept it dark. Blessed if I know how you spotted me," said Figgins.

"We were watching for a rotten breaking bounds. We were going to nab him and stop him. We thought you were worrying about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Fatty Wynn found you out one night, and—"

"Yes, it nearly came out that time," said Figgins, with a grin. "Now, you kids go back to bed, and leave me alone. I can't waste time."

"Then you're going to keep this up?" asked Blake?

"I must."

"It's rotten, Figgy. You'll get knocked up."

"I can stand it—till the exam," said Figgins wearily. "I'm going to pull off that exam, or bust something. And the harder I work the better chance I shall have. I'm getting on splendidly. I know I've got a chance."

"You won't have a chance if you get crooked, and have to miss the examination altogether," said Tom Merry.

"That's all right. I'm pretty tough. When it's all over, I'm going in for outdoor games again, and it will soon pull me round."

"I wish you would go back to bed," said Tom Merry uneasily. "This is overdoing it. Really playing the giddy ox, Figgy. Suppose you're spotted out of the House?"

"Well, I should have to chuck it then, I suppose."

"But you'd get into a row. Ratty would take it out of you."

"I can stand a licking."

"Yes; but he mightn't believe that you'd been out of the House to swot. He might think you've been up to a game like Levison."

"I should explain it all if I were spotted, of course. Now, buzz off, like good fellows, and let me wire in," said Figgins.

The School House fellows exchanged glances. They did not approve of Figgins' methods at all; but he was his own master. If he was determined to burn the midnight oil, it was his own business.

"Well, I think you're an ass!" said Tom Merry at last.

"Yaas, wathah; sevoral sorts of an ass!"

"Though you larrup a duffer with a cricket stump, yet will not his folly depart from him," said Blake resignedly. "All serene, Figgy. We won't waste your time. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Figgins.

He turned back to his books. He was deep in Horace before Tom Merry had closed the door. The three juniors made their way back to their own House, considerably worried about Figgins, but glad that matters were no worse. The night-walker had turned out to be old Figgins; but though Figgins might play the "giddy ox," he would never be found out doing anything worse than that.

In the lonely room in the old tower Figgins worked away grimly till midnight tolled out from the clock tower close by. Figgins paused a few moments then; but he bent resolutely to his task again, and worked on till the half-hour chimed, then he rose and sighed.

He put his books into his pockets, concealed the ink and the lantern in a recess of the old wall, and left the lonely

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OPPORTUNE MOMENT!



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room, making his way down the old stone stairs in the dark.

He was tired out, and his head was throbbing.

The unaccustomed work of swotting was telling very much upon the sturdy junior, and he felt a weary desire for the whole thing to be over. Well, it would be over soon, and he would know whether he could do things or not. Perhaps the medal would fall to him, and at that thought, and the thought of showing Cousin Ethel that her faith in him was not misplaced, Figgins felt a warm glow, and his weariness dropped from him like a cloak.

He climbed the ivy behind the New House, and clambered in at the window, carefully shutting it after him without a sound. The House was very dark and silent. At that hour masters and boys were long in bed.

Figgins tiptoed his way back to the Fourth Form dormitory and opened the door. In the passages all was dark and silent.

He entered the dormitory and closed the door behind him.

The next moment he uttered a sharp, excited exclamation as there was a blinding flash of light.

The electric light had been suddenly turned on in the dormitory.

Figgins staggered back, dazed, and, like a fellow in a dream, he saw the figure of Mr. Ratcliff, his Housemaster, standing before him, and his wandering gaze detected the Fourth Formers sitting up in bed with scared faces.

"So you have returned, Figgins?"

Figgins could only stare.

Dimly he realised that his Housemaster must have made a round of the dormitories at a late hour and missed him from his bed, doubtless owing to the report of Monteith of what he had seen the previous night.

The Housemaster had discovered that Figgins was missing from the Fourth Form dormitory, and, with cat-like patience, he had waited there in the dark for the errant youth to come back.

When he heard Figgins enter the room, he had turned on the light, and Figgins was revealed—fairly caught!

Figgins gazed dazedly at the Housemaster. He saw the cold, cruel smile upon Mr. Ratcliff's thin lips, and realised how pleased the hard-hearted

master was at this discovery. All Ratty's old dislike of the free and independent Figgins was in his hard, sour face at that moment, and gleaming in his greenish eyes. Of the New House fellows, Figgins was the one whom Mr. Ratcliff would have chosen to have completely at his mercy, and his time had come now.

All the fellows were awake. They had been awake ever since Mr. Ratcliff came into the dormitory. Kerr and Wynn were looking very dismayed; for, unless Figgins had some very good explanation to give, he would be "for it." There was only one punishment for breaking bounds at night, and staying out till nearly one o'clock in the morning, and that was expulsion. Farewell to the examination for which he had worked so hard, farewell to the old school and the playing fields—that was Figgins' punishment!

Kerr and Wynn would have faced death for their chum, but they could not help him now. He was like a mouse in the cat's paw, and Mr. Ratcliff's hard, cold, sour face showed that he would give no more mercy than the cat would give to the captured mouse.

"Where have you been, Figgins?"

Mr. Ratcliff's voice was hard and metallic. Figgins gasped.

"I've been out, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff smiled a cold, sarcastic smile.

"I am aware of that, Figgins, since I have been waiting for an hour and a half for you to come in. Where have you been? But I need not ask! What disgraceful place have you visited at this hour of the night?"

Figgins' eyes flashed. He began to recover himself a little.

"None, sir," he said firmly. "I haven't been outside the school walls."

Mr. Ratcliff sneered.

"Do you expect me to believe that, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

"You expect me to believe that you have spent two hours in the middle of the night outside your House, but within the school walls? And what were you doing, pray?"

"I was studying, sir."

"You were—what?"

"Studying, sir," said Figgins, with an effort. He realised that his midnight swotting was all over now, at all events.

"I'm working for the exam—the Bishop's Medal, as you know, sir. I got up to study, and I've been in the tower, working, sir, since I left the dorm."

"I do not believe one word of it!" said Mr. Ratcliff in a sneering tone.

"If you cannot think of a better explanation than that, Figgins, you had better hold your tongue!"

"But, sir, I—"

"You have been to some public-house, I presume!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You are a disgrace to your House! I demand to know, Figgins, what disgraceful resort you have been to?"

Figgins turned crimson.

"I can only tell you the truth, sir. I've been studying in the room in the old tower, and I've been doing the same every night this week," he said steadily. "I couldn't work in the House. I should have been spotted burning the light."

"You refuse to tell me, then?"

"I've told you."

"Enough! Go to bed, and in the morning I shall take you to Dr. Holmes, and then, Figgins, you will receive your sentence! You need not have the slightest doubt that you will be expelled from the school you have disgraced!"

