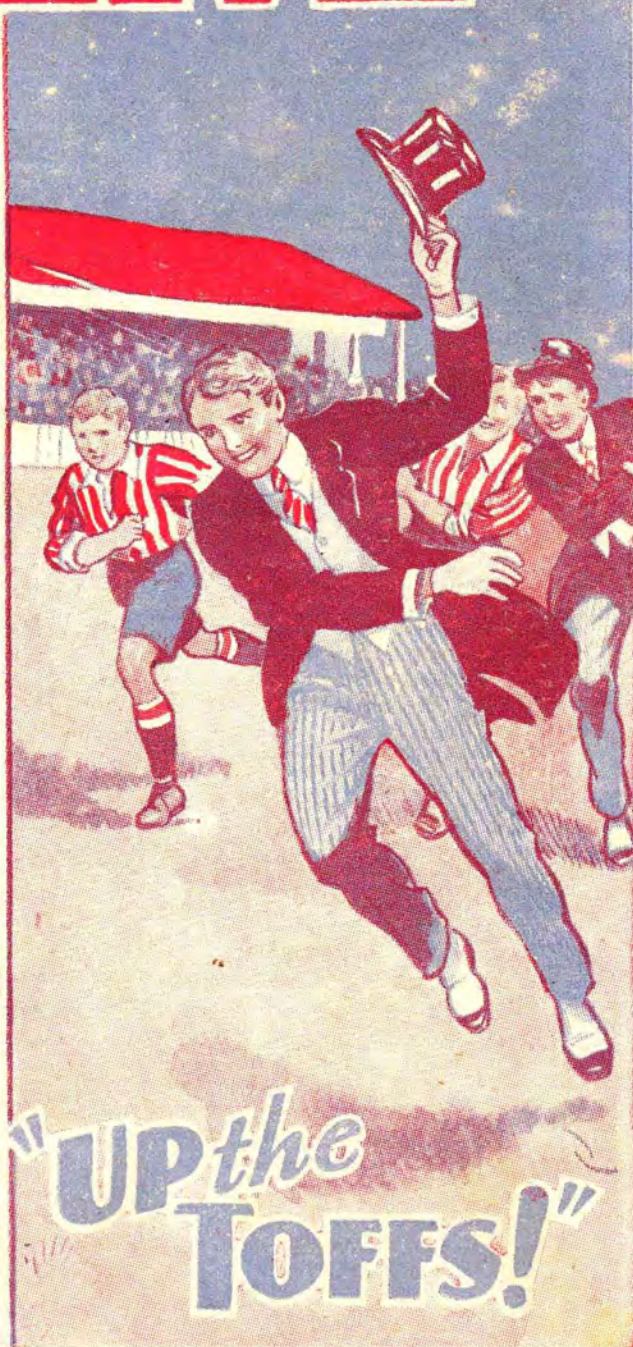


FULL-OF-FUN LONG YARN OF TOM MERRY & CO. INSIDE!

The **GEM** ^{2^d}



"UP the
TOFFS!"

The ST JIM'S CHARITY FUND!



"Well, my hat!" said Darrell, as he and Kildare stared blankly at the striking notice. "The cheeky young rascal!" exclaimed Kildare. "I told Merry plainly enough that this match was impossible. By Jove, I'll lick him for this!"

CHAPTER 1.

A Good Beginning!

"Y AAS, wathah!" Arthur Augustus made that remark quite suddenly. He had been sitting silently in Study No. 6 for some time, while Blake, Herries, and Digby were talking football.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was generally ready to lay down the law upon that subject, had said nothing. It was Jack Blake who was laying down the law. Herries and Dig were busy with a new packet of toffee, and they were giving Blake his head, so to speak.

Blake had just remarked that what he couldn't tell Study No. 6 about the offside rule wasn't worth listening to. Then it was that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy chimed in unexpectedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake looked at D'Arcy in surprise. He had not expected the swell of the School House to back him up in this whole-hearted way.

"Good for you, Gussy!" he said approvingly. "You're learning something about footer at last. You agree with me—"

"Eh?"

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"You agree with me that Figgins was offside when—"

"Weally, Blake, I was not thinkin' about footah at all," said D'Arcy, turning his celebrated monocle reprovingly on his studymate. "I was thinkin' about somethin' far more important."

"Then what did you say 'Yes, rather!' for, ass?" demanded Blake warmly.

"I did not heah what you were sayin', deah boy. I was thinkin' of a splendid ideah that has flashed into my bwain."

"Oh, rats!" said Blake crossly. "Now, about Figgins. I tell you he was standin' offside—"

"Nevah mind Figgins now, Blake—"

"Dry up!" roared Blake. "I tell you Figgins was standin'—"

"Pway wing off, Blake, and listen to my ideah. It is vewy nobby. I have thought of a scheme to enable evewy chap at St. Jim's to help Wayland Cottage Hospital. They're badly in need of funds."

Blake yawned portentously.

"How long will it take you to explain, D'Arcy?"

"Only a few minutes, deah boy."

"Would you mind going out into the passage to do it?" Blake further inquired. "Then you could take as long as you like without bothering anybody."

"If you wefuse to be sewious, Blake, on a sewious subject—"

"I'm quite serious," assured Blake. "Never been more serious in my life. Or you could go and tell Tom Merry. He might be glad to hear it—perhaps."

"This study is goin' to have the honah and glowy of startin' the wheeze," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "and I insist upon explainin' it."

Blake rubbed his nose thoughtfully. "Well, what's the idea?" he inquired.

"As you know, they're waisin' funds for the cottage hospital. Evewy chap who has anythin' ought to give somethin'. But that isn't all. It isn't a question of sendin' what you can spare. Lots of people do that—I twust evewybody does it; but it's up to St. Jim's to go one betterah."

"How?" roared Blake.

"By sendin' what we can't spare," said Arthur Augustus.

"Eh?"

"I mean, by bein' self-denyin', and goin' without things, and sendin' all we can waise to the funds."

"Oh!" said Blake.

"Weflect!" said Arthur Augustus enthusiastically. "You were goin' to buy a new ewicket bat for the comin' season—"

"I am going to, you mean," said Blake warmly.

THERE'S NOT A DULL MOMENT IN THIS SPARKLING STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO.'S AMUSING EFFORTS TO HELP A LOCAL HOSPITAL.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"You were goin' to, deah boy. Well, instead of buyin' a new bat, you keep the old one for the new season—"

"Do I?" said Blake.
"Yaas, wathah! And you send the pvice of the new one to the funds."
"Oh!"

"I suppose you'd wathah a suffewin' person have a bed in a hospital than have a new bat yourself, Blake?" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Of course I would! But—"

"There is no 'but' about it, deah boy. This study is goin' to start it, and the whole School House will take it up, and then the New House will have to follow suit to save its face. And if the movement spweads, considah what a splendid thing it will be—no end of money waisted for the funds, and so on."

"By Jove!" said Blake.

"Well, my hat!" said Herries. "Blessed if I ever expected to hear Gussy talk such sense! Gussy is right for once!"

"That's wathah a wude way of puttin' it, Hewwies. Howevah, I will pass ovah that. I twust you fellows are goin' to back me up. You can begin, Hewwies, by sellin' your bulldog."

"What!"

"I dare say Towsah would fetch a few shillin's."

Herries looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as if he would eat him. Herries would as soon have parted with his right hand as with Towser.

"You—you fathead!" said Herries, in measured tones. "A few shillings! Why, Towser is worth pounds and pounds!"

"All the more weason why you should sell him, deah boy. As a mattah of fact, it would be wathah a welief if he went. He has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs."

"Ass! Duffer! Chump!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"It's a good idea," said Digby, with a nod. "Never mind Towser; but a self-denying ordinance—that's a jolly good idea."

"Yaas, wathah! You can always wely on a fellow of tact and judgment to suggest the wight thing at the wight time," said Arthur Augustus confidently. "I knew you fellows would back me up. We'll begin at once. No sacrifice is too great for such a chawity. I twust you agwee to that. Besides the self-denial, there are othah things, such as waisin' money by sellin' things we don't want, and especially by sellin' things we do want. Then we might get up an entertainment and charge for admission, you know; or an extwa-wippin' footah match with gate-money for the occasion. I am prepared to take the lead in ewevythin' and see it through."

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"I mean it, deah boy. Now, to begin with, how much were you goin' to give for your new bat, Blake?"

"Fifteen shillings," said Blake un-easily.

"Vewy well!"

Arthur Augustus rose and went to the study cupboard. The three Fourth Formers watched him in surprise. The swell of the Fourth lifted an empty biscuit-tin from the cupboard and stood it on the table and removed the lid.

"What on earth's that for?" demanded Herries.

"That's for the subscriptions, deah

boy. We wequiah a vewy large weceptacle, you know, because we are goin' to waiste lots of money."

Blake & Co. grinned.

If Arthur Augustus succeeded in raising a large biscuit-tinful of money, certainly it would be a valuable aid to any fund.

"It's weady, Blake."

"Eh?"

"Here you are!"

"But what—"

"Fifteen shillin's, please!" said

Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Fifteen shillin's, please!"

"You see, I really want that new bat.

In the circumstances—"

"If this study doesn't set the example, Blake, it cannot expect the example to be followed by the othahs. Fifteen shillin's, please!"

Blake, with a wry face, fumbled in his pockets and produced a ten-shilling note, a two-shilling-piece, and three shillings.

Clink, clink, clink!

The note and the coins dropped into the biscuit-tin.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled a smile of satisfaction.

"Nothin' like havin' a good beginnin'!" he remarked. "Now, Hewwies, I heard you speakin' of gettin' a new collah for Towsah—"

"And I'm jolly well going to!" said Herries.

"Wats! Shove it in!"

"It's up to you, Herries!" grinned

Blake. "If I can go without my new bat, Towser can go without his blessed collah!"

When they set out to help the local hospital, the chums of St. Jim's raise more fun than funds!

Herries seemed on the point of an explosion. But he contained himself and dropped a two-shilling-piece into the tin.

Clink!

"Now, Dig, old man—"

"I—I wasn't going to buy anything new!" said Digby hurriedly.

"Wats! You were goin' to stand tea in the study!"

"Well, we must have tea, mustn't we?"

"Not at a time like this. We can have tea in Hall. Hand out the money!"

"Ahem! I—"

"Shell out, deah boy!"

Digby made a grimace, and clinked two shillings and a sixpence into the biscuit-tin.

"Good!" said D'Arcy. "That's a wippin' beginnin'! Now I'll take the tin along to Tom Mewwy's study."

"Hold on!" said Blake, with deadly politeness. "There's something you've forgotten, Gussy."

"What's that, deah boy?"

"You had a fiver from your pater this morning."

"Yaas; that's for my new clobber."

"You don't want any new clobber at a time like this," said Blake, with a grin. "Hand it out!"

"What!"

"Hand it out!" roared Herries and Digby.

Arthur Augustus looked dismayed.

"You—you see, deah boys, I'm just goin' to see my tailah. Weally—"

"Blow your tailor! Hand it out!"

"A chap can't go about in wags, you know," said Arthur Augustus feebly.

"I weally must have a new pair of twousahs at least."

"Hand it out!"

"Well, pewwaps if I weserve enough for a new tie and a—"

"Reserve nothing!" yelled Blake.

"This isn't a time for new ties. Hand out the fiver!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Shell out!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study for some moments. Then slowly he extracted a five-pound note from a little Russia leather purse and dropped it into the biscuit-tin.

Blake, Herries, and Digby grinned joyously.

"Quite a good beginninng!" said Blake.

"Quite!" grinned Digby.

"Oh, rather!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus smiled a rather sickly smile. It certainly was a good beginning, better than he had anticipated, in fact.

"Now we'll take the tin along to Tom Merry's study," said Blake, with a chuckle. "After Gussy's noble example they can't decline to shell out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of Study No. 6 lost no time—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accompanying his comrades with an extremely thoughtful expression on his face.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Goes One Better!

TOM MERRY, Manners, and Lowther were in their study. They were having tea, and their talk ran on the subject of footer.

The great winter game was popular at St. Jim's, and as Tom Merry was captain of the junior eleven it was naturally much in his thoughts.

The Terrible Three of the Shell were discussing the latest match with the Grammar School, in which Talbot, the scholarship junior, had distinguished himself highly by kicking the winning goal.

Tom Merry's team were in wonderfully good form lately, and they were having a very successful run. Like Alexander of old, they sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

With that idea in their minds, they had sent a challenge to the Fifth Form, nothing doubting their ability to play and beat a senior eleven. The Fifth Form had not, however, taken the trouble to reply to their challenge—Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, having contented himself with snorting when he received it.

"Cheeky rotters, I call 'em!" Tom Merry remarked. "I believe we could beat the Fifth; we'd give 'em a good tussle, anyway!"

"Or the Sixth!" said Monty Lowther. Tom Merry pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"I jolly well wish we could get the chance of playing the first eleven," he said. "I hinted it to Kildare the other day."

"And what did he say?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, he said 'Rats!'" confessed Tom Merry. "All the same, we could give them a jolly good game. And we're in topping

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good form now— Hallo, what do you Fourth Form kids want?"

Clink, clink, clink!

Blake was carrying the biscuit-tin. The chums of Study No. 6 marched in. Blake set the tin on the table.

"I say, that's jolly good of you!" said Lowther. "For us, I suppose? What kind of biscuits?"

"Weally, Lowthab—"

"That's the strong-box," explained Blake. "We're out for funds. We've thought of a new and jolly ripping idea!"

"Weally, Blake, I thought of it!"

"Gussy made the first suggestion," admitted Blake generously. "Now we've taken it up, to knock it into shape and make a success of it."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's a self-denial dodge, you know, to raise money for Wayland Cottage Hospital," explained Blake. "They're urgently in need of funds, and it's up to St. Jim's to help. Every chap puts in what he can afford, and especially what he can't afford. This is only the beginning. Shell out!"

"But, I say—"

"No need to say anything," said Blake briskly. "I suppose you don't want to roll in luxury and riotous living while the hospital is appealing for funds?"

"N-no! But—"

"Then shell out! No need to count your money—we want all you've got!"

"My hat!"

"Gussy has generously contributed a whole fiver, as an example to others," said Blake, with a chuckle. "But we're all in it. Shell out!"

"Yaas, wathah! Shell out, deah boys!"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances. Funds were not high in Tom Merry's study just then. Money was "tight."

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus impressively, "I twust it is not necessary for me to make a long speech to show you—"

"I trust not!" said Monty Lowther hurriedly. "Anything but that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I must point out to you that every chap is called upon to self-deny himself at a time like this. This is no time for half measures. St. Jim's is goin' to set an example to the whole district, I twust. This is self-denial week!"

"Oh!"

"Money, or articles of value—all's twist that comes to the mill," said Arthur Augustus.

"Gussy," said Monty Lowther affectionately, "nobody could resist you. The way you put it would bring tears to the eyes of a stone image. I am going to contribute every farthing I've got about me."

"That's wight, Lowthab," said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I twust your example will be followed."

"I trust so," said Lowther. "Every blessed farthing I've got! I can't say more than that, can I?"

"Certainly not, Lowthab! I wegard it as noble and genewous of you. Here's the box."

Monty Lowther fumbled in his pockets, one after the other. From one pocket at last he produced a small coin. It was a farthing. With a smile of conscious merit he dropped it into the biscuit-tin.

"There you are!" he said.

"You—you uttah ass, Lowthab! What do you mean by contwibutin' a farthin' to my fund?" exclaimed Arthur

Augustus warmly. "I wegard this as a wotten joke, Lowthab. You said you would contwibute ewevy farthin' you've got—"

"Well, that's all the farthings I've got," explained Lowther.

"You—you uttah ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't cackle, deah boys. At a time like this, it is no time for wotten jokes. Shell out!"

"It's up to you!" grinned Blake.

"Take it smiling!"

The Terrible Three realised that it was up to them. And, with a good grace, they went through their pockets, and raised by united efforts the sum of one-and-sixpence, which was forthwith added to the collection in the biscuit-tin.

"All you've got?" asked Blake.

"All!"

"Well, you can't give more than that, but remember the biscuit-tin the next time you get a remittance," said Blake warmly. "I'm jolly well going to see that I'm not the only giddy self-denyer in this school. Ta-ta! We'll try Reilly next, you chaps!"

And the collectors marched out of the study with the clinking biscuit-tin. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther looked at one another.

"Cheek!" growled Lowther.

"Well, it's a jolly good idea!"