"I—I—"

"Silence! Go to bed!"

Figgins, with burning eyes, went to bed. Mr. Ratcliff turned out the light and quitted the dormitory.

"Oh, Figgy," gasped Kerr, "I—I knew it wasn't anything rotten, though I was staggered when Ratty came in and you weren't here. But, Figgy, you ass, Ratty won't believe you! The Head mayn't believe you!"

Figgins groaned.

"It can't be helped now. Don't worry about me."

But his chums could not help worrying, and there was little more sleep for Figgins & Co. that night.

CHAPTER 17.

Before the Head!

TOM MERRY came down in the morning, a little heavy-eyed and sleepy from loss of rest on the previous night. But all his sleepiness vanished as Kerr came running into the School House, white-faced and panting.

Tom ran towards him.

"Kerr, what's the matter? What's happened, old chap?"

Kerr caught his arm.

"You saw Figgy last night?" he muttered. "You and Blake and Gussy—Figgy told me—in the old tower swotting!"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, in wonder. "But what—?"

Kerr drew a deep breath.

"You'll speak up for him—you and the others?"

"I don't understand—"

"He's caught!" groaned Kerr. "Ratty made a round of the House last night, missed Figgy, and waited for him to come in. He explained where he'd been, and Ratty wouldn't believe a word of it. You know he's down on Figgy always, and he's specially down on him now because Figgy went in for the Bishop's Medal against his wish. Oh, he's jolly glad he caught him out—the beast! He's taking Figgy to the Head now. He's going to have him sacked for breaking bounds at night! He thinks Figgy has been pub-haunting. Figgy can't prove where he was. The Head will believe Ratty, and—and—"

"Great Scott! What a ripping stroke

of luck that we found Figgy out!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You'll speak up for him?"

"Well, rather!"

"Oh, good!"

"Hasn't Figgins mentioned—"

"He hasn't said a word about you. You'll get into a row, you know, for being out of your House at that time of night. Figgy's not going to say anything about it. But I knew if I told you—"

"Oh, the ass!" said Tom Merry. "As if we should mind his giving us away at such a time as this! Just like Figgy, though! But you bet we'll speak up, if we get the flogging of our lives for breaking bounds! I'll find Blake and Gussy at once!"

Tom Merry rushed off in search of Blake and D'Arcy. They were not down yet, but he met them on the stairs. In a dozen panted words he told them what had happened and what was wanted. Blake chortled.

"Oh, what ripping luck we were out last night! Three giddy witnesses for Figgy!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great satisfaction. "They can lick me if they like; I don't care a wap! This is a time for us to wally wound Figgins, and no ewwah!"

And, whatever might be the results to themselves, the three juniors were determined at once on that point. They were going to speak up for Figgins, and bear witness in his favour.

A little later, Mr. Ratcliff was observed crossing the quadrangle, with Figgins walking by his side. Figgins was looking very downcast. Mr. Ratcliff had sent a message over to the Head that he wished to see him early upon a very important matter, and Dr. Holmes was in his study waiting for him. Mr. Ratcliff and Figgins walked through a crowd of curious fellows to the Head's study, and the door closed upon them.

Dr. Holmes looked very inquiringly at the Housemaster. His kind old face grew very grave as he listened to what the New House master had to say. Then he turned to Figgins.

"You do not deny this, Figgins?"

Figgins faced the Head's calm, searching glance bravely.

"I don't deny that I was out of the

House last night, sir," he said. "But Mr. Ratcliff has not told you my explanation."

"A most palpable falsehood!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"However, I will hear it," said the Head.

"I'm working for the Bishop's Medal Examination, sir. Every night this week I've been swotting—I mean, studying—in the room in the old tower, sir. That's where I was last night, nugging up Horace."

Dr. Holmes looked at him very hard.

"I hope this is true, Figgins. But what is your opinion, Mr. Ratcliff, as this boy's Housemaster?"

"My opinion, sir, is that the explanation is false."

"You have no proof, Figgins, of any kind. Did your companions know where you had been?"

"No, sir," faltered Figgins.

"You did not tell your own friends?"

"I—I didn't want to get them mixed up in a breach of rules, sir, in case it should come out at any time."

"You must be aware, Figgins, that this is—well, a most extraordinary explanation," said the Head.

"It's true, sir," said Figgins miserably. "Mr. Ratcliff doesn't believe me, and I suppose you won't. But it's true."

Knock!

The door opened, and Tom Merry stepped into the study, followed by Jack Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Dr. Holmes looked at them with a frown.

"How dare you—" he began.

"Excuse us, sir!" said Tom hurriedly.

"We know what Figgins is here for, and we can bear witness, sir."

"Do you mean that you know something about this matter, Merry?"

"We know all about it, sir."

"It is impossible that these School House boys can know anything about it!" said Mr. Ratcliff angrily.

The Head made a gesture.

"I will hear them. Go on, Merry."

"We know that Figgins was swotting in the old tower last night, sir."

"Indeed! How do you know?"

"Because we saw him, sir."

"Then you must have been out of your dormitory and your House in the middle of the night."

(Continued on page 28.)

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THE GREYFRIARS GYMNASTS!

Wharton Has His Doubts!

"WHEREOFRE that thoughtful frown?"

It was Bob Cherry of the Remove at Greyfriars who asked that question as he met Harry Wharton under the elms in the Close.

Wharton had his hands in his pockets, and his brow was wrinkled in an expression of thoughtfulness that at once attracted the attention of the careless, genial Bob.

Bob Cherry was not much given to thought himself, and he roused Harry Wharton out of his reverie by giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder and propounding his question.

"Eh?"

"Wherefore that thoughtful frown?" repeated Bob Cherry. "In other words, what have you got on your little mind?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing much. Only I've been thinking. You know that those French chaps who were down here last week have challenged us to meet them at gymnastics—"

"Yes; and I know that we shall lick them as we did at cricket."

"I'm not so sure about that."

Bob Cherry stared at his friend.

"My dear chap, you know the way they played cricket was too funny for words. You know we wiped the field up with them without half trying."

"Yes, I know that."

"Then it stands to reason that we shall do the same with them in another line."

"I wish I felt certain about it. They're stronger on gymnastics than they are on sports out of doors, you know. The worst of it is, that since the accident to the roof of the gymnasium here the place has been closed for repairs, and we can't get in much practice before the meeting comes off."

"Oh, we're all right!" said Bob Cherry confidently. "We shall beat them hollow."

"I tell you I don't feel sure about it. We shall have to get in some practice first somehow. We don't want to meet them and get licked."

"By Jove, no!"

"The meeting comes off on Saturday, and—"

"But won't it have to be put off till the gym is in order again?"

Harry shook his head.

"It can't be done. The French team have to go home next week, and so it's now or never. If we wanted to put it off they'd think we were fudging it."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"Lerouge has suggested having the hall in the village for the show and letting the people in to see it," went on Harry Wharton. "That looks as if he were confident, doesn't it?"

"Well, they were confident about the cricket, and you know what kind of a game they put up."

"This is different. We shall have to look out, or they will show us up. As we can't practise in the gym, the only thing is to rig up something in the study or in the Remove Form Room and practise there."

"Good! No harm in that, anyway; and, after all, we can't be too careful

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By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

about getting fit for a meeting like this."

The chums of the Remove walked into the House together. Wharton was still looking thoughtful, but Bob Cherry was whistling cheerfully. Even a serious trouble would not have damped Bob Cherry's volatile spirits for long. But Harry Wharton was captain of the Remove, and he felt the weight of the responsibility upon him.

A team of French schoolboys on holiday in England had visited Greyfriars, and had met the Remove eleven on the cricket field, and had been most ingloriously defeated.

Before they departed, however, Henri Lerouge had challenged the Greyfriars fellows to meet them at a gymnastic display, and Harry Wharton had readily accepted the challenge.

Afternoon school was over at Greyfriars. Nugent was coming out with

Challenged to a gymnastic contest by a team of French school-boys, Harry Wharton & Co. go in to training—with results that, if not altogether satisfactory, give them plenty of fun and amusement!

his fishing-rod under his arm as Harry Wharton entered. He stopped.

"Coming out up the river, Harry?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Got business in hand," he replied.

"What's the trouble? Anything on?"

"Yes; we are meeting the French fellows again on Saturday afternoon."

"Well, what does that matter? No need to worry about that until Saturday afternoon, and then there won't be anything to worry about," said Nugent cheerfully.

"Suppose they lick us?"

"Oh, rot!"

"The rotfulness of the supposition is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Janset Ram Singh, who had joined the other Removites as Harry spoke. "After the extreme wifefulness of the cricketful licking the Frenchful youngsters won't have a show against us. It will be the over-walkfulness for us."

"That's all very well, Inky," Harry Wharton remarked. "But I'm captain of the Remove, and I'm not going to risk getting licked. I think you had better put your fishing off and come in and have some practice."

"Anything to oblige an esteemed chum," said Hurree Singh.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We can rig up some parallel bars in the Remove-room," Harry Wharton remarked thoughtfully. "We can get some ropes up to the skylight, too."

"I say, you fellows—"

"We haven't done much in the gym lately, that's true," said Bob Cherry. "Wharton's idea is a good one."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Are you speaking, Bunter?"

"Yes, I am speaking," said Billy Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles indignantly. "I have been speaking for some time."

"Then it's time you left off," said Bob Cherry. "Don't say any more, there's a good chap! Suppose we see about rigging up the parallel bars at once, and—"

"I say, Cherry—"

"Dry up, Bunter! We can get a scaffold pole from the new building by the river, Harry, and that will—"

"I say, Wharton—"

"What is it, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, turning good-naturedly to the Owl of the Remove.

"I've been thinking that as we're going to meet the French fellows at gymnastics on Saturday you'd better include me in the Greyfriars team," said Billy Bunter. "The French chaps are strong at gymnastics, and we shall have to put up our very best men to get anywhere near them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish you wouldn't laugh when I'm talking, Cherry. I'm willing to undertake the parallel bar part of the business—"

"Can't be did, Bunter," said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "There isn't a parallel bar in existence that would bear your weight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all very well, Cherry. A joke's a joke, but as we shall have to put forth our best strength, as it were, against the Froggies I don't see how Wharton can afford to leave one of the best men out of his team—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know that I've been in a lot for physical culture lately," went on Billy Bunter. "You'll be sorry, Wharton, if you don't accept my offer!"

"Well, we'll see, Bunter," said Wharton, with a smile. "Keep up practice till Saturday, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"Good! I think that a fellow of your judgment will be hardly likely to leave me out," said Bunter. "Are you coming in to tea now?"

"No; we're going to get up some practice. Besides, we shall have to have tea in Hall this evening," said Harry. "Grab's run out in the study."

"Well, there's plenty more in the tuckshop," said Bunter.

"Unfortunately, Mrs. Mimble has a bad habit of wanting to be paid for it," said Harry. "It grows on her, too."

"Oh, I suppose some of you have some tin. I don't see how I can be expected to cook for tea if there isn't anything to cook."

"Yes, it would be asking rather a lot. We shall have to have tea in Hall."

"Are you all really broke?" asked Bunter.

"Yes, or next door to it."

"Couldn't you wire to your uncle for some money, Wharton?"

"No, I couldn't."

THERE'S NOT A DULL MOMENT IN THIS ROLLICKING YARN OF THE EARLY SCHOOLDAYS OF HARRY WHARTON & CO.

"I shouldn't mind walking down to the village with the wire," said Bunter generously. "I never mind taking a little trouble for a friend."

"You're too good, Bunter. But don't trouble."

"I shouldn't mind a bit. I will go, anyway, and you'll see afterwards that it's a good idea. Your uncle is a decent sort, and will shell out—"

"You young ass, there wouldn't be time for my uncle to send the tin, even if I had the cheek to telegraph to him for some."

"Oh, yes, that's all right—you can send money by telegraph," explained Billy Bunter. "He could easily wire a couple of pounds to Friardale. I'll go at once."

Harry Wharton's hand dropped heavily on the shoulder of the fat boy of the Remove as he was turning away.

"You won't do anything of the sort, Bunter. If you send a wire to my uncle, I'll give you the biggest licking you've ever had!"

"I think you're very selfish, Wharton. Still, I can go to Friardale and pawn Inky's watch, if you like."

"The pawnfulness is not a cock that will fight, as your English proverb says," said Hurree Singh. "My watchful timekeeper will remain in my honourable pocket."

"Shall I take yours, Wharton?"

"No, thanks."

"Well, it's quite impossible for me to have my tea in Hall after what I've been used to, so something will have to be thought of," said Billy Bunter.

"You'd better think of it, then," said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Come along, you chaps!"

And the chums of the Remove walked away to the Form-room, leaving Billy Bunter to think out that weighty problem.

Equal to the Occasion!

THE Form-room was empty when the chums of the Remove entered it. Harry Wharton glanced about him, and then up at the big square skylight in the roof.

"Easy enough to get a rope fixed to the crossbar there," he remarked. "A couple of ropes, for that matter, with a scaffold pole slung between them, and there's your horizontal bar."

"It is a wheezy good idea, my honourable chum. But how will you execute the climbfulness to the esteemed skylight?"

It was not an easy question to answer. The skylight was a good forty feet above their heads. When the glass was cleaned it was done by means of a long ladder inside; but the juniors hardly hoped to get Gosling's ladder into the Remove-room without being spotted by masters or prefects.