"That's what I mean, fathead! Cheek of those Fourth Form kids to think of such a wheeze, and leave us out! Where are your brains, Tommy? That blessed kids' study will be getting all the kudos. We ought to have thought of this."

"So we ought!" agreed Tom Merry, wrinkling his brows in thought. "But—but we didn't. But we can do our little bit—if we can think of a scheme for raising more money than they can get with their blessed self-denial."

"How?" said Manners.

"That wants thinking out."

Tom Merry thought it out. He thought it out so earnestly that he let his tea get cold, and Manners and Lowther finished the eggs and toast without his noticing that the table was being cleared. Suddenly the captain of the Shell uttered an exclamation:

"My hat! I've got it!"

"Oh, good! What is it?"

"A footer match—"

"What?"

"Gate money—"

"Well, of all the rotten wheezes!" said Monty Lowther, in disgust. "Who'd pay to see us play footer, I'd like to know? Most likely they'd want to be paid."

"Well, not us, perhaps," agreed Tom. "We're a jolly good team, but I admit that people wouldn't pay to see a junior team play—on its own. But if we can get a topping team to play us, that would make all the difference!"

"Thinking of challenging the Arsenal or Birmingham?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"No; what about St. Jim's first?"

"They won't play us!"

"Won't they? Look here, we could borrow the Ramblers' ground at Rylcombe," said Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming with excitement as he thought out his idea. "It's an enclosure, you know, though people don't usually pay to go in. But they have had matches with gate-money. We'll ask them for the ground one afternoon when they're not playing, and advertise the match in the local paper—see? St. Jim's first is jolly well-known as a first-class team, and lots of people would pay to see them play. They would pay

to come in just for the sake of the funds; we advertise all gate-money given to Wayland Cottage Hospital. We couldn't get a crowd on our own, but the first eleven would bring the crowd—plenty of 'em!"

"But they won't play us!" howled Lowther.

"But we'll make 'em!"

"How?"

"By appealing to their sportsman-ship!" said Tom Merry triumphantly. "Kildare thinks it's beneath the dignity of the first eleven to play a team of fags—that's what they call us, the cheeky bounders. But for the sake of the cause, they can put their pride in their pockets. We'll shame 'em into it!"

"My hat!" Lowther grinned. "It would be a lark!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"Come on!"

"Where?"

"To see Kildare."

"He'll kick us out!" said Manners. "Let him! All for the sake of the cause. Come on, I tell you! Why, we might raise twenty quid for the fund, and give Study No. 6 the kybosh!"

And Tom Merry led the way, and Manners and Lowther followed their leader, though with very considerable misgivings in their minds.

CHAPTER 3.

Misunderstood!

KILDARE of the Sixth rapped out: "Come in!" as a knock came at his door. Kildare was at tea, with Darrell and Lang-ton of his Form. The three great men of the Sixth glanced at the Shell fellows as they came in.

Tom Merry advanced into the study boldly—Manners and Lowther took up a strategic position near the door. They wanted to be near the passage in case of trouble.

"Hallo!" said Kildare good-humouredly. "What do you kids want? If you've come here to fag, you're just in time. You can put some coal on the fire, Merry!"

"Ahem! We didn't come to fag—" "Never mind; you can do it all the same," said the captain of St. Jim's cheerily.

Tom Merry mended the fire.

"Now, Kildare, if you've got a few minutes to spare—"

"Sorry; I haven't!"

"It's rather an important matter," explained Tom. "I suppose you chaps are sportsmen, aren't you?"

The three Sixth Formers looked surprised.

"I hope so," assented Kildare. "What on earth are you driving at?"

"We've got an idea," explained Tom Merry. "You're not playing a footer match next Saturday—the first eleven are—"

"No. What the dickens—"

"We want you to play us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing matter," said Tom Merry indignantly.

"Excuse me, I thought it was!" said Kildare.

"Look here—"

"We're much obliged for the honour you want to do us," said Kildare, "but we decline. I know it's rather ungrateful of us, but we decline. We do really. Shut the door after you, will you?"

"I haven't finished yet—"

"Your mistake; you have," said Kildare. "Get out!"

"You see, there are some very special circumstances in the case. We're going



"Hold on! Chuck it!" gasped Blake & Co. "Yaroooh!" Kildare was using his boot vigorously, and one after another Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy went flying out into the passage, to collapse with loud bumps and louder yells!

to have the Ramblers' ground in Rylcombe; it's an enclosure, you know—"

"There's the door."

"We shall advertise the match—"

"My hat! Will you get out?"

"And charge gate-money—"

"Clear out!" roared Kildare.

"And the gate-money will go—"

Oh—oh! I say, hands off! I tell you—yaroooh!"

Tom Merry flew through the study doorway. The captain of St. Jim's had lost patience. Manners and Lowther hopped into the passage, and picked up their gasping chum. Tom Merry panted for breath.

"Look here, Kildare—"

Slam!

"N.G.!" said Lowther, with a grin. "Chuck it, Tommy!"

Tom Merry shook his head. When he had made up his mind, he could be very firm.

"I'm jolly well not going to chuck it. It's their duty to play us, for the sake of the fund. I haven't explained to Kildare yet. When I explain, he will see it in the proper light. I'm going to try, anyway—"

"Better come away—"

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry opened the study door again. Kildare, Darrell, and Langton simply glared at him. The dignity of the great men of the Sixth was damaged by the bare suggestion of playing a fag team on a footer field.

Kildare jumped up.

"Will you clear off?" he roared.

"I want to explain—you see, we want you to play the junior team, because it—"

"Because you're a set of silly young asses!" growled Kildare. "Any other captain would lick you for your cheek.

And I will, too, by Jove, if you don't clear off this minute! Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek!"

"Get out, for goodness' sake, Merry!" said Darrell, laughing. "We're not looking for the honour and glory of playing fags—we're not, really!"

"Let me explain—"

"Travel!"

"We're going to charge gate-money for seeing the match, and all the cash raised will go to the— Here, chuck it!"

Kildare chuckled it—"it" being Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell alighted in the passage again, with a bump and a yell. Kildare slammed the door angrily, and Tom Merry was picked up by his sympathetic chums.

"Seems a bit difficult to explain to Kildare, doesn't it?" grinned Lowther. "I rather think I should chuck it."

"Ow!" groaned Tom Merry.

"Hurt?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"Yow! Do you think I'm doing this for fun, you ass? Ow, ow!"

Tom Merry limped away down the passage, Manners and Lowther following him, grinning. They were sympathetic, but they grinned. Evidently it was not possible fully to explain to Kildare the object of the proposed match, though if it had been explained at full length, Lowther and Manners doubted whether it would make much difference to Kildare. The dignity of the Sixth Form was at stake, and the first eleven was not likely to play a fag team in any circumstances whatever.

Kildare, Darrell, and Langton settled down to tea again, the captain of St. Jim's looking a little ruffled. Kildare was a very good-tempered fellow, but

there were limits, and in his opinion Tom Merry had passed them that time.

Knock!

Kildare turned an exasperated look towards the door. It opened, and Jack Blake came cheerfully in, with Herries and Digby behind him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy brought up the rear with the biscuit-tin under his arm.

"Hope we're not disturbing you, Kildare," said Blake, somewhat surprised by the glare the captain of St. Jim's gave him. "We've called in to—"

"Buzz off!"

Jack Blake being a prominent member of the junior eleven, Kildare's natural assumption was that he had come to repeat Tom Merry's challenge to the first eleven.

"Ahem! We've got a new scheme!"

"Yaas, wathah, a wippin' scheme!"

"I've heard all about it," roared Kildare, "and I don't want to hear any more. Travel out of my study—sharp!"

"You've heard about it?" said Blake, in surprise. "Well, I suppose it's getting about already. It's a tremendous idea, isn't it?"

"Tremendous cheek, if that's what you mean," said Darrell.

"Cheek!" said Blake. "I don't see where the cheek comes in. I should think that you fellows would back us up in it—Kildare especially, as captain of the school."

"I regard it as Kildare's duty."

"In fact, we look to Kildare to help us out in this," said Digby.

"I'll help you out fast enough," said Kildare, striding towards the astonished Fourth Formers. "Now, out you go! Outside!"

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"Here, I say, what the dickens—My hat! Yaroooh!"
 "Hold on! Chuck it! My hat!"
 "Bai Jove! Weally, Kildare! Gweat Scott!"

Kildare was using his boot vigorously. He might have been shooting for goal by the vigour he put into it. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy went flying out one after another into the passage. The famous biscuit-tin went to the ground with a crash. Then the study door slammed.

The chums of Study No. 6 sat up, dusty and breathless, and stared at one another in amazement and rage.

"Well, my hat!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Bai Jove! I wegard that—ow!—as wotten. Yow!"

"Ow! I'm hurt! Oh, Jerusalem!"

And the much misunderstood collectors for the hospital fund limped away down the passage without any contributions from Kildare's study.

CHAPTER 4.

Rivals in the Field!

"SOLD again!" growled Figgins of the Fourth.

Kerr and Wynn looked at their chum inquiringly. Figgins had just come into the Common-room in the New House, and was looking "wrathy."

"What's the trouble?" asked Kerr.

"Sold again! Those School House bounders have done us!" snapped Figgins.

Fatty Wynn looked alarmed.

"You don't mean to say that they've got at the pie in the study—"

"Blow the pie!" said Figgins. "I'm not talking about pies!"

Fatty Wynn looked relieved. If the School House juniors had raided the Co.'s study and appropriated the pie that was waiting there for supper, Fatty Wynn would have looked glummer than Figgins. But as that greatest of all possible catastrophes had not happened, Fatty felt that he could bear anything else with equanimity.

"Blessed if I know why we didn't think of it!" said Figgins, scratching his head reflectively. "We've got more brains than School House bounders any day!"

"What-ho!"

"And we're Cock House at St. Jim's, aren't we?"

"We are!" said Kerr. "We is!"

"And it's up to us to think of things like this. But we've let those School House bounders take the wind out of our sails!" growled Figgins. "Of course, we could have managed the thing better if we'd thought of it."

"But what is it?" asked Kerr, in astonishment. "What are they up to?"

"And it's a good idea—a jolly good idea!" said Figgins morosely. "It's a School House wheeze, but we've got to admit that it's a good idea—the right thing at the right time, blow 'em!"

"But what—"

"How they came to think of it is a mystery. Blessed if I can make it out! Seems to have been Gussy's idea to begin with. That ass!" said Figgins, in utter disgust. "The New House is nowhere—simply nowhere."

"But you haven't told us—"

"It's a hospital fund, you ass!"

"A hospital fund?" said Kerr.

"Yes; in aid of Wayland Cottage Hospital. No good denying that it's a jolly good idea. We never thought of it," said Figgins. "You know, it's a simply topping idea. They've got a self-denial dodge. Fellows go without things and put the money in a box. When they've saved up enough they hand it over to the hospital, and we hadn't the sense to think of it."

"Go without things," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully.

"That's it. Frinstance, you go without your supper, or jam for tea, or pies and cakes, any old thing, and put the money in the box. Isn't it a ripping idea?"

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn. The expression on Wynn's plump face seemed to imply that he thought there were limits to the rippingness of that idea.

Figgins looked very gloomy. It was the wheeze of the season, as he called

it, and it had emanated from the School House. The rival House was nowhere this time. And Figgins, as chief of the New House juniors, was very jealous of the honour of his House.

"And the worst of it is they're coming over here with their blessed collecting-box!" he grunted. "Coming here!"

"Well, we can shove in some tin," said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes; and help make a success of their wheeze," said Figgins. "And, of course, we can't refuse, because that would be mean. They've got us! We've got to back up their scheme—a rotten School House scheme! And we call ourselves the Cock House of St. Jim's. Brrrr!"

It was a distressing situation, and Figgins & Co. could not decline to back up the hospital fund. That was impossible. They were bound to help it on by every means in their power. And they would be exerting themselves to back up a scheme of the rival House. And the New House would be nowhere.

Kerr wrinkled his brows in thought. "We won't contribute," he suggested.

Figgins snorted.

"Of course we'll contribute," he said. "Nice it would look for us if we were left out. I should think even Fatty would go without a feed for the sake of helping the fund."

"Ye-es," murmured Fatty Wynn. He sighed, but he meant it.

"You don't catch on," said Kerr. "We won't contribute to the School House fund, I mean. We'll start a rival fund, and if we raise more money than they do, we'll beat them at their own game—see?"

"But we can't. There's only half as many fellows in our House as there are in the School House; and we can self-deny ourselves till we're black in the face, and we shan't raise more than half as much as they do."

Kerr nodded.

"I know. But we'll leave them their self-denial. We'll try something else; we must think of a wheeze. There are lots of ways of raising money. All we've got to do is to think of a dodge—Hullo! Here they come!"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy walked into the Common-room with the biscuit-tin under D'Arcy's arm. It clinked as they walked. Already the number of coins in it was mounting up.

"Pax!" said Blake, holding up his hand, as the New House juniors gathered round the four. "Pax, my infants! We've come over for your spare cash. Roll up and contribute to the hospital fund."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys! Small contvibutions thankfully received. Larger ones in pwpotion," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway make a start, Figgins!"

"Rats!" said Figgins.

"Rot!" said Redfern.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Weally, deah boys, I trust you are not goin' to leave the hospital fund in the lurch!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "This is no time for House wows. This is a time for backin' up, shouldab to shouldah."

"Quite so," said Kerr. "Hold on a minute."

Kerr rushed out of the Common-room, and the collectors waited in some surprise for his return. Kerr was back in a minute, but he did not bring a contribution. He brought an empty jam-jar. He held it out to the School House quartet.

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The MAGNET

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the jam-jar in surprise.

"That is no use, Kerr. We are not collectin' wags and bones and bottles and jars."

"That's our collecting-box," explained Kerr.

"What!"

"That's the collecting-box for the New House hospital fund," said Kerr. "I request you to shove something into it."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the New House juniors. "Shell out!"

"Bai Jove! But we are collectin' for the fund—"

"If you can collect, you can contribute," said Figgins, with a chuckle.

"Pay up to the New House hospital fund."

"Pay up!"

"Weally, you wottahs—"

"Look here!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "This is our idea. It's our hospital fund. We're collecting."

"So are we!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "Come on, you chaps! If these bounders won't contribute, we'll try farther on."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Halt!" said Figgins; and a party of New House juniors lined up between the collectors and the doorway.

"You don't go out till you've paid up!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm shocked at you!" said Kerr severely. "At a time like this, I must say I'm shocked at you! Shell out!"

"But we've paid up in our own biscuit-tin!" roared Blake.

"Then you can pay up again in our jam-jar."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I uttably wefuse to have my ideah bowwowed in this way! There is only one hospital fund at St. Jim's, and we're collectin' for it."

"Pay up!"

"I'm waiting with this jam-jar," said Kerr patiently.

"You silly ass—"

"Gentlemen," said Figgins, "at a time like this, I suggest that every fellow who refuses to contribute to the hospital fund shall be bumped!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar the bounders!"

"Look here—" roared Herries.

"Hands off! It's pax!"

"It isn't pax till you've contributed to the hospital fund," said Figgins.

"Self-denial is self-denial; you can't have any half-measures. Pay up—all you've got."

"Gweat Scott! I wefuse—"

"Then you'll be bumped."

"Collar the bounders!"

The crowd of New House fellows closed in on the unfortunate four, Blake & Co. looked at one another helplessly. They had come for wool, and they would be shorn. But there was no help for it.

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as uttably wotten," said Arthur Augustus. "I have only five shillings left—"

"Five bob's better than nothing. Shove them into the jam-jar," said Kerr. "Pay up!"

"Or you'll be bumped till your House won't know you again," grinned Redfern. "We mean business with our hospital fund, I can tell you!"

Blake & Co. went through their pockets with sickly expressions. Figgins & Co. kindly helped them. Every coin the unfortunate four had about them was promptly transferred to the jam-jar.

"I'll put the names and the amount on



our list," said Kerr cheerfully. "You will have the honour of heading the New House list! Now kick 'em out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters—"

"Kick 'em out!"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy made a somewhat hurried departure from the New House. They left Figgins & Co. roaring with laughter. The rival fund had been started, and the School House juniors had started it.

Blake & Co. returned to the School House with the biscuit-tin, containing the same amount as when they crossed the quadrangle with it, and with empty pockets.

Study No. 6 had made a handsome collection in their own House, so far, and the biscuit-tin was clinking with coins. But Study No. 6 themselves were "stony-broke," and likely to remain in that unhappy condition for a considerable time to come.