"Perhaps we could sling the rope over the crossbar," Bob Cherry suggested.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"If you could sling a rope up forty feet over an iron bar, Bob—"

"Well, I dare say it would be difficult."

"The difficulty would only be equalled by the totality of the impossibility," observed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"No; we must think of some other way," said Harry. "If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet will have to go to the mountain, that's all. The skylight is up there, and we're down here—ergo, we shall have to climb on to the roof and tackle it from outside."

"But if you go Mahometfully to the mountain in this instance, the breakfulness of the neck will have great probability."

"I shall have to risk that. Some of the bed-room windows look out on the leads of this roof, and it would be easy to get out of one of them. If the roof didn't slope it wouldn't be risky at all."

"But it does slope," said Nugent, "and it's jolly dangerous!"

"Oh, I shall be careful. It only requires some nerve, and there's really no danger. Come on, let's get the rope, and then we'll get it done."

"Well, if you've made up your mind—"

"I have."

They quitted the Form-room. Nugent, Cherry, and the nabob were looking rather anxious. But they knew that it was not much use arguing with Harry Wharton when he had made up his mind.

The coil of rope for the purpose was soon obtained. The chums of the

Remove had one in their study, which had often borne the weight of a junior descending from the window.

"Now, which window are we going to use?" Harry remarked reflectively as they went up the second staircase. "Do you know whether Herr Rosenblum is in?"

"No. I saw him go out," said Nugent. "That was about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Good! Then we'll use his window."

The juniors stopped at the door of Herr Rosenblum's room. Rosenblum, the fat and genial German, was staying at Greyfriars, and acting as German master while his new academy was being built by the River Sark. Herr Rosenblum was a popular master at Greyfriars, and he deserved to be; for, although he sometimes flew into a passion, he was generally beaming with good-humour.

Harry tapped at the door to ascertain whether he was there or not. There was no reply to the knock, so he opened the door, and the chums of the Remove entered. Harry crossed to the window and threw up the sash.

The window looked out upon the leads of the Remove-room roof, which was now only a few feet below the sill. Harry drew himself up on the window-sill and then dropped to the leads.

"Hand over the rope, Nugent."

"You'd better let me come with you,"

"One is enough, and we don't want to be spotted. Some of the other windows overlook the roof, and the more we are, the more likely we are to be seen."

"That is a matter of factfulness," said the nabob.

"You are going alone, then?"

Harry Wharton nodded decidedly.

"Yes. You fellows get back to the Remove-room, and don't forget to close the door here. I shan't come in this way; I'll come down the rope into the Remove-room when I've fixed it on the bar."

"Oh, right you are!" said Bob Cherry. "Come along, you chaps!"

And the chums of the Remove left the German master's room and went downstairs, leaving Harry to carry out his task alone. The window was shut, and if the German had come into his room it was doubtful if he would have noticed the presence of anyone on the leads. Harry turned towards the skylight.

He reached it by crawling along the leads, and to fasten the end of the rope

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "What—what are you boys doing? How came this rope in the Form-room? Descend to the floor at once, all of you!" "Certainly, sir!" said Nugent. The climbing practice of the Greyfriars gymnasts had come to a sudden end!



securely to the transverse iron bar was not difficult. Then he allowed the coil to slip through the skylight, and it uncoiled as it fell.

The chums of the Remove were now in the room below. They gazed upward, and their hearts beat faster as they saw Harry Wharton swing himself in on the rope.

There were other eyes watching Harry if he had only known it. A face was flattened for a moment against the glass of the German master's window. It was only for a moment, and Harry, busy with the work in hand, did not observe it. He swung himself in at the open skylight, and went down the rope hand under hand.

The Removites below watched him anxiously, but they soon saw that he was safe. He came nimbly down the rope, and dropped to the floor.

"Good!" exclaimed Nugent. "The goodfulness is great. The honourable French rotters will have at least one dangerous opponent in our worthy chum Wharton," Hurree Singh remarked.

Harry Wharton laughed. "It was nothing. Let's get to practice."

"Hallo! Who's that?"

The chums looked round anxiously as the door of the Remove-room opened. It was not likely that a master would enter at that time, but if one did discover them it would mean a very speedy termination to gymnastics in the Form-room. But it was not a master. It was Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, who entered.

Gymnastics!

BULSTRODE had a far from pleasant expression upon his face. He came straight towards Harry Wharton, and the hero of the Remove glanced at him. There had never been any love lost between Wharton and Bulstrode, especially since the bully of the Remove had been thoroughly licked in a fair fight by his young opponent.

"I want to speak to you, Wharton." "Well, we're busy now," said Harry. "Won't it keep?"

"No." "Then fire away. What is it?" "It's about the competition on Saturday. You are getting up a Remove team to meet the French gymnasts. The fellows have made you captain of the Remove," said Bulstrode, with a sneer, "so the management of the matter has fallen into your hands." "It couldn't be in better hands!" said Nugent warmly.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, of course, you would say so! You fellows are always sucking up to Wharton; but you can't expect me to do the same."

Nugent turned crimson. "I expect you to keep a more civil tongue in your head, or else put up your fists!" he said. "You can take your choice."

"It wouldn't take me long to lick you, Nugent!"

"You're welcome to start!"

"I didn't come here for a row, though. I've come to speak to you, Wharton, about the Remove team, that's all. I'm pretty good as a gymnast, and I think I ought to be one of the representatives of the Remove in the contest on Saturday."

Harry Wharton shook his head. "I don't think so, Bulstrode."

"Of course, you would say so."

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"Well, if you knew that you needn't have asked me!" said Wharton, rather tartly. "But it's quite apart from my personal feeling. You are not up to the form of a dozen fellows I could name in the Remove."

"I could lick any fellow in the Form!"

"It's not a question of fighting. You petered out on the cricket field in the last Remove match because you had no wind. As a matter of fact, I know perfectly well that you smoke cigarettes in your study."

Bulstrode sneered. "Are you setting up to preach to us?"

"No, I'm not," said Harry Wharton sharply. "But anybody knows that a fellow who smokes will never make anything of an athlete. You know it as well as I do. You think it's smart to break the rules of the college, and it's no business of mine. But you can't expect me to take you into the Remove team and let you make a failure in public, and get the Remove and yourself laughed at."

"You can put it how you like," said Bulstrode bitterly; "but I know your real motives well enough. You made up your mind when you first came to Greyfriars to oust me and take my place in the Form."

"That's not true." "It is true, and you know it. And I'll make you sorry for it yet!"

And Bulstrode, driving his hands deep into his trousers pockets, strode from the room. The Removites stared after him.

"My hat, he's cutting up rough about it!" Nugent remarked. "I knew he wouldn't be pleased, but this is a bit thick!"

"The thickfulness is terrific!"

"Oh, never mind him!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's get on with the washing!"

"That is a goodful idea! I am waiting impatiently for the washfulness to proceed!"

"Right-ho!" said Harry. "Shut the door, or we shall have a crowd round. Let's get on this rope; it will easily bear the weight of the lot of us, and we can do some climbing practice, at any rate."

The chums of the Remove were stronger at outdoor games than at indoor gymnastics. But they were lithe and active, and they could climb. Harry Wharton was determined that the representatives of the Remove at the contest should be in good form.

Nugent dropped off the rope, gasping, after a good deal of climbing.

"I say, this takes the wind out of you!" he exclaimed.

"Never mind; come on!"

"Wait a minute."

"Come on," said Harry Wharton inexorably. "I'm going to climb up this rope to the skylight, and you're going to climb after me."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Nugent. "He won't be happy till he's broken all our necks! It's getting dusk, Wharton."

"I've noticed that," said Harry cheerfully. "It generally does get dusk in the twilight of the evening, you know."

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"Follow your leader!"

Harry Wharton swung himself up the rope with tireless aims. After him went Bob Cherry, and then Nugent, then Hurree Singh. Bob Cherry gave a sudden howl.

"Ow, ow!"

"What's the matter?" asked Harry, glancing downward, as he swung.

"You've shoved your beastly foot on my nose and nearly broken the thing!" said Bob Cherry.

"You shouldn't shove your nose against my boot."

"I didn't! You shoved your foot against my nose!"

"Oh, blow your nose! Come on!"

"We are coming, my esteemed chum, but the breathfulness is petering out," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "Nugent, my esteemed chum, could you kindly contrive not to kick me on the chin again?"

"Well, I'll try, since you're so polite about it," said Nugent. "You shall have the next cosh on the ear, instead."

"Thank you. I would rather have it chinfully than earfully, but if you would be more careful, my worthy chum—"

"Hush!" muttered Harry Wharton.

"Cave! There's someone coming!"

"I expect it's only Bulstrode."

"Hush!"

The door of the Form-room opened again. In the dusk, which was deeper in the Remove-room than out of doors, a dim figure was visible to the juniors hanging on the rope. It was not Bulstrode this time. Even in the dusk, from the height of nearly twenty feet, they knew well enough the figure of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

"My only hat!" murmured Nugent.

"Quiet!" whispered Wharton.

"The quietfulness is—"

"Hush, fathead!"

Mr. Quelch was crossing to the desk. In the dusk he did not see the rope dangling from the ceiling, and as he did not glance upward he naturally did not see the juniors.

What the Form-master would say if he found them at their gymnastic exercises in that style they could not guess; but there was a chance that he would leave the room again without discovering them.

The juniors hung on to the rope with bated breath. Mr. Quelch walked straight across the room in the dusk—and ran right against the swinging rope. He started back with an exclamation as it "biffed" upon his nose.

"Dear me! What—what—"

The rope was swinging to and fro. Mr. Quelch put out his hand and caught it.

"Dear me! It is a rope!"

The Form-master was amazed. A rope swinging from the skylight was very unusual in the Remove-room. The master of the Remove grasped it and shook it as he glanced upward to see where it was fastened. There was a gasp from above.

"Hold on, there!"

Mr. Quelch let go the rope in amazement.

"There is somebody—"

"Don't shake the rope like that, sir!" gasped Nugent. "We shall all fall down if you do!"

"Nugent!"

"Yes, sir?"

"What—what are you doing? How came this rope here? What are you doing on this rope?"

"Hanging on, sir!"

"Don't be impudent, Nugent! Descend to the floor at once!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Nugent lowered himself past Hurree Singh and slid to the floor. The Form-master fixed a stern eye upon the three figures still clinging to the rope in the dimness above.

"Come down at once, all of you!"

The Remove master did not mean exactly what he said. He meant that the juniors were all to descend immediately. But they took him at his word,

and all came down at once. There was a slithering sound, and three juniors whizzed down and rolled on the floor round the feet of the astounded Remove master.

Mr. Quelch uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Bless my soul! Are you hurt, boys?" "No, sir," said Harry Wharton, regaining his feet. "I'm all right, for one, sir."

"So am I," said Bob Cherry, getting up. "You told us to come down all at once, sir, and we thought we ought to obey you."

"How dare you fasten up this rope in the Form-room and perform these ridiculous antics upon it!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"The gym is closed for repairs, sir."

"That is no reason why you should turn the Form-room into a bear garden, I presume!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Oh, no, sir! We were turning it into a gymnasium, that's all, sir," said Bob Cherry innocently. "We haven't any bears, or animals of any sort here."

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"You will be dealt with severely. Hurree Singh, why do you not get up? How dare you remain sprawled on the floor in the presence of your Form-master!"

The Nabob of Bhanipur groaned.

The chums looked alarmed for a moment. Harry Wharton bent down by the nabob's side and caught a wink from his eye and a lurking grin on his dusky face, and understood. But the Remove master saw neither the wink nor the grin.

"Hurree Singh, are you hurt?"

The dusky junior groaned again.

"You see the result of this absurd freak!" said the Remove master severely. "Hurree Singh has been injured by—"

"By coming down so quickly when you called him, sir."

"Nonsense! Hurree Singh, where are you hurt?"

The nabob only groaned.

Mr. Quelch looked really concerned. He was a severe but kind-hearted man. He stepped nearer to the sprawling nabob.

"Hurree Singh, my boy—"

"Pray excuse the groanfulness, respected sahib," said the nabob faintly.

"I wish you would extend the beneficence of the gracious pardon to me and—"

"Certainly I pardon you, Hurree Singh. But—"

"If the benignity of the greatly-to-be-esteemed pardon could extend itself to the worthy rotters here, I should—"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Quelch, looking worried. "This is a most unfortunate occurrence. I am willing to overlook this absurd freak, Hurree Singh, on your part and the part of the others. I only hope you are not severely hurt."

"The painfulness is greatly relieved, worthy sahib."

"What do you mean?" asked the Form-master suspiciously. "Is it possible that—"

"It was the anticipativeness of the heavy punishment that caused me to groan with the terrors of the apprehensions," said the nabob. "I am all right limberly, respected sahib."

And the Nabob of Bhanipur showed that his limbs were all right, as he said, by immediately getting on his feet.

Bob Cherry suppressed a chuckle. Nugent turned his head to hide a grin. Harry Wharton remained as grave as a judge; and as for Hurree Singh, his features might have been carved in bronze. The colour crept into the Form-master's cheeks.



Herr Rosenblau entered his room in the darkness, and so he failed to see a cord stretched from the bed to the wainscot. But next moment he knew all about it as he caught his foot in it and fell headlong to the floor!

"Hurree Singh, you led me to suppose that you had been injured by the fall."