"Aftah all, it's all wight," said Arthur Augustus, with a feeble attempt at consolation. "It is our self-denial week, you know."

But his chums did not look as if they enjoyed it.

CHAPTER 5.

Going Strong!

THE hospital fund in the School House had started well.

The next day all the school was talking of it. The biscuit-tin in Study No. 6 received many contributions. Blake had fastened the lid on securely, and jabbed a hole through the top, so that contributions could be dropped in. A list was made out of the contributors, and posted up in the Common-room, with the name of the donor and the amount of donation.

There were few fellows who did not hand out something, and the list was soon a long one, and a fresh sheet of impot paper had to be added to it.

Blake also took the precaution of numbering the donations. Thus, when Darrell of the Sixth handed out half-a-crown, Blake marked it on the list thus:

"Darrell. First donation. Two-and-sixpence."

Which was a strong hint that second donations, and third, were requested, and, indeed, expected.

Some of the fellows considered it a better idea to keep their money in their pocket—such as Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, and Crooke of the Shell.

Crooke was the son of a millionaire, and had plenty of money, but he did not seem disposed to part with any of it, however worthy the object.

Levison and Mellish were not over-blessed with cash, and they explained that what they had they wanted. That explanation was not good enough.

Arthur Augustus pointed out to them eloquently that the more they wanted the money themselves, the more credit there was in handing it out to the hospital fund. To which Levison replied:

"Rats!" And Mellish: "Rot!" Self-denial did not seem to appeal to them somehow.

But they were not to escape easily. After morning lessons, Arthur Augustus tackled them in the Form-room passage, in the presence of all the Fourth.

Levison and Mellish spotted him with the biscuit-tin, and would have hurried off, but the swell of St. Jim's planted himself in their way.

"Contributions, please."

"Oh, clear off!" said Levison irritably.

"Go and eat coke!" growled Mellish.

"Weally, deah boys, I am shocked at you! I appeal to all the fellows whethah it is not up to these boundahs to contribute."

"Shell out!" chorused the Fourth Formers.

"Pay up, you worms!"

"Don't be Shylocks!"

"Considah the example of the othah chaps who are wathah hard up," urged Arthur Augustus. "There is Bwooke, who is only a day-boy, and has to work—well, he has put in five shillin's. Then there is Talbot—you know he's a scholarship chap, and hasn't vewy much cash, but he has handed out ten shillin's. You have more money than old Talbot."

"Look here—"

"You had a remittance this morning, Levison," said Reilly. "Shell out!"

Levison looked exasperated.

It was true that he had had a remittance, but he had intended to expend it for the benefit of Ernest Levison. Part of it was to go in "smokes," that being one of the indulgences of the black sheep of the Fourth. And he was extremely disinclined to see it disappear into the capacious biscuit-tin.

"Shell out!" chorused the juniors, gathering round Levison in a grinning crowd. To most of them it was a first-class "laugh" to see Levison compelled to part with some money. It gave Levison a pain to have to give anything away.

"I am surprised at you, Levison," said D'Arcy severely. "You have been wathah improv'in' lately; I had begun to wegard you as weally almost a decent chap. I twant you are not goin' to wuin my good opinion of you."

"Blow your opinion!" growled Levison.

"Oh, let the mean beast alone!" growled Blake. "If he wants to keep his dirty postal order, let him keep it."

"Yaas, and the despicion—I mean, the contempt—of all the House with it!" said Arthur Augustus crushingly.

Levison flushed uncomfortably. He did not like to hear it put like that. He fumbled in his pockets.

"That's wight, deah boy," said D'Arcy encouragingly. "You'll be glad aftahwards that you haven't acted like a wottah. At a time like this a fellow is called upon to sacwifice anythin' he has. Wich and poor alike—they all ought to hand out. Any fellow who hasn't any money can sell somethin' to waise tin."

"You mean that?" asked Levison.

"Certainly!"

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"All serene!" said Levison, with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "I'll remind you of that. Here's my postal order."

A postal order for five shillings was squeezed into the tin.

"Bwavo!"

"Good for you, Levison!"

"Your turn, Mellish! Pay up!"

"I'm stony!" said Mellish savagely.

"Vewy well, if you're stony sell somethin'," said Arthur Augustus. "One of the chaps will buy your penknife."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want my pocket-knife!" roared Mellish.

"Not so much as you want to contribute to the fund, deah boy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Sure, pay up and look pleasant intirely!" urged Reilly. "You don't want to be the only mean skunk in the House!"

Mellish made a wry face, but public opinion was too strong for him. He unwillingly took out his pocket-knife.

"What offers?" said Blake, with a chuckle.

"Bai Jove, I'd make an offah myself, only all my tin is in the biscuit-tin and the jam-jar ovah the way!" said Arthur Augustus. "What offahs, deah boys, for Mellish's pocket-knife? Pway make a good offah for the good of the cause."

Jameson of the Third offered three-pence. Wally D'Arcy, the younger brother of Arthur Augustus, raised it to a tanner. A shilling was offered by Gore of the Shell, and the pocket-knife was knocked down to Gore.

Mellish, looking almost green, saw his pocket-knife disappear into Gore's pocket and the shilling into the biscuit-tin.

"Bravo, Mellish!"

"Bai Jove, we're goin' stwong!" said Arthur Augustus, as he marched off with his chums and the biscuit-tin. "This is goin' to be a great success. We've got to make Cwooke pay up somehow. Hallo! There's Cutts! Wun him down!"

And the collectors rushed after Cutts of the Fifth. He, however, was not contributing. He let out with his boot instead, and the biscuit-tin sailed through the air and landed several yards away, with a crash and a terrific clinking. The wrathful collectors rushed after it, and Cutts walked away.

Levison and Mellish walked out of the House, Mellish looking sulky and Levison grinning. An idea was working in Levison's active brain.

"Now I'm cleared out!" growled Mellish.

"Same here," said Levison. "Never mind, it's a good cause. And I've got an idea."

"Blow your idea!" granted Mellish.

"But it's a jolly good one," said Levison, with a chuckle. And he proceeded to explain to Mellish in subdued tones. And when he had finished Mellish was chuckling, too, and had quite forgotten the loss of his pocket-knife.

CHAPTER 6.

Polite Letter-Writers!

TOM MERRY was busy that day. The Terrible Three felt that it was up to them.

Study No. 6 had started a self-denial dodge which seemed to be panning out successfully.

Figgins & Co. had started a New House collection, and were supposed to be planning some wheeze for raising unheard-of sums.

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The Terrible Three, who looked upon themselves justly as great leaders, were in danger of being put quite in the shade, which, of course, was not to be thought of. That consideration, added to the goodness of the cause, made them wire in with great energy. Tom Merry's scheme, if it was a success, would bring in funds, and would bring the Terrible Three to the front—their proper place, as Tom remarked.

The first steps were easy. The Rylcombe Ramblers, of whom Grimes was captain, willingly loaned their ground for Saturday afternoon. Grimes, the grocer's boy of Rylcombe, was ready to do anything to help. Besides lending the enclosure, he undertook to help to get a crowd to come in. As all Grimes' friends and acquaintances could not afford threepences and sixpences it was agreed that the crowd should pay anything they liked at the gates so long as they paid something.

Then Tom Merry visited the offices of the "Rylcombe Gazette" and arranged for large advertisements in the local paper. The adverts were on tick as money was short; but Tom Merry was well-known there, as the "Gazette" had the printing order for "Tom Merry's Weekly," so there was no difficulty about that.

Tom gave also an order for a number of posters in red and blue to be posted up about Rylcombe and the neighbourhood to advertise the match, and some were to be sent to him at St. Jim's to be stuck up about the school.

The Terrible Three walked back to St. Jim's very well satisfied with what they had done so far.

"Only," said Lowther, "suppose the first team won't play us?"

"But they've got to!" said Tom decidedly.

"But suppose they won't?" said Manners dubiously. "We shall look a set of asses, with the match advertised and all that. The crowd will come—lots of people are bound to come when they know that all the gate-money is for charity—and there won't be any match for them if Kildare won't play."

"They've got to, that's all!"

Tom Merry was quite decided about that. His belief was that when the sportsmanship of the first eleven was appealed to they would play up. If they wouldn't, they would be forced to somehow, the how not yet being decided upon.

The St. Jim's first was famous in the vicinity, and their matches often attracted large crowds. There was no doubt that Kildare and his team would be a draw. They had to be got to play, that was all.

After all the arrangements were made in this thorough-going manner Tom Merry felt that they couldn't very well get out of it. He did not mean to let them get out of it. His next step was to explain to Kildare what had been done.

He found Kildare in the prefects' room. The captain of St. Jim's held up his hand when the Terrible Three came in.

"I've paid!" he exclaimed.

"Same here," said Langton, laughing. "D'Arcy has been round with the biscuit-tin."

"So has Figgins with the jam-jar," said Darrell.

"So you can hook it!" said Rushden.

"Nuff's as good as a feast!"

Tom Merry smiled.

"I haven't come for collections," he said. "That's all right. I've come about the match."

"The match!" said Kildare, frowning.

"Yes. I want to explain the object of—"

"Cheese it!"

"All the gate-money will be devoted to—"

"Clear off!" shouted Kildare.

He jumped up, and the Terrible Three executed a masterly retreat from the prefects' room. In the passage Monty Lowther whistled softly.

"Looks like N.G.!" murmured Manners.

"Bosh!" said Tom Merry decisively.

"If Kildare won't let us explain to him by word of mouth, we shall have to write to him. I'll write a note and get a fag to take it."

"Oh, good!" said Lowther admiringly.

A quarter of an hour later D'Arcy minor of the Third Form entered the prefects' room with a note in his hand and a grin on his face.

"For you, Kildare."

D'Arcy minor handed over the note to the captain of St. Jim's and promptly retreated.

Kildare opened the letter. It ran:

"Dear Kildare,—I want to explain to you that the football match, first eleven v. junior eleven, is to take place for the benefit of the hospital fund."

"All the gate-money—expected to be very considerable—will be handed over to the fund without deductions."

"Therefore, it is up to the first eleven, as sportsmen, to play in the match. The Ramblers' ground in Rylcombe has been secured. Advertisements of the match are already out."

"In these circumstances, I hope you will reply, fixing the match for Saturday afternoon. Kick-off any time you like."

"R.S.V.P."

"TOM MERRY."

Kildare read the note, and frowned. He handed it to Darrell, and it passed round among the lofty occupants of the prefects' room. There were a good many frowns, and some laughter.

"Cheeky beggars!" said Darrell.

"Awful nerve!" said Rushden, laughing. "Of course, we can't play them! It would be too ridiculous."

"Of course we can't!" growled Kildare. "The Sixth Form playing kids in the Shell and the Fourth! Of course we can't! It would be too absurd!"

"Only they don't see it," grinned Rushden. "They think they could play us, the silly asses!"

"Before a big crowd, too! Catch us!"

"The young duffer thinks we shall have to give in, to help his blessed fund!" said Kildare, knitting his brows. "Of course we want to help the fund, or any fund for the same purpose. But we can't make the first eleven look ridiculous. That's what the young duffers can't see."

"R.S.V.P.," smiled Darrell, glancing at Tom Merry's letter again. "Are you going to answer?"

"Yes," said Kildare grimly.

He took the letter and scrawled across it in pencil:

"Take fifty lines.—KILDARE."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare called in a fag and handed him the letter, with instructions to take it to Tom Merry. It was Frayne of the Third who bore the message.

The Terrible Three were in their study, chatting with Talbot while they

waited for an answer. Frayne handed Tom Merry the note.

"Here's Kildare's answer," said Tom. "I hope it's 'yes,'" said Talbot, with a smile.

Tom Merry looked puzzled as he unfolded the letter.

"It's my own letter again. My hat!" "What's the answer?" asked Manners.

"Look!" Manners, Lowther, and Talbot read out together:

"Take fifty lines.—Kildare."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Nothing to cackle at!" growled Tom Merry crossly. "Kildare hasn't answered me. Wait a minute, Frayne. Take this to Kildare."

Tom Merry hastily scribbled on a fresh sheet of paper, Joe Frayne waiting for the note. Tom's second message was brief:

"Dear Kildare,—I don't quite understand your note. Will you kindly reply to my letter and tell me that we can depend on you for the match on Saturday afternoon?—Tom MERRY."

"Take this to Kildare and wait for an answer, kid," said Tom, as he handed the note to the waiting fag.

"Right-ho!" said Frayne.

The fag departed, and the Shell fellows waited rather anxiously for his return. In a few moments Frayne came back into the study, with a note in his hand. Tom Merry spread it out on the table, and the Shell fellows read it:

"Take a hundred lines.—Kildare."

The chums of the Shell looked at one another with rather sickly expressions. Kildare's reply was not exactly to the point, but its meaning could not be misunderstood. The first eleven were not taking any.

"I call it cheek!" said Manners, after a long pause.

"Considering the object of the match," said Lowther, "I call it unsportsmanlike!"

"It's a disappointment, anyhow," remarked Talbot. "But—"

"But we're not finished yet," said Tom Merry. "There's something more going to be done."

"Lines?" suggested Lowther, with a feeble attempt at humour.

"Oh, blow the lines! They're going to play!"

Tom Merry spoke with great determination. The first eleven were going to play in that match for the hospital fund somehow.

"Hear, hear!" said Manners, Lowther, and Talbot. But they looked doubtful, all the same.

CHAPTER 7.

Sale Announced!

"BAI Jove!" "What a giddy surprise!" "Levison, too!" "Well, this takes the cake!"

There was amazement in the faces of all the juniors collected before the school notice-board in the School House.

They had reason to be amazed. On the board was pinned a new notice, in the handwriting of Levison. And it was simply astonishing. It ran, in large, displayed letters, to catch the eye:

"HOSPITAL FUND!"

"At 8 p.m. a sale will take place in the Common-room in the School House. Valuable articles of all kinds will be offered for sale. The whole proceeds of the sale will be devoted to the St. Jim's Hospital Fund!"

"All St. Jim's fellows are urged to attend the sale, and bring all their spare cash with them. No reserve! Every article knocked down to the highest bidder!"

"Among the lots will be letter-cases, fountain-pens, silver pencil-cases, cornets, silk hats of the very best quality, a large assortment of fashionable neckties, splendid overcoats, footballs, football boots, cricket bats all ready for next season, etc., etc."

"No reserve!"

"The highest bidder takes the cake!"

"This Grand Sale has been arranged by Ernest Levison of the Fourth Form, who will act as auctioneer. Every article will be sold, regardless of value, to the highest bidder."

"Now is the time! Help the Wayland Cottage Hospital, and secure good

had turned over an entirely new leaf, and was prepared to stagger humanity by making greater personal sacrifices than any other contributor to the hospital fund.

"I wogard this as wippin' of Levison," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy enthusiastically. "I must say, I am surprised. But it is wippin'. He is cawwyin' self-denial furthah than any of us!"

"Must be a jape!" growled Herries. "Levison doesn't do that kind of thing. Self-denial isn't in his line."

"Can't be genuine," said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head. "It must be a rag. He's trying to pull our leg. There'll be a crowd in the Common-room at eight o'clock, but there won't be any auction. That must be his little game."

"We'll jolly well mob him if he makes asses of us like that!" growled Digby.

"It must be that," said Kangaroo of the Shell. "Fancy Levison parting with all his props! Rats!"

"Besides, he hasn't such a blessed lot of props as that," remarked Clifton Dane. "He isn't rolling in money."

"May have been making a collection of things to sell," hazarded Talbot.

"I haven't heard of it, if he has."

"Same here. It's gammon!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I hardly think that Levison would twy to gammon us on such a serious object as the hospital fund, deah boys," he remarked.

Figgins & Co. walked in. They were looking very surprised.

"Hallo! You've got it here, too!" said Figgins, stopping to stare at the notice. "We've got one of these papers in our House. Mellish came and stuck it there."

"My hat!"

"If it's genuine, we're coming over to the sale, of course," said Kerr. "We'll bring a crowd to make the bidding lively. But is it genuine?"

"Blessed if I know!" confessed Blake. "It's queer, I must say. Still, if Levison means business, we'll do him justice. Let's go and see him."

"Good egg!"

A crowd of astonished and curious juniors sought for Levison. He was found in his study in the Fourth Form passage. His studymates were there—Mellish, Blenkinsop, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. Blenkinsop and Lumley-Lumley had seen the notice in the Hall, and they were questioning Levison about it. Blenkinsop, who was a simple youth, was expressing his admiration for Levison's generosity. Lumley-Lumley, who wasn't at all simple, was expressing his opinion that it was spoof.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now, Levison—"

"What's the little game, Levison?"