"I am truly sorry for the misunderstandingfulness," purred Hurree Singh. "I was simply overcome by the terrors of the sahib's wrath. The terrorfulness was terrific, and—"

"I have pardoned you."

"It was noble of the esteemed sahib to—"

"You may go."

"Certainly, sahib."

"But if any of you ever play these tricks in the Form-room again I shall come you severely. You understand?"

"The understandingness is great."

"Now go."

"Shall we get the rope down, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No; I will tell Gosling to get his ladder to do so. The rope will be confiscated. You may go."

And the chums of the Remove left the Form-room, glad enough to get off so cheaply. In the passage they hugged the grinning nabob.

"Good old Inky!" said Bob Cherry, giving him a slap on the back that made him stagger. "You saved us from a hundred lines each, at least."

The nabob grinned blissfully.

"It was the great brainfulness that enabled me to pull the august leg of the teacher, sahib," he remarked. "It was somewhat roughful on the Quelchful sahib, but—"

"But it was ripping!" said Nugent. "Let's get along to the study and see if Billy Bunter has scared up anything for tea. It's too late for tea in Hall now."

And the chums of the Remove hurried along the passage to Study No. 1. The door of the study was open, and a scent of frying bacon proceeded from the room. It was evident that Billy Bunter had been equal to the occasion.

Bunter's Treat!

THE chums of the Remove entered Study No. 1 with rather mixed feelings. They were hungry after their exercise, and they had had no tea, and that meal was long overdue. The scent of frying bacon was extremely gratifying to them. But they could not help wondering how Billy Bunter had raised the funds.

Mrs. Mimble at the school shop would not have trusted him with a stale bun. She knew him only too well. On a previous occasion Bunter had raised the wind by selling Harry Wharton's cricket bat for the good of the cause. Bob Cherry's pocket-knife had had a narrow escape of sharing the same fate. And so the question was a very important one to the Removes. How had Bunter raised the wind?

Bunter looked up with a face as red as a beetroot from the grate. He had a large frying-pan going on a fire of wood, and he was hot. He was in his shirt-sleeves, with the sleeves rolled up to the elbow. Bob Cherry felt in his pocket to ascertain that the pocket-knife was still there, and breathed a sigh of relief when he discovered that it was.

Harry Wharton glanced at the table. It was spread with a nice white cloth, and on the cloth were various comestibles. There was a new loaf and a pat of butter, a pot of strawberry jam, and a jar of marmalade. There was ham and tongue and radishes. The bacon was cooking, and the eggs were done and spread in a dish on the hob.

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton, in amazement. "Where did you get all this from, Bunter?"

Bunter grinned. "That's all right, Wharton. It's my treat."

"That's all very well," said Nugent. "If it's your treat we're awfully grateful. But where did you raise the tin?"

"That's all right."

"Have you sold Wharton's new cricket bat?"

"No, I haven't."

"Have you pawned anything belonging to any of us?"

"Really, Cherry, you are very suspicious! I always told you that I was going to stand a feed when my postal order came—"

"Oh, if it's your postal order come at last, that's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "It's been a jolly long time coming, and I thought—"

"There has been some delay in the post—"

"But has it come at last?" asked Nugent.

Bunter was busy turning the bacon in the frying-pan, and he pretended not to hear the question. Nugent tapped him on the shoulder.

"Has your postal order come?" roared Nugent.

"The bacon's nearly done—"

"Has your postal order come?"

"I've poached the eggs—I thought you fellows would like them best that way, and I think you'll agree that they're cooked really ripping—"

"Has your postal order come?"

"Eh? Did you speak, Nugent?"

"Yes, I did, and you know it jolly well. I asked you if your blessed postal order had come!" said Nugent wrathfully.

"I don't see—"

"Has it come?"

"Well, no, it hasn't exactly come," said Billy Bunter, "I'm expecting it by every post now, and I really don't quite

understand the delay, but it hasn't exactly come, Nugent."

"I was pretty sure it hadn't—"

"I don't see why—"

"Where did you get the tin from for this feed?"

"I'm standing treat—"

"I know you are, but where did you get the tin from?"

"Really, Nugent—"

"If you haven't pawned anything belonging to us what have you sold?"

"I haven't sold anything."

"Then what utter mug have you found to lend you money?" demanded Nugent.

"I don't see why a fellow should be a mug for lending me money, Nugent. I should pay it back immediately my postal order came."

"Do you mean to say that somebody has lent you money on the strength of your giddy postal order?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, I do."

"What ass was it, then? I should have thought everybody in the Remove knew you and your postal order too well."

"Really, Cherry—"

"There's a new chap in the Form," said Nugent. "Levison, you know. He may not know Billy Bunter's little ways."

"That's it," said Bob, with conviction. "Bunter has been plundering Levison."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Levison doesn't look to me the kind of fellow to lend money easily without any security," he remarked.

"Well, that's so; but a fellow who knew Billy Bunter wouldn't lend him twopence and expect to see it again, so

I fancy it must have been the new fellow."

"Was it Levison, Bunter?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't answer impertinent questions—"

"Why, what do you mean, you young ass?"

"I don't see why—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Let him keep the secret if he likes," he said. "As we are going to wolf the feed we shall stand the cash when it's wanted, I suppose, and, meanwhile, I'm jolly hungry. Let's have tea."

"The wisdomfulness of our worthy chum's remark is terrific. Yet us have the teaful meal, my esteemed friends."

"No objection," said Bob Cherry. "I can't understand it, that's all, and I don't see what Bunter wants to be so secretive about it for. He generally has his mouth wide open and all his affairs running out of it."

"Really, Cherry—"

"Oh, hand over the bacon and some of the eggs, Bunter!"

"But, I say—"

"No, don't say anything. Your cooking is ever so much better than your conversation. Let's have the eggs."

"Oh, very well, but—"

"That's right, pass them along."

The hungry juniors fell to on the viands with a will. There was plenty and there was a variety. There could not be a doubt that Billy Bunter was a good cook. As he had been taking snacks all the time he had been cooking he was not in a hurry for his tea, and he served all the others first. Then he sat down to a big plate containing half a dozen rashers of bacon and as many eggs.

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent, as he helped himself to a fourth egg.

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said the nabob, who was eating banana fritters, his meals always being much lighter than those of his English chums.

"The esteemed Bunter is worthy of the medal of tin."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" said Bob Cherry in his polite way.

The door opened, and a somewhat thin-faced lad stepped in. It was Levison, the new boy in the Remove Form.

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Come and have tea, Levison."

Levison looked at him suspiciously.

"Thanks, I remember the last feed I had with you fellows," he replied. "I'm not taking any more doses of liquorice powder in my grub."

"That was an accident."

"Yes, I know exactly how much an accident it was."

"If you have come here to get a thick ear, you're going just the right way to work," said Bob Cherry, reddening.