"Whose leg are you pulling?"

"What do you mean by that giddy notice?"

Levison yawned.

"Can't you read?" he asked.

"We've read it," said Tom Merry.

"But what does it mean? Is there really going to be a sale?"

"Yes."

"Honest Injun?" asked Figgins.

"We don't want to march an army of New House chaps over here for nothing."

"Honest Injun!" said Levison.

"You won't come for nothing. It will be a genuine sale. No reserve. All articles knocked down to the highest bidder. A jolly good chance to get

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bargains! Lay in your new overcoat for the spring, and your new cricket bat for the summer. Sport a fashionable necktie.

"(Signed) ERNEST LEVISON."

The juniors read that announcement with an astonishment which was not complimentary to Ernest Levison, but which was natural enough.

Levison was supposed to be exceedingly selfish, and very close with money. He was seldom or never known to give anything away. True, of late Tom Merry & Co. had observed a marked improvement in the character of the cad of the Fourth.

Talbot had lent him a helping hand in a bad corner, and Levison had shown gratitude—a new thing for Levison. And the incident seemed to have influenced him for good in many ways.

But that his reform would go to this extent was amazing. The idea of Levison selling off his private property in a public auction for the good of the fund made the fellows gasp.

But there it was, written in Levison's hand, and signed with Levison's name. It certainly looked as if the black sheep

good bargains, and to show your generosity at the same time."

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish, with a grin. "We expect to raise a really handsome sum for the hospital fund."

"Hallo! Is Mellish in it, too?" asked Kerr.

"Certainly!" said Mellish.

"You're putting up things to sell—you?" ejaculated Blake.

"I'm putting up as much as Levison, anyway."

"Bai Jove! I wegard it as wathah wotten to hint a doubt of Levison's motives," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard Levison as playin' up splendidly!"

Levison gave him a curious look.

"You approve?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Good!"

"I'm only sowwy that our study is out of funds, and won't be able to bid," said Arthur Augustus. "Othahwise, we would twy our vewy best to wun the pwices up."

"There'll be plenty of bidders if the sale comes off," said Bernard Glyn. "I'm in funds and I'll lend cash to intending purchasers, if they want it."

"Hear, hear!"

"And Crooke, too. We'll make him bid—"

"Oh, I'll bid if there's anything worth bidding for!" said Crooke, rattling his money in his trousers pockets—a habit he had. There was always a jingle of cash about Crooke of the Shell. "But I don't believe Levison has anything to sell that's worth buying."

"Wait and see!" said Levison sentimentally.

"Where's the saleable property?" asked Reilly.

"The lots will be produced when the sale is ready to begin. They're not on view until then," said Levison. "I hope everybody will turn up. I give you my word, there will be a big sale at bargain prices."

"Oh, we'll come!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You chaps can help," added Levison to Study No. 6. "If you can't bid, you can be there to help the auctioneer—hand out the things, and so on. It will be a pleasure to have your assistance on the occasion; a very great pleasure indeed."

Mellish burst into a cackle.

"Certainly!" said Blake, staring at Mellish. "Where does the cackle come in, Mellish?"

"Oh, don't mind him!" said Levison hastily, with a glare at his chum. "I suppose I can depend on you four chaps before eight?"

"Yes; but—"

"Then you can help me get the saleable articles on the spot," said Levison. "They'll be packed in a big box. That's all."

"Can't we see any of the things now?" asked Patty Wynn.

"Not on view."

"Blessed if I don't think it's a rag after all!" said Higgins suspiciously.

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "Levison is all wight, and he is actin' nobly. And I call upon all the fellows of both Houses to wally wound at the sale."

"Hear, hear!"

And as there was no further information to be obtained from Levison and Mellish, the curious juniors retired from the study. They hardly knew what to think; but it was settled that everybody was to turn up at the sale, and if the sale didn't come off, everybody agreed with Blake that Levison should

have the ragging of his life for pulling their legs.

And the fellows of both Houses looked forward with great keenness and curiosity to eight o'clock that evening, when Levison was to appear in the new and surprising role of an auctioneer.

CHAPTER 8.

The Auction!

BEFORE eight had struck, the Junior Common-room in the School House was crowded, not to say crammed. All sorts and conditions of fellows were there.

Juniors of both Houses came in crowds—the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third Forms. And as the fame of the sale had spread, there was a good sprinkling of seniors.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in his keenness to help on the good work, had constituted himself into a regular advertiser for the auction, and had spread its fame far and wide, and so a good many seniors had promised to look in.

D'Arcy had succeeded in getting Kildare and Darrell to promise to come, and their example brought many others. Cutts & Co. of the Fifth looked in, not specially to back up a worthy object, but to look out for bargains, and in a spirit of curiosity.

It was agreed on all hands that it was a noble object, and that therefore the dignity of the seniors would not be compromised by mixing with a junior crowd. So they came in good numbers.

The apartment was large, but the space was well filled long before eight o'clock. As yet the auctioneer and his assistant had not appeared. There were calls for Mellish and Levison on all sides. But so far they were not to be seen. Some doubting Thomases averred that they didn't intend to come, at all, and that there wouldn't be a sale.

The table was dragged up to one end of the room, and a large hammer, borrowed from the toolshed, lay upon it, all ready for the auctioneer. And a soapbox was there to form a rostrum for that functionary.

As eight o'clock drew nearer, impatience was shown on all sides. The chums of Study No. 6 were ready to help the auctioneer, but he had not come. They sat on the table in the meantime, waiting for him.

"There goes eight!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as the hour began to strike from the old tower.

"He isn't here!" growled Blake.

"Here he comes!"

Levison walked into the crowded room with Mellish at his heels. The doubting Thomases were silenced now. The auctioneer had come!

"Where's the goods?" demanded Gore of the Shell.

"Just coming," said Levison briskly.

"We've been packing them into a box to bring here."

"We could have helped you do that," said Blake.

"Oh, that's all right! You can come and help us carry the box," said Levison. "We've borrowed D'Arcy's biggest trunk from the box-room."

"You are vewy welcome, deah boy."

"Thanks! Will you fellows come and lend a hand? It's rather heavy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The four chums departed with Levison and Mellish, and the crowd waited eagerly. It looked like real business at last!

In a few minutes the six came back,

carrying among them a trunk of extremely large dimensions, the lid of which was closed.

It seemed to weigh a good deal, by the evident exertions of the six juniors in carrying it; but the trunk when empty was no light weight.

"Here's the goods! Hurrah!"

The trunk was carried in and planted down with a bump behind the table, within easy reach of the auctioneer's stand. Mellish took up his position in front of it, ready to hand up the goods to the auctioneer, Blake & Co. lined up on the other side of the table, between the auctioneer and the audience.

"Gentlemen—" began Levison.

"Hear, hear!"

Levison gave a flourish with the hammer.

"Gentlemen, the sale is about to begin. You are already acquainted with the nature of this sale. There is no reserve. Every article here is a good one and will go cheap—to the highest bidder, anyway. Every article has been willingly and cheerfully contributed by its owner to be sold to swell the fund."

"Bravo!"

"I need not dwell on the worthy and deserving nature of the fund," went on Levison, waxing eloquent. "You have heard of it from D'Arcy, here present, who has described it much better than I can—"

"No, no!"

"Oh, weally, Levison—" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost overcome by that flattering allusion to himself.

"I mean it," said Levison. "In case any of you should have forgotten, I will repeat D'Arcy's noble expressions—"

"Oh, weally, deah boy—"

"D'Arcy says—and we all endorse it—that every fellow who is worth his salt should support the hospital fund. Every fellow ought to be prepared to make any kind of sacrifice. Self sacrifice is the order of the day!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted the juniors. They had never expected Levison to come out like this. Still, after his idea of selling off his property to help the fund, really nothing could surprise them.

"To quote our respected friend D'Arcy again, a fellow who hesitates to make any sacrifice is a wank wottah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, I need say no more. The sale will now begin. Four of you"—Levison indicated the chums of Study No. 6—"being in the state usually known as stony, are unable to bid, and have promised to help me in my work. I appeal to them to see that order is kept, and to keep down all disturbances. I ask them to give me their word that there shall be no disturbances during the sale."

Blake & Co. stared at Levison.

"What the dickens—"

"Of course there won't be any interruptions," said Blake. "What are you driving at?"

"You promise to keep order and see that the sale is not interrupted?"

"Certainly! It isn't necessary, but we do."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well. Now to business. Hand up the first article, Mellish."

Mellish grinned, and opened the trunk and took out the first article, a very handsome cricket bat, which had evidently not cost less than a guinea. Mellish held it up for general inspection.

"Lot No. 1—a handsome cricket bat. What offers?"

Arthur Augustus jumped, and turned his eyeglass scrutinisingly upon the bat.

"Hold on a minute, Levison! That looks like my bat!"

"The handsome cricket bat," went on Levison, unheeding, "cost a guinea. I am aware that we are now in the football season, but cricket will soon be starting, and then bats will be to the fore again. This very handsome cricket bat—"

"Weally, Levison—"

"Two bob!" called out Gore.

"But that is my bat!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly. "You are makin' a mistake, Levison! You have got the wrong bat! That is mine!"

"Two bob I am offered," said Levison, apparently deaf to the excited voice of the swell of St. Jim's. "Two bob for this very handsome bat!"

"Three bob!"

"I wefuse to allow this to pwoceed!" shrieked D'Arcy. "That is my bat! You must have taken that bat fwom my study, Levison."

"Yes, that's Gussy's bat right enough," said Blake. "What's your little game, Levison? You can't sell D'Arcy's bat."

"Can't I?" said Levison, with a stare. "Why not?"

"Why not?" stuttered Arthur Augustus. "Why, because it's mine, you wottah!"

"That makes no difference," said Levison coolly.

"N-no difference!"

"Certainly not. This is a time to sacrifice everything for the fund. I appeal to all the fellows if you didn't say so, to the extent of giving up everything—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite right!"

"Well caught!"

"Goal!" chuckled Blake. "He's got you, Gussy. You can't go back on your word. It's up to you!"

"B-but I want my bat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the whole

crowd, delighted at the turn things were taking. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face alone, as Lowther remarked, was worth a guinea a box.

"Play up, Gussy!"

"Play the game!"

"Levison, you wottah, hand me that bat, or I'll give you a thick eah!"

"Do you mean that you are going to interrupt the sale?" demanded Levison.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what about your promise?"

"My—my pwomise?"

"Certainly! You four chaps have given me your word that the sale shall not be interrupted."

"Oh cwumbs!"

The crammed room rang with laughter. The fellows understood now why the auctioneer had extracted that promise from the chums of Study No. 6. They had promised that the sale should not be interrupted. After that they could hardly proceed to interrupt it themselves.

Arthur Augustus' face was a study. And the fellows who considered that the swell of St. Jim's had been a little too pressing with the biscuit-tin enjoyed his discomfiture to the full.

"Three shillings I am offered for this excellent cricket bat, once the property of D'Arcy of the Fourth, and generously devoted to the fund."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take it smiling, Gussy!" grinned Blake. "You're fairly caught! Must practise what you preach, you know. And it's all for the good of the cause, anyway."

"Vewy well. I agwee, Levison."

"Bravo, D'Arcy! Four bob!" called out Glyn.

"Five bob!"

"Six!"

"This handsome bat, going for six bob!" said the auctioneer. "Going—going—gone! This handsome bat goes to Lumley-Lumley for six bob. My assistant will take the money. Thank you!"

Lumley-Lumley paid over the six shillings and put the bat under his arm. Mellish chuckled and clinked the six shillings into a coffee-pot placed there for the occasion. And amid great hilarity the auctioneer's assistant proceeded to hand up Lot No. 2 to the enterprising auctioneer.

CHAPTER 9.

Put to the Test!

"LOT NO. 2!" announced the auctioneer. "A very handsome violin, with case and bow complete. Initials 'J. B.' on the case, but can be painted over by the new owner. What offers for this very handsome violin?"

Jack Blake stood like a statue for a moment, dumb with wrath, as he recognised his violin in the hands of the auctioneer. Then he gave a roar.

"Levison, you rotter! Gimme my violin!"

"This violin has seen service, but is still in very good condition," said the auctioneer calmly. "Some of you have heard it played in Study No. 6."

"Ha, ha, ha! We have!"

"That's my violin!" roared Blake. "You're not going to sell my violin, you—your burglar! I'll wallop you if you don't hand it over! Sharp, now!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's turn to chuckle.

"That's all wight, Blake, deah boy. Take it smilin'. You must pwactise what you pweach, deah boy. It's all for the good of the cause, anyway! Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of merriment from the crowd. The sale was exceeding all their expectations. Levison's cool nerve in thus taking the promoters of the self-denying scheme at their word and collaring their property to sell by auction for the hospital fund seemed to everybody there the richest joke of the term—to everybody, that is, but the



"Lot No. 1, a handsome cricket bat!" said Levison. "What offers?" "I wefuse to allow this to pwoceed!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "That is my bat! You have taken it fwom my study!"

owners of the property. They were by no means prepared to see their principles carried out to this extent. And Blake liked his violin. It was an old friend.

"Gentlemen, what offers for this violin? Those of you who have heard it played in Study No. 6 may think it is a rotten violin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But that's quite a mistake. With a different player it will go rippingly. A lot depends on the player. What offers?"

"Ninepence!" shrieked Jameson of the Third.

"One-and-six!" shouted Curly Gibson.

"You're not selling my violin!" bellowed Blake. "If you don't hand it over I'll come over the table to you."

"Order!" shouted the juniors. "Don't interrupt the sale."

"Wemembah your pwomise, Blake, deah boy."

"Go ahead, auctioneer!"

"One-and-six I am offered for this ripping violin," said Levison coolly. "I put it to you, gentlemen, this violin is worth more than one-and-six. I appeal specially to members of the Fourth Form. It is worth something to get it out of the Fourth Form passage."

"Hear, hear!"

"My hat! I—I—I'll slaughter him!" gasped Blake. D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby were holding him back from scrambling across the big table at the auctioneer. "Leggo, you fatheads! Leggo, I tell you!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Play the game!" said Herries. "You can't go back on your own word! We're in for it now, and we can't eat

our words in public, Blake. Think of the prestige of the study."

"Two bob!" called out Kerraish.

"Two bob I am offered—"

Kildare pushed his way through the laughing juniors. Room was made at once for the captain of St. Jim's.

"Hold on!" said Kildare. "Don't carry a joke too far, Levison. You can't sell Blake's property without Blake's permission."

"Blake has already given permission," said Levison.

"I haven't!" roared Blake.

"I say you have! You endorsed D'Arcy's remarks on the subject. Nobody has a right to hold back anything at a time like this. You were fast enough to collar my postal order—all I had. I put it to the fellows—I gave all I had, and I'm left stony. Mellish sold his pocket-knife. Isn't Blake called upon to keep to his word?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Play the game, Blake!"

Jack Blake calmed himself with a great effort. He realised that it was a new example of Levison's cunning and peculiar sense of humour in thus turning the words of the unfortunate chums against themselves. But undoubtedly they were fairly caught. They were in a cleft-stick.

The chums had meant all they said about self-denial and making sacrifices, but they had not anticipated its being taken in hand by a third party and pushed to this awful extreme. Still, there was no way of getting out of it without eating their own words. Blake gave a curt nod.

"Pile in!" he said, with an effort.

"You needn't consent to the sale if you don't want to, Blake," said Kildare.

"Oh, that's all right! Nobody shall say that I don't play the game and keep my word," growled Blake. "I consent!"

Kildare laughed. The sale proceeded cheerfully; but musical instruments were not much in demand, and the violin was knocked down for four shillings to a Fourth Former.

Blake drew comfort from the fact, as he would undoubtedly be able to repurchase the violin from the purchaser later on when he was in funds once more. If the bidder had gone up to its value, that would have been a more difficult matter.

"Lot No. 3!" rapped out Levison.

All eyes were eagerly turned on the auctioneer to see what Lot No. 3 might be. The juniors guessed now what Levison's little game was, and did not expect to see any of the auctioneer's own property among the lots. And they were right.

Lot No. 3 proved to be a cornet. There was only one cornet in the School House, and it was easily recognised as the instrument with which Herries sometimes made night hideous.

"Gentlemen, what offers for this handsome cornet—"

"My cornet!" spluttered Herries.

"Handsome cornet, with check action, back-pedal brake, and ball bearings complete!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, I'll give a bob, if only to keep Herries from playing it any more, bedad!" said Reilly. Reilly of the Fourth had the study next to Herries, and he knew that cornet.

"Look here—" roared Herries.

"Shush!"

"Don't interrupt the sale!"

"Play the game, Study No. 6!"

Herries was red with rage and consternation. But Blake, D'Arcy, and Digby gathered round him, urging resignation. There was nothing to be done.

D'Arcy's bat was gone, and Blake's violin had followed, and there wasn't any reason why Herries' cornet shouldn't be sacrificed to save the honour of the study. At least, Study No. 6 would be able to keep up their reputation for playing the game, though it began to look as if they would not be able to keep anything else.

"Pway take it calmly, Hewwies, deah boy. Bettah to play the game than to play the cornet," said Arthur Augustus.

"I'll scalp him!" muttered Herries furiously.

"Gentlemen, I am offered a bob for this formidable—I mean, this valuable cornet. I put it to you that this cornet cannot go at a mere bob. Now, gentlemen, I am waiting for your bids. Remember the noble cause—"

"Half-a-crown!" from Kangaroo.

"Three bob!"

"And sixpence!"

"Three shillings and sixpence I am offered for this awful—this admirable cornet, formerly the property of George Herries, and nobly devoted to the hospital fund. Going—going—gone to Ray for three-and-six! Kindly step up and pay the assistant, Ray."

"Hold on, though," said Ray. "Does Herries agree?"

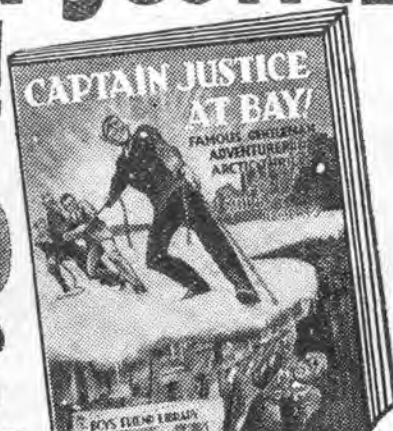
"Yes!" gasped Herries.

He could hardly find his voice. That cornet was the apple of his eye. It came only second to Towser in his affections.

"You can have it back next week at the same figure, old chap," said Ray, laughing. "I don't suppose I shall hurt it practising. Here are the boblets!"

"Lot No. 4!" said the auctioneer, amid loud laughter. There was a loud blast upon the cornet—Ray was already

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trying his new purchase. "Order! Gentlemen are not allowed to play their purchases in the sale-room. Lot No. 4, a handsome Russia-leather letter-case, with the initials 'R. A. D.' on the back—"

"My letter-case!" howled Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where are the things that were in it?" roared Digby, with almost a homicidal glare at the cheerful auctioneer.

"They're safe," said Levison. "I put them in the wastepaper-basket in your study for safety. Gentlemen, what offers for a Russia-leather letter-case—"

"Oh, you rotter!" groaned Digby.

He made no further protest; he realised that he had to share the fate of his chums.

"Eighteenpence!"

"Two bob!"

"Three bob!"

"Three bob I am offered, Gentlemen, what bids? Remember, this is a Russia-leather case. Did a gentleman say four bob?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Four bob!"

"Going, going, gone for four bob to Tom Merry of the Shell!"

And Tom Merry paid up, then took the letter-case, which he promptly slipped into poor Digby's hand.

"Settle up later," murmured Tom. And Digby gave him a grateful glance.

"Let's see Lot No. 5!" shouted Gore. "Buck up with Lot No. 5!"

Lot No. 5 turned out to be a match football. Nobody was surprised to see that it was Jack Blake's footer. They knew what to expect now. The crowd grinned joyously at the expression on Jack Blake's face. But the owner of the footer raised no objection. He knew that he had to grin and bear it, though he mentally promised Levison all sorts of things after the sale.

The footer fetched quite a good price, footers being in demand just then. Lot No. 6 proved to be a new silk hat, and there was a shout of laughter when D'Arcy gasped faintly that it was his newest Sunday topper.

The sale-room was in a ripple of merriment now, as Levison's scheme was fully understood. While the crowd had been waiting there, Levison and Mellish had evidently been packing in the big trunk all the movable property belonging to Blake & Co. that they could lay hands on, and then the victimised juniors had helped them to carry it to the auction.

All the lots so far belonged to Study No. 6, and it was pretty certain that the rest of the things in the trunk were their property. And the juniors roared with laughter, and wondered how long they would stand it.

The Terrible Three were sympathetic towards the unfortunate propounders of the self-denial scheme, but they could not help laughing. After all, Study No. 6 were only being taken at their word. It was just like Levison to play a trick of this sort; but there was no finding fault with his action.

Study No. 6 were there to stop the sale if they liked. Only they couldn't—being bound by their own programme of self-denial, which certainly they had urged on other fellows without mercy.

Blake & Co. looked at one another with sickly looks.

"We're in for it," said Blake. "We've got to grin and bear it. Anyway, they shan't say that Study No. 6 wasn't as good as its word! We—we didn't expect this—but we're playing the game!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

D'Arcy's silk topper passed from hand



to hand. It was a really handsome topper, of the very latest style; but the juniors wanted to try the fit before they bid. It was finally secured by Gibbons for half-a-crown. And it had cost the noble scion of the house of D'Arcy twenty-seven-and-six!

"Nevah mind," said Arthur Augustus heroically, "we're keepin' up the pwestige of Study No. 6, and—and it's all for the good of the cause!"

"Br-r-r-r!" murmured Blake.

And the sale proceeded amid great hilarity, shared in by all but the chums of the victimised study.

CHAPTER 10.

Very Satisfactory!

"GENTLEMEN, what offers for this handsome diamond pin?" Arthur Augustus jumped as if he had received an electric shock. The pin flashed and sparkled as Levison held it up to the light, and there was a general exclamation of admiration. Arthur Augustus turned almost green.

"Hang it! This is going too far!" exclaimed Kildare. "You had better give that pin back to D'Arcy at once, Levison."

Levison looked at Arthur Augustus with a mocking grin.

"Does D'Arcy object to the sale?" he demanded.

The swell of St. Jim's raised his head proudly. It was "up to him," and Arthur Augustus was not found wanting.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Go it, auctioneer!"

"This handsome diamond pin, formerly the property of the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, especially valuable on account of its aristocratic associations—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What offers for this diamond pin—the diamond guaranteed genuine. It is well-known that the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would wear nothing else."

"Five bob!"—from Manners, with the object of saving the pin for its unfortunate possessor.

"Ten!" came from Cutts.

"Fifteen!" said Kildare, joining in the bidding for the first time, with the same amiable object as Manners.

"Quid!" said Cutts coolly.

"Only cash is accepted," said the auctioneer warningly. "Gentlemen bidding recklessly are reminded that I O U's are N.G."

There was a laugh. A good many of the fellows knew that Cutts had been on the rocks a little while ago. But Cutts was evidently in funds again; the dandy of the Fifth was seldom out of them for long.

"Twenty shillings I am offered," said the auctioneer. "One quid for this aristocratic diamond pin, presented by a member of the aristocracy to a member of the aristocracy. Any advance of one quid? Going—going—going—"

"Twenty-five bob!" said Gilmore of the Fifth.

"Twenty-six!" said Kildare.

"Thirty!" rapped out Cutts.

"Thirty-five!" exclaimed Crooke of the Shell. And Crooke opened a wallet and showed a little wad of one-pound notes.

Crooke had often envied that handsome diamond pin in the tie of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he could afford to buy it. And he meant to outbid the dandy of the Fifth, if he could—if only for the eclat of doing so.

"Bravo, Crooke!" shouted the Lower School, delighted to see a junior bidding against Cutts. "Go it!"

"Two pounds!" said Cutts angrily.

Manners had dropped out long ago, and Kildare had followed suit. Kildare hadn't pounds to expend, like Cutts and Crooke. It was left to the Shell fellow and the dandy of the Fifth to carry on the bidding.

"Two-five!" said Crooke.

"Two-ten!"

"Two-fifteen!"

"Three!"

There was great excitement now. The bidding was high, much higher than it had been previously. But as the pin cost ten pounds, the bidders were not in danger of paying more than it was worth. There were shouts of encouragement to Crooke to "Go it!"

"Three quid I'm offered," sang out Levison, rapping with the hammer—"three quid for this splendiferous diamond-pin."

"Three-ten!" said Crooke.

"Hurrah!"

"Four!" snapped Cutts, with a glare of wrath at Crooke. He wanted that pin, but he did not want to run into pounds.

"Guineas!" said Crooke.

"Gentlemen, I am offered four guineas for this pin, worn by a member of the aristocracy, presented to him by a Member of the House of Lords. Any advance on four guineas?"

"Five!" rapped out Cutts.

"Go it, Crooke!"

Crooke shook his head. He was done. "Going at five guineas!" said the auctioneer. "Any advance on five guineas for this amazing diamond pin? Going, going, gone! Sold to Cutts of the Fifth for five guineas! Pay the assistant, please!"

Cutts laid five one-pound notes and five shillings on the table. The pin was handed over by the auctioneer, followed with a mournful eye by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Cutts thrust the pin into his pocket and walked away with St. Leger and Gilmore. He had cleared a good five pounds by the transaction, and he was satisfied. Arthur Augustus seemed to gulp something down.

"Buck up, old chap!" murmured

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Blake. "All for the good of the giddy cause!"

"Ya-as!"

"Next lot!" said the auctioneer briskly.

And Blake's football boots came into view. The football boots went very quickly, being almost new. Dig's, which followed, were not new, and they were knocked down for a mere song.

Lots followed thick and fast, and Blake's fountain-pen followed D'Arcy's, and Dig's alarm clock succeeded Herries' dog-whip. The chums of Study No. 6 bore it with Spartan fortitude. With an elaborate air of unconcern they watched the progress of the sale, and handed over the purchased articles to the purchasers.

The trunk was empty at last, and the coffee-pot was simply flowing with cash; but the auctioneer was not quite finished.

"Now you can cawwy my twunk to the box-woom, you wottah!" said Arthur Augustus.

Levison did not seem to hear.

"Gentlemen, last lot! What offers? A very handsome and strong leather-bound trunk, suitable for week-enders or travellers to the North Pole. War-ranted all leather."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! My twunk—"

"Half-a-quid!" shouted Gore.

"Bai Jove! It cost seven guineas!"

"One pound—"

"One pound ten—"

"Two quid!" shouted Gore.

"Going for two quid! This stunning trunk! Going—going—gone! Pay up, please!"

Gore paid up. The sale was over, and, with many chuckles, the crowd dispersed. The purchasers carried their purchases away with them, Gore being in some difficulty about his. Then Levison, with a bland smile, approached the chums of Study No. 6 with a coffee-pot nearly full of money.

"Jolly successful sale," he remarked affably. "Let's count it out in public, please. No deception, ladies and gentlemen!"

"You—you—you—"

"This was simply a stunning idea of yours, old chaps!" went on Levison. "If you Shell fellows are on the self-denial dodge to the same extent, I don't mind holding another sale to-morrow—"

"Pleased!" chuckled Mellish.

"Let me catch you shifting anything in my study, that's all!" said Monty Lowther wrathfully. "I'll shift some of your features if I do."

"But the noble cause—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Well, here's the tin," said Levison, pouring the coffee-pot out on the table and counting his gains. "Ten, fifteen, sixteen pounds, fifteen shillings, and sixpence. Sixteen fifteen-and-six for the funds. I really think I've done very well. Where's your biscuit-tin, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus had brought the biscuit-tin ready for the cash, little dreaming how the cash was to be raised. He held it out, and Levison slid the money in.

"If I can help you in this way again don't forget to call on me," said Levison blandly. "Always pleased to help you. Ta-ta!"

And Levison walked away with Mellish, chuckling.

Blake made a movement and then stopped. Study No. 6 had gone through it with great fortitude, and he would not spoil the effect by taking vengeance upon the amateur auctioneer.

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"Well, it's very satisfactory in one way," remarked Tom Merry. "I must say it's rather rough on you chaps, but it's a good thing for the fund."

"Yaas, wathah! It's all wight. I wegard the result as vewy satisfactory," said Arthur Augustus firmly. And he marched off with the biscuit-tin.

From a financial point of view the result undoubtedly was satisfactory; but it was noted that evening, for some reason or other, that the chums of Study No. 6 did not wear wholly satisfied expressions.

CHAPTER 11.

Well Advertised!

TOM MERRY found a parcel waiting for him when the Shell came out of the Form-room the next morning. It was from the printers in Rylcombe.

"Hallo! A new number of the 'Weekly'?" asked Blake, as he caught sight of the Terrible Three with the parcel. "You haven't told us about it."

"It isn't the 'Weekly,'" said Tom Merry. "No time for the 'Weekly' now."

"Then what the dickens are you having from the printers?"

"Posters."

"Posters!" repeated Blake.

"Certainly! Posters to advertise our new scheme for raising money for the hospital fund," said Tom Merry calmly. "More ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream, you know, and more ways of raising cash than selling up the happy home at auctions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake, rather crossly.

The auction was still a sore point with Study No. 6. Indeed, Levison had been discovered that morning caressing a swollen nose, and the fellows attributed it to his skill and success as an auctioneer.

Tom Merry unrolled the contents of the parcel. There were a dozen large bills, printed in large type, in red and blue, and exceedingly striking in appearance. There was no doubt that they would catch the eye when they were posted up about the school.

Tom Merry immediately proceeded to put one up in the Form-room passage. A crowd of juniors gathered round it at once.

Kildare and Darrell came along the passage, and paused at the sight of the poster and the crowd reading it.

The Terrible Three were gone—with the rest of the bills—and were busily engaged in their new profession of bill-posters. Kildare uttered an exclamation at the sight of the poster on the wall.

"What the deuce—"

The grinning juniors made way for the great men of the Sixth. Kildare and Darrell stared blankly at the striking announcement in red and blue:

"NOTICE!

RAMBLERS' FOOTBALL GROUND,
RYLCOMBE.

GREAT MATCH IN AID OF THE
ST JIM'S CHARITY FUND!

First Eleven v. Junior Eleven.

On Saturday afternoon this Great Match will be played between the St. Jim's First Eleven (captain, Eric Kildare), and the Junior Eleven (captain, Tom Merry).

Admission to Enclosure, 3d.

All Gate-Money to be handed, without deduction, to the St. Jim's Charity Fund.

ROLL UP!



Believing furiously, the bull charged towards Mr. Ratcliff. "Help me up, Figgins!" panted the Housemaster. The junior leaned over the wall and held his hands down to Mr. Ratcliff. The master grasped them, and made frantic efforts to scramble up the wall.

All Saints are requested to Rally Round and support the Good Cause!
(Signed) TOM MERRY."

"Well, my hat!" said Darrell.

Kildare compressed his lips.

"The young ass! The cheeky young rascal! I told him plainly enough that it's impossible! By Jove, I'll lick him for this!"

"You're going to play, Kildare?" asked Blake.

"No!" growled Kildare.

"For the sake of the fund—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Weally, Kildare, you are called upon to put your pwide in your pocket for the sake of the hospital fund. Think of the gate-money—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Considah the good of the cause, deah boy!"

"Dry up!" snapped Kildare. "Take that bill down, Blake!"

Blake did not move. It was a very unusual thing for the popular captain

of St. Jim's to have his orders disregarded. But it had happened now. Kildare stared at Blake, hardly able to believe his eyes.

"Do you hear me, Blake?"

"Yes, I hear you," said Blake.

"Then do as I tell you!"

The chief of Study No. 6 shook his head.

"Can't!" he said.

"That's wight, Blake! Back up, old boy!"

"You can lick me, if you like,



Kildare, old chap," said Blake resignedly, "but I'm not taking that bill down! It's up to you to play in the match! Call yourself a sportsman! Bow-wow!"

Kildare coloured. His sportsmanship was quite up to the mark, but to take his great eleven out to play a team of fags was a little too much. He did not quite see that.

But he did not lick Blake. He jerked the bill down from the wall, crumpled it, threw it into a corner, and walked away with Darrell.

As the two seniors left the School House, Jack Blake picked up the poster, smoothed it out, and pinned it on the wall again.

The captain of St. Jim's looked decidedly wrathful as he strolled out with Darrell. The latter had a very thoughtful expression.