"When a fellow doubts my word I generally wipe up the floor with him."

"Oh, keep your wool on! I know all about the jokes played on newcomers, and, of course, I couldn't expect—"

"I tell you—"

"Oh, don't argue with him!" said Nugent. "You'd better travel, Levison."

The new boy turned red.

"I came here—"

"Yes, we can see that. Now we want you to go. Shut the door."

"As your great poet Shakespeare remarks," said Hurree Singh, "some are born pigs, some achieve piggishness, and some have piggishness thrust upon them. The first and the second apply to the esteemed Levison. The third applies to

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our honourable selves. The pleasurefulness will be great when Levison disappears from our viewfulness."

"I came here to speak about the contest on Saturday," said Levison, "not to have any of your rotten grub, or to listen to any of your rotten jokes. I hear that you chaps are going to make guys of yourselves in the town-hall in Friardale, with the French gymnasts to show you up."

"Got anything more nice to say?" asked Bob Cherry. "You may as well get it all over before I sling you out into the passage."

"Only that I'm willing to take part in the gymnastics, if you like. I'm pretty good in that line, and I've taken a prize—"

"A prize for a swelled head, I suppose?"

"I've taken a prize in gymnastic competition—"

"All entries under nine years of age, I suppose?" said Nugent sarcastically.

"I'm willing to—"

"Are you willing to get on the other side of that door?" asked Harry Wharton. "If you are not, you'll be put there."

"Oh, very well! I've said enough to—"

"Too much," said Bob Cherry.

"Much too much!"

"The too-muchfulness is terrific!"

"Well, I'll go; but—"

"That's right, go, and never mind the but!"

Levison walked out of the study and slammed the door. The chums of the Remove grinned round the tea-table.

"That fellow gets on my nerves," Bob Cherry remarked. "I never met such a distrustful beast in all my natural."

"I say, you fellows—"

"He still thinks we played a joke on him the day he came to Greyfriars, though we had some of the stuff and were all ill," said Nugent. "I'm beginning to think that what he wants is a licking."

"And the lickfulness ought to be terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur emphatically.

"We don't want any of his gas about his gymnastic prowess," said Harry Wharton. "There may be something in what he says, but that wasn't the way to say it. Whether he would be of any use or not, we can't stand him."

"Quite correctful."

"I say, you fellows—"

"What's the matter with you, Bunter?"

"Have you decided whether I'm to represent the Remove in the contest on Saturday?" asked Billy Bunter anxiously. "I want to see the Form an'ke." "I want to see the Form an'ke a good show, but I'm not going to take the trouble to practise unless I'm to take a part."

"I think we'll leave you over till we have a gastronomic contest," said Harry Wharton. "You could keep your end up in that line. But I'm afraid that gymnastics are not quite your mark, Bunter."

"Well, you really don't know much about it, Wharton—"

"Thank you," said Harry, laughing. "All the same, Bunter, I don't think we shall want you to help us on Saturday. You can cook a big feed for us when we get back, if you like!"

Wharton is Suspected!

HERR ROSENBLAUM came along the upper corridor, with his little jerky steps, and his fat face glowing after his walk. It was dusk in the corridor, but he knew his

way well enough. He opened the door of his room and entered. His blind was down, and the room was very dark.

"Mein gootness!" murmured the German master. "Tat plind must haf come down mit itself pefore. I did not take it down after."

He felt his way into the room. Suddenly he gave a terrific yell and bumped down heavily on the floor.

It was a nasty fall; not that the herr was much hurt, but the suddenness of it had jarred his nerves.

He sat up, dazed.

"Mein gootness!"

His foot had caught in a cord stretched along the floor, and he had gone down helplessly. As he realised that he had fallen into a trap set by some practical joker, the German's fat, good-natured face grew savage. He could understand a joke, and pardon one, but not of that kind.

He rose gingerly to his feet, and groped his way to the electric light switch. As the room was flooded with light, he looked round for the trap into which he had fallen.

The cord was stretched across the floor from a leg of the bedstead to a nail jammed in the wainscot of the room. It had been directly in his path as he entered, and even had it been lighter, he would probably not have seen it. But the blind had evidently been lowered so as to make it certain that he would not see the cord.

The German's brow was very dark. "Ach! Tat is a trap for me to fall into," he murmured, "and I fall into it meinself in te dark after. Ach!"

He rubbed his legs ruefully. He had hurt them a little, and his heart was still palpitating from the shock.

"I tinks tat te poy who laid tat trap wants some punishments!" murmured Herr Rosenblum. "I tinks tat he gets it, too."

The German master went to the door and glanced into the passage.

He had been some time out, and who might have been in his room in the interval he could not possibly guess.

Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, was coming along the passage, and the German called to him.

"Wingate, I speaks mit you."

The captain of Greyfriars stopped.

"What is it, Herr Rosenblum?"

"Look at tat," said the German master, turning back into the room, and pointing to the taut cord stretched across the floor.

Wingate looked in and his brow darkened.

"Did you fall over that, sir?"

"Ach! Ja, ja; and I feel te pain in my pones," said the German master.

"It is a silly and dangerous trick," said the Sixth Former. "The perpetrator of it ought to have a severe licking!"

"Ach! Tat is vat I tinks, too."

"You don't know whom it was?"

Herr Rosenblum shook his head.

"I have not te idea, Wingate. I not knows te poy tat play such a trick."

"It was one of the youngsters, of course. One of the rougher lot in the Remove, I expect," said Wingate. "Have you punished any of them lately?"

"Dere vas Bulstrode. I gif him hundredt lines."

"H'm! I should think Bulstrode would have too much sense for a trick like this. He is older than most of the fellows in the Remove. But we shall be able to find out, I expect, who has been here. Shall I inquire, sir?"

"Certainly, Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars walked away with a frowning brow. He could forgive horseplay among the juniors but this was a dangerous trick, and called for condign punishment. Sprain, or even a broken limb, might have been the result of such a fall in the dark.

Wingate went towards the Junior Common-room, but as he passed Stud No. 1 he changed his mind. He knocked at the door and went in. Even prefects at Greyfriars knocked at the door before entering a junior study.

The chums of the Remove had finished tea. Billy Bunter and Nugent were gone, but Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Hurree Singh were still in the study.

"Has any one of you been larking in Herr Rosenblum's room?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, coming directly to the point.

The Removes looked at one another without replying.

It was easy to see that they had something in their minds on the subject, and Wingate's look grew darker as he fixed his eyes upon them.

"I want an answer to my question, he said."

"We haven't been larking there," replied Harry Wharton.

"That is not a direct answer," said the Greyfriars captain sternly. "Have you been in the room at all?"

Harry Wharton met Wingate's eyes fearlessly as he replied:

"Yes."

"All of you?" asked the Sixth Former.