"The cheek!" growled Kildare. "The nerve! Tom Merry wants a licking badly!"

"After all, it would bring a crowd, I dare say," Darrell remarked.

"I dare say it would."

"All the other fellows would go and pay for admission, and a good many of the village people and other folk," said Darrell. "Quite a little sum might be raised. The fund is a jolly good thing, Kildare."

Kildare grunted.

"I know that. Of course, I'd do anything I could. But to take out the first eleven and play those silly fags, with a big crowd looking on—Hang it all, Darrell, we can't make ourselves look such asses!"

"Well, it would be rather infra dig," said Darrell, with a smile. "But—"

"Hallo! What's that?"

Kildare halted, with gathering wrath in his look. "That" was another poster, a replica of the first, pinned to a tree in the quadrangle, blazing with red and blue. Darrell smiled and Kildare frowned darkly.

"They're posting them up all over the school," said Darrell, with a gesture towards another poster on the wall of the gymnasium, which was being read and commented upon by a crowd of fellows.

"By Jove, I'll whop them!" growled Kildare. "Hallo, Monteith!"

Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, came striding towards them, with a somewhat excited face.

"Is that true?" he asked.

"Is what true?"

"There's a poster stuck up in the New House same as that," said Monteith, with a nod towards the poster on the tree. "Is it true that we're playing fags?"

"No, it isn't!"

"Then the sooner you stop that cheeky fag the better!" said Monteith. "It's signed Tom Merry, so I suppose he's

at the bottom of it. We can't make such asses of ourselves, fund or no fund!"

"I know we can't," said Kildare. "I'll see Tom Merry at once—"

"There he is," said Monteith, "sticking up a poster on the gate!"

The Sixth Formers bore down on Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell was pinning a poster on the gate in a prominent position. He turned away as he finished, and found himself face to face with the wrathful captain of St. Jim's. But he did not "cut"; he faced Kildare with quiet confidence.

"What does that mean, Merry?" demanded the St. Jim's captain, pointing to the bill.

"That's the announcement of the footer match on Saturday," said Tom cheerily.

"I've told you it's not going to take place."

"We depend on you changing your mind, Kildare. You can't possibly refuse to take up the hospital fund, for the honour of Ireland."

"You cheeky young ass!" said Kildare. "I tell you we can't let ourselves down in public by playing a fag eleven."

"Oh, we'll give you a good game!" said Tom Merry. "Besides, what does that matter? Even if we aren't up to

your form, it's for the sake of the cause. I suppose you're thinking about the dignity of the Sixth. Well, blow the dignity of the Sixth!"

"What!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Blow the dignity of the Sixth!" repeated Tom Merry. "What the dickens does the dignity of the Sixth matter? Nothing matters at all, excepting helping to back up the fund."

Kildare stared at him. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry's words found an echo in his own heart. It was true that their dignity really did not matter in helping a charitable cause. Everybody ought to do the utmost to help the hospital. Darrell nodded assent involuntarily, and even Monteith looked impressed.

"Yes, that's so," said Kildare, after a long pause.

"The less you like it, the more it's your duty to do it, if it helps the good cause," said Tom Merry.

"Look here, I don't want you to teach me my duty!" said Kildare. "Take that poster down!"

"I can't!"

"Why, I'll—I'll—"

Kildare grasped the ashplant he carried under his arm.

"Go ahead," said Tom. "You can lick me, Kildare, but you can't make me act against my conscience."

"Your—your conscience!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Yes; I'm doing right," said Tom decidedly. "Go ahead; I can stand a licking!"

Kildare slipped the ashplant under his arm again.

"Cut off, you young rascal!" he said.

"Right-ho! I hope you'll think it over between now and Saturday and decide to play. We shall raise quite a lot for the fund—"

"Cut off!" roared Kildare.

And Tom Merry cheerfully cut off.

CHAPTER 12.

Kildare Gives In!

MR. RAILTON, the Housemaster of the School House, met Kildare as the latter came in with a somewhat moody brow. The Housemaster was smiling.

"Quite a new idea this, Kildare," he remarked.

"What is, sir?" asked Kildare, starting.

"I was referring to the announcement of the football match which I have just read," said Mr. Railton. "I think it's quite probable that a good sum will be raised in gate-money, and I think you are doing very well, Kildare, in arranging this match."

"I—I haven't arranged it, sir," said Kildare, taken aback.

"It's Merry's idea, then, I suppose?" said Mr. Railton, laughing.

"Well, I'm glad you have fallen in with it—a very good idea indeed!"

And the Housemaster passed on before Kildare could reply.

Kildare grunted as he went into the House. Mr. Railton evidently took the announcement seriously and did not see any harm in it. But Kildare was feeling very sore. Such a match would be simply farcical.

The junior eleven were a very good team for their age and size. But, of course, they would not be able to hold the mighty men of the Sixth for a minute. It would be like a team of Goliaths playing eleven Davids. Defeat was not possible; but a victory would be ridiculous against such opponents.

The first eleven was the apple of

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Kildare's eye, and he was not disposed to make it look ridiculous if he could help it. But he was in a difficult position. There was no doubt that the match would bring in a good sum of gate-money. In the first place, nearly every fellow at St. Jim's would come, and three hundred threepences would mount up. Then the village folk would flock in, and people from Wayland and Abbotsford, quite a crowd.

The first eleven was well known; and, besides, the fact that all the gate-money was to go to the Wayland Cottage Hospital would attract everybody who could come. The takings might be very large. Certainly it was no time to allow questions of personal dignity to interfere with raising money for a hospital that was sorely in need of funds.

Kildare began to feel that he couldn't get out of that match—that St. Jim's expected it of him.

But it was extremely irritating. Anything else he would have done, but that was too "thick."

He felt himself in a cleft stick. He frowned as he passed the posters in the passage. There was a new line added to it in the elegant handwriting of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy:

"P.S.—St. Jim's expects every man to do his duty."

Kildare read the line and walked on, frowning. He went into his study, and uttered an exclamation of annoyance. Staring him in the face was a red and blue poster, pinned up on the wall of his own study.

"The cheeky rascals!" ejaculated Kildare.

He jerked the poster down and tossed it out of the window. There was a chuckle outside, and he glanced out, and saw several juniors with the poster. They were sticking it up on the wall outside his window.

"Clear off!" rapped out Kildare.

The juniors laughed and cleared off, leaving the poster there. It was out of Kildare's reach from the window, so he had to leave it there. The captain of St. Jim's threw himself into his arm-chair to think it over.

Darrell and Rushden came into the study. They looked as if they did not quite know whether to frown or to laugh.

"We seem to be in for it," said Rushden, handing Kildare the latest number of the "Rylcombe Gazette." "Look at that!"

Kildare looked at it and growled. It contained a displayed advertisement of the forthcoming football match on the Ramblers' ground, at Rylcombe, and an exhortation to all citizens to roll up and see the match and swell the funds.

"And I hear the posters are out all over Rylcombe and Wayland," said Rushden. "Blake's just come in on his bike, and he says so."

"There'll be a crowd there to see the match whether it comes off or not," remarked Darrell. "If those young rascals take the gate-money, and there's no match, they'll find themselves in trouble."

"They can hand back the gate-money," said Kildare.

"Yes; but I say, Kildare, it will look pretty rotten for us. Everybody will know that a good sum might have been raised for the hospital fund if we hadn't refused to play the match," said Darrell uneasily.

And Rushden nodded solemnly.

"But we can't make ourselves look such asses!" exclaimed Kildare. "It's all right for those cheeky fags. They

can talk about having played the first eleven. But what about us? It's ridiculous—Hullo, Mulvaney!"

Mulvaney of the Sixth came in. He was grinning.

"Faith, we're in for it, Kildare!" he remarked. "The fags have beaten us. The Head has just congratulated me!"

"What for?" demanded Kildare.

"For this idea of playing a match and raising tin for the hospital fund!" chuckled Mulvaney major. "Took the wind out of my sails, bedad!"

"You told him we weren't playing?"

Mulvaney major shook his head.

"No jolly fear! I couldn't, in the circles. You can tell him if you like. After all, old chap, it's only sportsman-like."

"We shall look a set of duffers playing those kids!" exclaimed the exasperated Kildare.

Mulvaney grinned.

"Sure, and I've got an idea about that entirely!" he remarked. "I've been thinking it out. What you're afraid of is making the first eleven look ridiculous playing the fags, isn't it?"

"That's it!" growled Kildare.

"Well, honey, suppose I could suggest a way of putting the boot on the other foot," said Mulvaney. "Making the fags look ridiculous instead of us—what?"

"That can't be done."

"Sure, and it can, and aisy, too. We've only got to show that we don't take them seriously," explained Mulvaney, "and we can do that as aisy as falling in a ditch."

"How?" said Kildare doubtfully.

"That would make it all right, of course. But—"

"Lend me your ears, as they say in Shakespeare," said Mulvaney major.

And Mulvaney major proceeded to explain, with his eyes dancing.

Kildare, Darrell, and Rushden listened in surprise at first to the extraordinary suggestion propounded by Mulvaney major.

Then there was a roar of laughter in the study.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Ha, ha, ha! I rather think Mulvaney's hit it. The young sweeps will be sorry they spoke, I'm thinking!"

"Good idea—what?" grinned Mulvaney.

"Topping!" said Darrell, laughing.

"First chop!" chuckled Rushden.

"You'll play 'em now, Kildare?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!"

Kildare rose and hurried into the passage where the poster was still attracting a crowd.

The fellows made way for Kildare, who took out his pencil. Underneath Tom Merry's signature, Kildare signed his own. There was a cheer from the juniors.

"Bravo, Kildare!"

"Bai Jove! You're playin', deah boy?"

A CORONATION SOUVENIR.

Here is an idea for your collection of Coronation Souvenirs. A handsome casket and medal combined is offered free in exchange for coupons from both Rowntree's Cocoa and Table Jellies. The metal casket, which is packed with two layers of Rowntree's delicious chocolates and confectionery, is beautifully shaped and printed in fine colours.

A recessed circle in the centre of the lid contains a magnificent Coronation medal, made of gold coloured metal, with a portrait of their Majesties embossed on one side and commemorative wording on the other. Actually, the medal is an additional gift, as it is detachable from the lid. When it is removed, another portrait of the King and Queen is revealed.

Send to Rowntree & Co., Ltd., Casket Department, York, mentioning GEM, for a new illustrated list of this and other gifts.

"Certainly," said Kildare. And he went back to his study, whence sounds of laughter were heard to proceed.

Arthur Augustus rushed away in search of Tom Merry, with the good news. He found the captain of the junior eleven sticking up the last of the posters in the gym.

"It's all wight, deah boy!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Eh?"

"Kildare's playin'. He signed his name on the postah. It's all wight. He says he's goin' to play the match!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry was elated. He had expected Kildare to surrender, but he had hardly expected it so soon as this.

"Wippin', isn't it, deah boy?" said Arthur Augustus jubilantly. "Kildare is weally a bwick. He was laughin' like anythin' when he signed his name on the postah."

"Eh? What was he laughing at?" asked Tom Merry suspiciously.

"Weally, I didn't ask him, deah boy. But it's all wight."

"I don't see quite what there was to laugh at—"

"Nevah mind that, deah boy. He's playin', and that's the point."

Certainly that was the point. In a quarter of an hour all St. Jim's knew that Kildare had agreed to play the first eleven against the junior team in the charity match, and all the juniors rejoiced.

CHAPTER 13.

Ratty and the Bull!

FIGGINS & CO. looked glum. Matters had not been going well for the chums of the New House.

The rival fund had been started, and the jam-jar in the New House contained a good many contributions. But Figgins & Co. had to admit that, so far, they hadn't an earthly chance of getting anywhere near the School House total.

The School House being nearly twice as large as the New House, there were more contributions there. And then the auction sale had raised quite a large sum. And now the footer match, fixed up by Tom Merry, was likely to bring in a good sum in gate-money.

The jam-jar, in point of fact, was not likely to be "in it" with the biscuit-tin over the way.

Figgins & Co. had debated all sorts of methods for swelling the fund. They had cut down supplies in their own study—and Fatty Wynn's remittances, usually expended in the tuckshop, had been remorselessly transferred to the jam-jar. Fatty Wynn bore it like a hero, though with inward groans.

"But what we want is a whacking good sum," said Figgins. "We want to make a raise—a real raise! There's only one thing I can think of—and that's trying Ratty!"

"Ratty?" said the Co. dubiously.

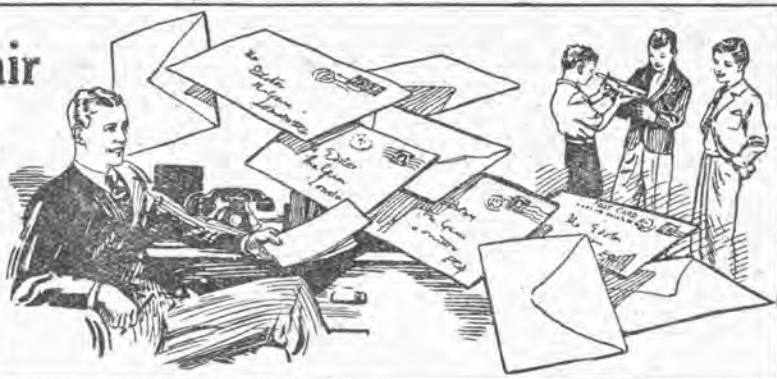
"Ratty" was an abbreviation of the name of their Housemaster, Mr Ratcliff. As Mr. Ratcliff was well known to be extremely sparing with his money, the Co. did not look upon Figgins' suggestion as hopeful.

"Why not?" argued Figgins. "Railton, over the way, has sent a good cheque to the fund, so he can't contribute to Tom Merry's fund. I think he's put five bob in the biscuit-tin. They're letting him off lightly, because they all know he's sent ten guineas

(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! The response to my request for readers' selections of the ten best GEM stories published in 1936 has been excellent. It is very pleasing to me to find so much enthusiasm among readers. It is a clear indication that you have a real interest in the old paper, quite apart from reading its stories every week.

Readers' selections have been many and varied, but in every list appears the "Toff" series, which speaks for itself. "The Mystery of Eastwood House" stories and the St. Jim's "Captaincy" series also figure in all selections. So I think that it would be quite fair to say that these yarns were the most popular.

I received an interesting letter from the secretary of the Vincents' Old Boys Club on the subject of the ten best stories. In addition to his own club, he has kindly collected for me the result of the voting among members of the Wilmet Sports Club, the Gem Club (West End), the Magnet and Gem Club (Wiltshire), the Good Companions Club, and the Grangemere Old Girls' Club. He tells me that over three hundred members of these various clubs voted, and the result was as follows: (1) The "Toff" series. (2) "The Mystery of Eastwood House" stories. (3) "For the Honour of St. Jim's." (4) "They Called Him a Coward." (5) "Micky Makes Things Hum." (6) "St. Jim's on Strike." (7) "The Sign of Three." (8) The St. Jim's "Captaincy" series. (9) "The Last Laugh." (10) "Wally on the Warpath."

In addition a vote was taken on the ten most popular St. Jim's characters. Here is the list in order of popularity: Talbot, Wally D'Arcy, Figgins, Lumley-Lumley, Tom Merry, Glyn, Kerr, Ethel Cleveland, Levison, and Blake. I wonder how many readers agree with these selections and their placings. I should be interested to know.

Please convey my grateful thanks, Mr. Secretary, to the members of the clubs who voted on these subjects.

"THE TOFF'S TRIUMPH!"

Now, as I have a large mail to answer, I must get down to next week's programme. Topping the bill is, as you have guessed from the title, another great yarn of Reginald Talbot. It tells of the arrival at St. Jim's of a new science master, a Mr. Packington. For some reason which Talbot will not divulge to his chums, it comes as a big shock to the Toff to see the new master at the school. Mr. Packington has the best of recommendations, but Talbot nevertheless views him with keen distrust. And his distrust is greatly increased when a daring burglary occurs at Glyn House, the home of Glyn of the Shell! Who is Mr. Packington? Can he be the crackman?

Personally I consider this story—which incidentally features our old friend Skimpole—to be the best of the "Toff"

series so far, and I feel sure that readers will readily agree with me.

"PETTICOAT RULE AT GREYFRIARS!"

The Remove Form at Greyfriars have been in a good deal of bother of late with their Form-masters, and their troubles are by no means over yet. Once again, in the next sparkling yarn of Harry Wharton & Co., they find themselves under the charge of a new master—or, rather, mistress! For when Mr. Quelch goes away for a rest the Remove is taken by a girl! She is the Head's youthful sister, on a visit to Greyfriars. The amazed Removees, sensing that they will be chipped to death by their rivals of the Upper Fourth, are both indignant and annoyed.

How they fare under petticoat rule I will leave Frank Richards to tell you all about next week. You can be sure of a good laugh—so take my tip and order your GEM early.

IN REPLY TO READERS.

Miss M. Crawford (Liverpool 22).—Glad to hear that you have become a GEM reader, and that you like the "Toff" series. Figgins is in the Fourth Form. D'Arcy is 15 years 3 months.

S. Zimmerman (Leeds 4).—Thanks for your suggestion for a story, but it has been done several times before. Dicky Nugent is 13, Wharton is 15 years 10 months, and Wingate 17 years 11 months.

W. H. Cooper (Reigate).—Many thanks for your congratulations and good wishes for the success of the GEM. I cannot tell you yet when Levison's reformation will be dealt with. Sorry, your jokes just failed to make the Jester smile. Better luck next time!

Miss O. Mabell (Birmingham 8).—There are six Forms and roughly 300 fellows at St. Jim's. Pleased to hear that your father reads the GEM regularly. I'm afraid your joke was rather a "chestnut." Try again.

A. Scattergood (Liverpool 15).—I will pass on your congratulations to Martin Clifford and Frank Richards. Monty Lowther is taking a well-earned rest. Perhaps when he has got a good stock of new wisecracks, his "Just My Fun" will appear again. The "knock-knock" craze has gone out of fashion. Try the Jester with a joke.

A. Smith (Norwich).—Yes, you may have the autographs of Martin Clifford and myself—though what you want the latter for I don't know! Do you want them added to your album?

R. T. Acraman (Stoke Newington,

N.16).—The junior football team is: Merry, D'Arcy, Blake, Lowther, Figgins, Talbot, Kerr, Redfern, Wynn, Herries, and Noble. Sorry, your joke failed to make the bell ring! Keep them short and snappy!

D. J. Johnson (Norbury, S.W.16).—Pleased to hear that the GEM has thrilled and interested you for four years, and that you think the stories have been "100 per cent wonders." Yes, the "Modern Boy" is a companion paper of the GEM and "Magnet." Both your jokes have been published in the GEM before. Have another try.

Miss E. Moore (Islington, N.1).—Thanks for your selection of the ten best stories published in 1936. I cannot tell you anything more about the Greyfriars film yet. The average age of the Greyfriars Remove is about 15. Wingate is 17 years 11 months, and Kildare 17 years 8 months.

T. Metcalfe (Leeds).—Yes, for a short time there was another member of Figgins & Co. He was called Marmaduke, but he has left St. Jim's.

P. Duffill (Swindon).—Thanks for your sketches of Mr. Quelch and Mr. Prout. If you like drawing, keep it up, and join an art school later on.

K. Townsend (Grimsby).—Welcome to the happy band of GEM and "Magnet" readers, Kenneth! I was pleased to hear that you will never give up the companion papers. The Cliff House girls, I expect, will be appearing in a "Magnet" story again soon.

H. Walton (Leeds 11).—Kildare is 17 years 8 months. A story featuring him appeared last week. Thanks for your selection of the best 1936 stories. Have another try at winning half-a-crown!

W. S. Butcher (Southampton).—You can rely on Martin Clifford to keep up the present high standard of GEM stories. Glad you like the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. Levison's reform will be coming along in due course. I have published a joke very similar to yours. Send along another.

D. Garrett (Kingsbury, N.W.9).—Wally D'Arcy is 13½ years. St. Jim's is about twenty miles from Greyfriars.

Miss D. Windsor (Birmingham).—Yes, send me along your poem. I should like to read it. Tom Merry & Co. play a big part in most stories, but a series featuring Tom himself will be coming along soon.

M. Toft (Springhead, near Oldham).—Thanks for letting me know how much you enjoy the "Toff" series and the Greyfriars yarns. I cannot tell you exactly when Vernon-Smith will arrive. I have no more details yet about the Greyfriars film. Your joke is quite good, but it's a real "chestnut."

Cheerio, chums!

THE EDITOR.
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PEN PALS COUPON

3-4-37

already. Ten guineas is a big sum. Now, we all know that Ratty is better off than Railton. He gets a good screw, and he saves money—never spends anything, and never gives anything away. Now is the time for him to begin."

"He jolly well won't, all the same," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "Might as well ask Shylock."

"Well, you never know; even Ratty must be a bit of a sportsman," said Figgins. "I think Ratty ought to shell out."

"He ought to," said Fatty Wynn; "but he won't."

"We haven't asked him."

"He'll lick us if we do."

"Well, as founders of the fund, it's up to us," said Figgins resolutely. "If we can squeeze ten guineas out of him—and he could afford it quite easily, much easier than old Railton—it would swell our funds tremendously."

"Might as well ask him for a pound of flesh!" grunted Kerr.

"Well, I'm going to ask him," said Figgins, rising and taking up the jam-jar. "You fellows can come and back me up if you like."

"Oh, we'll come!" said Kerr. "I don't mind a licking, if you don't."

It was in that far-from-hopeful spirit that the chums of the New House proceeded to Mr. Ratcliff's study with the jam-jar.

There was no reason why Ratty shouldn't contribute, if he wanted to. He was a very well-to-do man, of a saving turn. And Figgins had an idea that if it were put very nicely to Ratty, the New House-master might see it in the proper light, and shell out accordingly.

Figgins knocked at Mr. Ratcliff's door, and the snappish voice of the Housemaster rapped out: "Come in!"

The Co entered. Mr. Ratcliff's hat was on the table, and he was putting on his gloves, apparently ready to go out. He looked frowningly at the juniors and stared at the jam-jar. He had heard of that jam-jar.

"If you please, sir—" began Figgins, very respectfully.

"What do you want?"

"We are raising a fund for Wayland Cottage Hospital in the New House, sir."

"I have heard of it," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I regard it as nonsense. Is that all?"

"Ahem!" murmured Figgins, somewhat discouraged. "No, sir; that isn't quite all."

"Figgins!"

"Mr. Railton sent ten guineas to the hospital, sir. We saw his name in a list in the 'Wayland Gazette.'"

"You may leave my study, Figgins."

"We thought, sir, that you might like to hand us ten guineas for our fund, sir," said Figgins, sticking to his point.

"Ten guineas!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Is the boy mad?"

If Figgins had asked him for his ten toes or fingers, Mr. Ratcliff could hardly have been more horrified at the idea of parting with them.

"Yes, sir. We thought—"

"You have no right to think anything of the sort, Figgins. Take that ridiculous jar away at once, and take fifty lines."

"Oh, sir!"

"Now leave my study!"

"But, sir, surely you'd like to back up the fund, sir," persisted Figgins. "Everybody will think it looks rather rotten, sir, if you're the only one left out."

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Mr. Ratcliff's face was a study. Figgins, in his enthusiasm for the good cause, was certainly speaking a little more plainly than was usual for a junior schoolboy to a Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff caught up a cane from the table.

"Hold out your hand, Figgins!"

"Oh!"

Figgins despondently handed the jam-jar to Kerr and held out his hand. He had come there prepared to hold it out, in fact, but he had hoped it was to receive something other than a caning.

Swish—swish!

"Ow, yow!"

"Now leave my study!" said Mr. Ratcliff, breathing hard. "And if I hear any more of this nonsense I shall punish you severely, Figgins."

Figgins & Co. retreated. Figgins jammed the jar down on the table in his own study with a jolt that almost broke it. His face was furious.

"Did you ever hear of such a rotter?" he gasped. "Two licks for asking the beast for a subscription!"

And Figgins shook a furious fist at the study window as he caught sight of a lean figure crossing the quad towards the gates.

Evidently it was N.G. The New House fund would have to hide its diminished head beside the fund of the School House. Figgins' last hope had failed.

The chums of the New House strolled out moodily into the quad, Figgins rubbing his hands. They met Arthur Augustus near the gates.

"How's the fund gettin' on, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass on the Co. "Goin' up by leaps and bounds—what? Oh, you wottah!"

Arthur Augustus struggled with his silk hat, which Figgins had morosely jammed down over his eyes in response to his unfortunate inquiry. Figgins & Co. strolled out of the gates with moody brows.

"Nothing doing!" growled Figgins. "It's rotten! Ratty ought to have played up. We ought to think of some way of making him pay up. He owes our fund ten guineas; that's how it stands. How are we going to make him pay?"

"Echo answers how!" grinned Kerr.

The Co. thought it over as they sauntered along. They were quite convinced on the point that Mr. Ratcliff "owed" their fund ten guineas, and that he was a defaulter if he didn't pay up. But dunning him was evidently out of the question. Figgins' palms were still smarting from his Housemaster's cane.

"Have a sandwich, old chap?" said Fatty Wynn comfortingly, as Figgins stopped and leaned against a stone wall beside the road, deep in thought.

"Blow your sandwiches!" said Figgins crossly.

"Well, they're good," said Fatty mildly, and he proceeded to show his belief in their goodness by demolishing them at a great rate. "Can't think anything out on an empty tummy, you know. Always a good idea to lay a solid foundation."

"Oh, rats!"

Figgins thought it out, but the more he thought the less hopeful appeared the chance of screwing out the subscription from Ratty. And there was no other prospect of swelling the New House hospital fund.

In his deep and moody thought Figgins did not notice a loud and angry bellowing proceeding from the field on the other side of the wall.

"Hallo! That's old Blount's bull!"

said Kerr. "Some ass crossing the field. He nearly killed a man the other day. There ought to be a notice up."

"Help!"

It was a loud yell from the field, and the juniors spun round. But the stone wall was eight feet high, and they could see nothing. But they knew the voice.

"Ratty!" ejaculated all three together.

"Ratty and Blount's bull!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn. "It's a giddy judgment!"

"Help!"

Bellow!

The juniors forgot their resentment against Mr. Ratcliff. If the unfortunate Housemaster was in the field with the savage bull, he was in danger.

Figgins retreated a little distance from the wall, made a run and a spring, and caught the top with his hands and drew himself up. Kerr followed his example. Fatty Wynn strove to do the same, but he fell short. He had considerably more weight to lift.

Figgins and Kerr, looking over the high wall into the field, beheld a startling sight. The long, lean figure of Mr. Ratcliff was tearing across the field, and behind him rushed and bellowed the bull. Mr. Ratcliff's hat had fallen off, and the bull had paused to wreak his rage upon it, which was fortunate for the Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff was not an athlete, and he had "bellows to mend."

"This way, sir!" yelled Figgins.

CHAPTER 14.

Ratty Dubs Up!

MR. RATCLIFF ran blindly on. In his terror he hardly knew whether he was going, and he was panting and gasping, his scanty locks floating in the wind as he ran. Figgins drew himself actively on top of the wall, and yelled:

"This way! This way!"

Mr. Ratcliff heard him then, and came loping on towards the wall.

The Housemaster had been crossing the field by the footpath, without noticing the bull. But the bull had noticed Mr. Ratcliff. Farmer Blount's bull was accustomed to having his field all to himself—for very good reasons. Mr. Ratcliff had entered it in ignorance of the animal's existence, but a terrific bellow had warned him of the bull's presence, and he had taken to his heels.

He was too far from the gate to reach it, and he had run to the side of the field, where he found himself shut in by a high and impenetrable hedge. He swerved off towards the wall which bordered the road, and there he heard Figgins' welcome voice.

The sight of the two juniors on the wall brought new hope to Mr. Ratcliff. He rushed desperately towards them.

"Help me up, Figgins!" he gasped.

Bellow!

The bull had succeeded in impaling Mr. Ratcliff's silk hat on one of its horns, and it seemed to irritate him there. He lashed his tail furiously and roared, and made another rush for the Housemaster.

Figgins, with his chest on the top of the wall, leaned over and held his hands down to the Housemaster. Mr. Ratcliff grasped them convulsively. Clinging to Figgins, he made frantic efforts to scramble up the wall, finding foothold for his toes in the rough stones.

Kerr took off his jacket, with his eye on the bull. As the maddened animal careered up, the Scottish junior flung his jacket deftly, and it caught on the horns

and smothered the bull's eyes, blinding him for the moment. With a hoarse bellow the great animal spun round, leaping to and fro in the effort to get rid of the blinding jacket.

"Lend a hand, Kerr!"

The bull was occupied for a few minutes, at least. Kerr leaned down, and got a grip on one of Mr. Ratcliff's arms. With united efforts, the two juniors dragged him up, till he was able to seize hold of the wall with his hands.

He hung there, panting and breathless, wanting the strength to drag himself farther up.

"H-help me!" stuttered the terrified man. "The—the bull!"

"He's off, sir!" said Figgins.

The bellowing animal was dashing away across the field, the rags of the jacket fluttering from his horns and

shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "That fearful animal may return at any moment——"

"Sorry, sir——"

"Pull me up instantly, I command you!"

"My hands are smarting, sir," said Figgins respectfully. "It's rather hard to get a grip when a chap's hands are smarting from being caned."

Mr. Ratcliff panted. He was much given to caning juniors, and he had seldom regretted the infliction of punishment. But he regretted it then with his whole heart.

"I—I am sorry I caned you, Figgins," he stuttered. "I—I beg you to pull me up, my boy. Make an effort."

"All right, sir; when I get my second wind," said Figgins. "Hang on for a bit, sir, and then we'll make an effort."

"But the bull—the bull! Oh dear!"

thing, though," said Figgins. "Sorry I can't pull you up. My hands are smarting, sir. About our fund, sir. If you could see our way to paying up that ten guineas——"

"Figgins——"

"It's for a good cause, and your name would appear in the list posted up in the House, and then we should be able to say that our Housemaster had done quite as well as the Housemaster over the way, sir——"

"Help me up——"

"Yes, sir; I'm holding on——"

"Cannot you manage to draw me up on the wall, Figgins?" panted Mr. Ratcliff. In vain he was making great efforts to pull himself up. But for the grasp of the two juniors, in fact, he would have slid down the wall to the ground.



There was a yell of laughter from the crowd as Kildare and his eleven walked out into the field. But Tom Merry & Co. didn't laugh—they stared in utter astonishment. Every member of the senior team wore a tail-coat, spats, and a silk hat!

irritating him to fury. Mr. Ratcliff screwed his head round, and gave a gasp of relief as he saw that the bull was fifty yards away.

"Help me up before it comes back, Figgins!"

A peculiar expression came over Figgins' face. He closed one eye to Kerr, and ceased to drag at the heavy Housemaster. Kerr looked puzzled, but he followed Figgins' lead loyally.

Mr. Ratcliff hung on the wall, one arm thrown over it, and the other hand grasping Figgins. He had not the strength to climb higher, but the two juniors could have pulled him up.

If the bull had returned towards his victim, they would have done so instantly, of course. But the bull was careering round the field, tearing the jacket to shreds. There was no hurry. "Figgins, why don't you pull me up?"

"He's not coming yet, sir!" said Kerr encouragingly.

"He may come at any instant. Oh dear! Make an effort, my dear boys! You—you need not do the lines I gave you!"

Figgins suppressed a grin. Ratty was climbing down now with a vengeance. But Figgins was not done with him yet. Figgins' mighty brain was at work.

"Must rest a bit, sir, before we make an effort," he said. "I wanted to speak to you again, sir, about a rather important thing——"

"Figgins! At this moment—oh, I can hear him coming!"

"All serene, sir! He's not coming yet. About our fund, sir——"

"Figgins! How dare you—I—— Oh, my goodness, hold me!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, as Figgins seemed to relax his grip.

"I've got you, sir. That was a near

Bellow! Bellow!

The bull had got rid of the jacket at last, and was roaring in the middle of the field, glaring round for his enemy. The deep bellow from the savage animal made Mr. Ratcliff shudder. The perspiration was thick on his brow. Perhaps the smarting of his hands made Figgins more merciless.

"I—I shall be gored!" moaned Mr. Ratcliff. "Pull me up! Oh dear! This is—is dreadful! Figgins, I order you—— Oh dear, I'm slipping! Hold on—I mean, I beg of you to exert yourself, Figgins! I—I will think about your fund! Help me!"

"We're holding you, sir," said Figgins. "As soon as I get my second wind I'll pull you up like anything!"

Figgins seemed a long time getting his second wind, and it dawned on Mr. Ratcliff that Figgins would not get his. THE CRESS-LIBRARY.—No. 1,520.

second wind until he got Mr. Ratcliff's promise of a handsome subscription to the hospital fund.