"Yes."

"What did you go there for?"

"To let a rope down through the sky light of the Remove-room to do some gymnastic exercises."

"Did you tie a cord across the floor for Herr Rosenblum to fall over?"

Harry Wharton looked amazed.

"Certainly not."

"Was any one of you alone there?"

"Yes," said Harry at once. "I was alone there, but I didn't tie any cord across the floor. I like Herr Rosenblum too well to play such a trick on him, especially such a dangerous trick as that!"

"Someone did so," said Wingate. "I'm sorry to have to suspect you, Wharton, but you say you were alone in the room while Herr Rosenblum was out?"

"That is true."

"Then I—"

"But I say also that I never played such a trick," said Harry. "I did not know that anyone had done so."

"Is Herr Rosenblum hurt?" asked Bob Cherry.

"He seems to be. He is angry, any way. You had better go along to his room and explain to him, Wharton."

"Certainly."

"The explainfulness will clear up the misapprehension on the subject," the nabob remarked. "My esteemed friend Wharton is incapable of the fatheaded jape you describe, Wingate."

"I hope he is," said Wingate grimly and he left the study.

Harry Wharton was looking rather blue.

"I suppose I must go," he said. "This is rotten. I don't like Herr Rosenblum to suspect me of playing a trick on him."

"If he's wild about it he may not stop to inquire too closely," Bob Cherry

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remarked. "Suppose you leave it over for a bit before you go?"

Harry laughed. "They might come to look for me. I'd better go."

And the hero of the Remove left Study No. 1 and took his way upstairs to the German master's room.

Herr Rosenblum looked up as he appeared at the open door.

"Ach! Is tat you, Vharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"You vishes to speak to me, ain't it?"

"Wingate has sent me to you, sir," said Harry Wharton, quietly and respectfully. "I was in your room while you were out—"

The German master's genial face darkened like a thundercloud.

"Ach! You vas in mein room, Vharton?"

"Yes, sir. I—"

"And you vas play tat trick on me, ain't it?"

"No, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly. "I shouldn't play a trick like that upon anybody, and certainly not upon you, sir. I came through this room to get out on the leads, to let a

rope down into the Form-room. That is all, sir."

Herr Rosenblum looked at him very keenly.

"Den who vas it tat tie te cord tat I fall over mit meinsel?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Ach! You vas here, and I know not if anybody else did come here, and yet you can tell me tat you not tie te rope."

"I did not, sir."

The German nursed his fat chin thoughtfully.

Harry Wharton met his glance fearlessly. There was truth in the junior's face and in his tones, and the German master nodded his head at last.

"I pelieve you, mein poy. But dere has been somevun who play tat trick, somevun who did come to mein room, and I tink I find him some time and make him sorry—hein?"

"I wish I knew who it was, sir; but I haven't the faintest idea," said Harry Wharton earnestly. "Nobody! in the Remove, I think, would play such a trick on you."

The German smiled genially.

Mr. Ratcliff's face was a study.

"The evidence of three honourable and straightforward witnesses is enough, and more than enough," continued the Head. "It is clearly established that Figgins left his dormitory for the purpose he has stated. I am very glad that these three boys have had the courage to come forward in this way, at the risk of severe punishment to themselves, to speak up for a schoolfellow. In the circumstances, Merry, Blake, and D'Arcy will not be punished for having broken House bounds," said the Head. "I thank them for having come forward and saved me from the possibility of committing an injustice. Figgins, you have acted very unwisely, and it must be understood that nothing of the kind occurs again."

"Certainly, sir!" said Figgins.

"I am very glad that you are cleared from disgraceful suspicion. Mr. Ratcliff, as Figgins' motives were good, though his conduct was unwise, I should prefer this matter to be passed over without punishment."

And Mr. Ratcliff could only agree. He hurried from the study without another word.

"You may go, my boys," said the Head. "I wish you good fortune in your examination, Figgins. But no more midnight studies. Everything should be in reason, and you may work too hard."

"Thank you, sir."

"Dere are two or tree poy in te Remove who might, I tink," he said. "But no matter. I tink I find out, and den I talks to him after. You may go, mein poy."

"Thank you, sir."

Harry Wharton left the room. There was a thoughtful frown on his face.

His mind was busy as he went upstairs. In the passage upon which the Remove studies opened he met Bulstrode.

The bully of the Remove looked at him with a grin, and a sudden suspicion flashed into Harry's brain. He walked up to the burly Removite.

"Bulstrode—"

"Well," said the bully of the Remove, with a sneer, "what's the trouble?"

"Did you tie the cord in Herr Rosenblum's room for him to fall over? Did you tie it there because I had been there, and you hoped that the blame would fall upon me?"

(Is Bulstrode the culprit? And how will the Remove fare in their gymnastic contest against the French boys? Look out for next week's exciting chapters.)

And the juniors left the study, looking as if they were walking on air.

And Figgins did win the Bishop's Medal.

The exam, as he said afterwards, was a regular twister, and nobody was really so much surprised as Figgins when his name came out at the head of the list. But there it did come out; and when the medal and the award of ten guineas were handed to George Figgins by the Head himself before the assembled school the old Hall rang with the cheering.

And afterwards there was a gigantic celebration, to which came Cousin Ethel.

And when Figgins was shouted at for a speech, he rose to say a few words.

"Gentlemen, chaps and fellows, I propose the health of Miss Ethel, who first made me think I could possibly score at anything besides cricket and football, and backed me up like the good and true chum she is. Gentlemen, Cousin Ethel!"

And the toast was drunk with exuberant enthusiasm. And it was agreed on all hands that Tom Merry & Co. had deserved well of their country in rallying round Figgins the swot.

(Next Wednesday: "GUSSEY GOES TO WORK!"—a full-of-laughs long yarn of the amazing and amusing adventures of Gussy as one of the world's workers! Don't forget to order your GEM early.)

THE SWOT!

(Continued from page 21.)

"Yes, sir."

"It is untrue," said Mr. Ratcliff; "a plot among these young rascals to save Figgins from the punishment of his iniquity—"

"Weally, Mr. Watchiff—"

"Silence! Kindly explain to me, Merry, how you came to be out of your House at such a time of the night," said the Head very quietly.

Tom Merry explained breathlessly.

Figgins gave the School House juniors a look of heartfelt gratitude. He wondered if they had saved him. But it was Mr. Ratcliff's sour voice that broke the silence.

"Of course, Dr. Holmes, you do not credit this? These boys are well known to be personal friends of Figgins', and this is evidently a scheme—"

"I do not think anything of the kind, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head icily. "On the contrary, I know these three boys to be thoroughly truthful, and I firmly believe every word they have uttered."

Tom Merry's face lighted up, and it was with difficulty that Jack Blake refrained himself from shouting "Hurrah!"

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