"Figgins! I—I— Help me! Don't let me slip! Figgins, I will contribute a guinea. Oh, I'm falling—I mean two guineas! Hold on, Figgins!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff.

"All serene, sir!"

The Housemaster panted.

"I—I will give you a cheque for five guineas for the fund, Figgins, if you succeed in pulling me over this wall! Oh, I am slipping again! Figgins—Kerr, help! I—I mean, ten guineas!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

From that moment Mr. Ratcliff did not slip again.

"You promise us ten guineas for the fund, sir?" said Figgins cheerily, quite as if that had nothing whatever to do with the holding on to Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, I—I promise!"

"You are very good, sir. This will have a very encouraging effect upon the fellows, and make them subscribe—"

"Pull me up!"

"I'll try, sir! I've got my second wind now. Go it, Kerr!"

Bellow, bellow! Thud, thud!

The bull was coming!

Apparently Mr. Ratcliff had promised his subscription only just in time. Figgins and Kerr exerted themselves and dragged the Housemaster upon the wall out of reach of the threatening horns. The bull pranced furiously inside the field, bellowing hoarsely, but robbed of his prey. Mr. Ratcliff sprawled across the wall, gasping for breath, utterly exhausted and terrified.

"Let's help you down, sir!"

"Th-thank you, Figgins!"

The juniors helped Mr. Ratcliff down into the road, Fatty Wynn receiving him, and steadying him as he landed. On the other side of the high wall the bull was still raging. But Mr. Ratcliff was safe now.

He stood panting for breath in the road. Figgins kindly dusted him down. Then the juniors waited, hardly knowing whether they were going to get that subscription for the fund or the licking of their lives. Ratty had promised, but they did not wholly trust their Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff, when he had recovered his breath, looked at the three serious-faced and sympathetic juniors in a very peculiar way. To break his promise was not easy, but to keep it was hard.

But Mr. Ratcliff realised another thing—that if the juniors told the story of his undignified flight and scramble over the wall, it would become a standing joke in the school.

Mr. Ratcliff did not mind inspiring fear and dislike, but he had a very strong objection to inspiring ridicule. He was in the hands of those three solemn-looking young rascals, and he knew it. It helped him to keep his word.

"All right now, sir?" asked Kerr.

"Ye-es," muttered Mr. Ratcliff. "I—I am obliged to you. And—and I shall be still more obliged to you if you will—ahem!—refrain from—from mentioning this incident in the school. It is very—very unfortunate—very—very absurd! That dreadful animal ought to be slaughtered, and—and—"

"Not a word, sir!" said Figgins.

"We shall only say that you are subscribing ten guineas to the fund, sir—nothing else!"

"You young—ahem!—yes, exactly, Figgins! I—I will give you a—a—a cheque for that sum for the fund when—when I return."

"Thank you so much, sir! I'll go back and put your name on the list at once, sir!" said the delighted Figgins.

A couple of hours later Figgins & Co. were seen walking in the quadrangle of St. Jim's, with exceedingly satisfied and triumphant expressions on their faces. And Tom Merry & Co., spotting them, naturally inquired the cause of their elation.

"Fund getting on all right?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"Piling up—what?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Oh, fairish, fairish!" said Figgins negligently. "What with coin and currency notes and cheques, we shall make up a tidy sum."

"Cheques!" exclaimed the School House juniors together.

There were no cheques in the School House collection.

"Oh, yes; a cheque from our Housemaster!" said Figgins carelessly.

"My hat! Ratty has ponied up?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Rats!"

"Gammon!" said Lowther.

"How much?" asked Blake incredulously.

"Ten guineas!"

The School House fellows almost fell down.

"Ten guineas!" gasped Tom Merry. "Why, that's as much as Railton sent to the fund. Ratty stood ten guineas! Oh, come off!"

"Fact!" said Kerr. "Of course, our Housemaster backs up our fund. That's only to be expected—ahem! Ta-ta!"

Figgins & Co. walked off cheerily. They left Tom Merry & Co. staring at one another in astonishment.

"Well, this beats the giddy band!" said Blake. "Fancy Ratty ponying up ten giddy guineas! It's the unexpected that always happens. The chap who said that the age of miracles was past was a frabjous ass!"

And the School House juniors agreed that he was!

CHAPTER 15.

Funny Football!

SATURDAY, the day of the great match, was hailed with joy by Tom Merry & Co. The junior eleven were in the highest of spirits. Tom Merry had been serenely certain all along; but the members of the eleven had had their doubts. But all doubts had been removed by Kildare's acceptance of the challenge. After that it was all plain sailing.

And the juniors gleefully reflected that it was not only a great success for the fund, but a triumph for themselves. They were going to play the first eleven! That great and lofty band—as select as the Sacred Band of Thebes in olden times—had to play the junior eleven!

The cool and confident juniors were not without hopes that they might beat them. But whether they beat them or not, nothing could alter the fact that they had played them; that was honour enough for the junior eleven.

They would be able to remark in a careless sort of way, when talking footer, "Oh, yes, I remember the time we played Kildare's lot!" or "So-and-so occurred on the day we played the first eleven!" It was a feather in the cap of the junior team, and they knew it and rejoiced accordingly.

Half the senior eleven were prefects; but they would not be able to "come the prefect" over juniors they were meeting on the footer field.

It was a great privilege for a Fourth Former to be able to shove a prefect off the ball, to bump into the captain of the school, or to yell opprobrious epithets at some lofty Sixth Former at whose frown he would have trembled—off the footer field.

Curiously enough the first eleven appeared very genial also. They did not seem to mind in the least the fact that they were entering into a match which might have been supposed to touch their lofty dignity. Most of them were laughing when they started for the Ramblers' ground.

It was observed that they were carrying unusually large bags, and it caused some surprise. Why the first eleven wanted those big bags in which to carry their football "clobber" the juniors could not guess. They knew later.

Nearly all St. Jim's walked or cycled down to the Ramblers' ground.

A dozen fellows took charge of the gates and extracted gate-money from all who entered. Threepence was the fixed price, but it was announced that all who liked could pay more, and those who were short of "tin" could pay less. It was noticeable that a good many paid less, but the takings were brisk.

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Besides a huge crowd from St. Jim's, half Rylcombe had turned up to see the match, and a great many country folk came in and a crowd from the market town of Wayland.

The enclosure was a good size, but it was crammed.

Tom Merry & Co. looked over the crowd with great satisfaction. There was no doubt that the gate-money on that historic occasion would swell the hospital fund immensely.

The dressing-rooms on the Ramblers' ground were not palatial, nor were the conveniences first-class, which, perhaps, accounted for the very long time the first eleven took to change.

Tom Merry & Co. were in their football rig and out in the field long before there was any sign of the seniors.

They kicked the ball about merrily while they waited. They were in the highest of spirits.

A crowd of fellows from the Grammar School, headed by Gordon Gay & Co., gave them a rousing cheer as they appeared in the field. Tom Merry & Co. waved their hands to them cheerily. Tom was glad that Gordon Gay & Co. were there to see the St. Jim's juniors play the mighty men of the first eleven.

Grimes was there with his whistle to referee. The crowd was very good-humoured, but they began to show some sign of impatience when the senior eleven did not appear.

"Come out!" shouted Gordon Gay. "Get a move on!"

"Where are the old fogies?" shouted Wally D'Arcy of the Third. "Wake 'em up!"

"Bai Jove, they do seem wathah a long time!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wondah what can be detainin' them?"

"Here they come!" said Grimes. "They—what—My 'at!"

Grimes stared in astonishment, so did the junior eleven, as the first eleven walked solemnly out into the field.

There was a gasp from the crowd. It was followed by a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What the dickens—"

"The asses—the duifers! What the dickens—"

"My word!"

There was reason for astonishment.

Kildare and his followers came out into the field, ready for the football match. But they were not dressed as footballers. Every member of the senior team wore a tail-coat, white spats, and a silk hat.

They looked as if they were dressed for some social function rather than a match on the football field.

Howls of laughter rose from the crowd.

"Ready?" said Kildare.

"What the—the—what—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Sorry we kept ye waiting," grinned Mulvaney. "Sure, it took us some time to change."

"Bai Jove! You nttah asses, you are not goin' to play like that!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Like what?" asked Kildare.

"Gweat Scott! In tail coats and toppahs—"

"We can choose our own colours, I suppose?" said Kildare.

"Yaas; but—but—"

"You can't play in these things!" shouted Figgins.

"Pardon! We can, and we're going to!"

"But—but it turns the whole thing into a farce!" howled Monty Lowther. "They'll laugh at us—"



"Better at you than at us!" said Monteith, with a chuckle. "You kids have brought this on yourselves. We're going to play you like this. It will show the precise opinion we entertain of the junior eleven."

"Look here, you—you've got no right to guy us like that!" exclaimed Tom Merry, his face crimson with wrath.

Kildare smiled.

"You're wasting time," he remarked.

"Toss for ends!"

"But—but—but—"

"You're keeping us waiting."

"Bai Jove! I pwotest—"

"Play up!" roared Gordon Gay. "Go it, toppers! Play up!"

"Play!" roared the crowd, in great delight.

The junior eleven looked at one another with sickly expressions. They were playing the first eleven, as they had planned. But Mulvaney major had been one too many for them; they guessed that the suggestion had come from him.

The first eleven were "guying" them in the most merciless manner. A match with a team of fellows in tail-coats and silk hats was utterly absurd, and could not be taken seriously at all. But there was no help for it.

Kildare & Co. had a right to dress as they liked; and, anyway, there they were.

Tom Merry glumly tossed for ends.

The kick-off fell to the seniors, and the ball rolled from Kildare's foot.

Grimes was laughing so much that he could scarcely blow the whistle.

"Never mind!" muttered Blake.

"They can't run and kick in that rig, anyway; and we'll beat them!"

"Yaas, wathah! We'll wallop them to the wide, deah boy!"

But it was not so easy to "wallop to the wide" such players as St. Jim's first, in spite of their inconvenient rig for footer.

They followed up the kick-off with an attack, and the juniors were left standing. In goal, Fatty Wynn was on the look-out, and when Kildare sent in a hot shot the fat Fourth Former leaped for the ball and punched it out promptly.

"Well saved, Fatty!"

Then there was a howl of laughter as

Kildare, gracefully removing his silk hat, headed the ball into the net, and replaced his topper after a polite bow to the goalkeeper.

"Goal! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cwumbs!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm afraid the cword are laughin' at us, deah boys."

There wasn't much doubt on that point. The crowd were yelling with laughter. In spite of the silk hats and the tail coat, the junior were hopelessly outmatched by their opponents.

The match was one howl of laughter from beginning to end. Tom Merry & Co. played hard, and several times there were crunched silk hats on the ground. But the senior players picked them up, and punched them into shape again, and put them on, and played on serenely.

When a fellow took off his hat to head the ball there was a yell of merriment from the spectators.

At half-time, the senior score was three goals to nil. In the second half Tom Merry's side played up desperately, and Blake succeeded in putting the ball into the senior net, amid cheers.

The Sixth Form goalkeeper tossed out the leather, and carefully dusted his hands afterwards on a clean white handkerchief, amid peals of laughter.

"Broken our duck, anyway," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I wouldn't mind the lickin', if they weren't guyin' us, the wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus plaintively. "I weally do not see any weason for this excessive amount of laughtah."

But the spectators evidently did, for they laughed uproariously all the time.

When Grimes blew the whistle for the finish, the score was six goals to one. That did not matter to the juniors; they had hardly expected to win. But for the great match to be nothing but one roar of laughter from beginning to end—that was too bad.

At the final whistle, the senior eleven walked back solemnly to the dressing-room, raising their toppers in response to the shouts from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a match!" gasped Gordon Gay. "What a giddy match! Ha, ha, ha!"

In the junior dressing-room, Tom Merry & Co. changed in grim silence. They had had their way, but it was likely to be a long time before St. Jim's allowed them to forget how they had been rotted.

"Neval mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the eleven gathered in Study No. 6 for a well-earned feed. "After all, we've weached our object. There's eight pounds for the fund! It was worth bein' guyed for that!"

Tom Merry & Co. tried to think it was.

At all events, the fund was a great success. And when all the collections were pooled, upwards of sixty pounds were realised to be forwarded to Wayland Cottage Hospital. So, in spite of their "guying" in the great match, the juniors had reason to be satisfied with the result of the St. Jim's charity fund.

("THE TOPPS TRIUMPH!")
Loyalty for the Head of St. Jim's, or friendship for a cracksman? That's the choice which faces Talbot in next Wednesday's great yarn. Don't miss it!

THE JUNIOR WHO CLIMBED THE RUINED TOWER AT GREYFRIARS TO EAT A CAKE!

THE MYSTERY RAIDER!

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Harry Wharton of the Remove Form at Greyfriars is awakened in the night by the sound of the dormitory door closing. He gets up to investigate, and, hearing footsteps downstairs, arouses Wingate, the school captain. The pair make a thorough search, but discover nothing; neither is there anyone absent from the dormitory.

In the morning it is learned that someone has broken open the pantry in the kitchen and eaten a large pie. In view of what Wharton heard in the night, it is thought that the culprit belongs to the Remove.

Billy Bunter is immediately suspected; but the Owl protests his innocence, and Wharton, knowing that Bunter was fast asleep just after the search for the midnight marauder, supports him. Who, then, is the raider?

That night Wharton is again awakened, to hear the creak of the dormitory door! The unknown raider is on the move!

(Now read on.)

Another Raid!

THE Remove dormitory at Greyfriars was very dark, and Harry Wharton, as he heard the creak of the door, could see nothing. What the hour was he had no idea, but from the silence of the house he knew that it must be very late.

Creak!

The door had closed again.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton, straining his ears to listen. "It's the rotter again, whoever he is. The question is, has he gone out of the dormitory or come in?"

He listened intently.

If the mystery raider of the kitchen pantry had left the room, Harry had only to strike a match to discover by the empty bed which of the fellows was absent.

But a sound of fumbling with bed-clothes warned him that the wakeful one was not out of the room. Harry had awakened in time to hear his return.

He reached out for his jacket, to feel for a box of matches, but for a moment could not find them.

The box was in his hand at last.

Scratch!

The flare of the match glimmered through the darkness of the dormitory. Harry stepped out of bed and looked quickly round him. So far as he could see every bed was occupied by a sleeping Removeite. He lighted a candle and went along the row, looking at each sleeper.

But all were asleep, and if one was shamming he was doing it so well that Harry Wharton could not detect the imposture.

The junior paused, baffled.

He had no doubt that the marauder had been at work again, and that the morning would show a fresh raid on the pantry. There could be no doubt that the culprit was a Removeite. But who was he?

There was a yawn from Bob Cherry's bed.

"Hallo! What's this light?"

"It's only I," said Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes and sat up.

"What's the matter, then?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,520

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

"Someone has just come into the dormitory and got into bed."

"My hat!"

"I was trying to see who it was, but I can't. The rotter is pretending to be asleep, I suppose."

"That means another raid below stairs, Harry."

"I suppose so."

"Well, I don't see what could be done," said Bob Cherry, after a pause. "If you knew which one it was, you couldn't give him away to Quelch."

"But I could give him a jolly good hiding, which would stop him from getting the Form into disgrace," said Harry Wharton grimly.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Bunter woke up now, and he won't let us go to sleep again to-night," yawned Bob Cherry. "Don't answer him."

There's a big shock—and a big thrill—for Harry Wharton & Co. when they track down the unknown tuck-raider of the Remove!

"I say, you fellows, have you been raiding the pantry?"

"No," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Go to sleep, Bunter."

"Of course, I don't doubt your word, Wharton, but if you have been raiding the pantry I should like to have some of the cold rabbit pies."

"Oh, shut up and go to sleep!"

"I feel that I ought to have something to eat to keep me up."

"You don't want to be kept up at this time of night," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Go to sleep."

"I mean to keep me up physically."

"Oh, go to sleep!"

Harry Wharton got into bed, and soon sank into slumber again. There was no hope of solving the mystery that night, and he was tired.

He did not wake again till the rising-bell was clanging unmusically through the morning air.

Billy Bunter, for a wonder, was first out of bed in the dormitory. He came towards Harry's bed as the captain of the Remove was rising.

"I say, Wharton," he said in a mysterious whisper.

"Well, what is it, Bunter?"

"You don't mind if I ask you a question?"

"No."

"You won't get waxy?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, where are the rabbit pies?"

"The what?"

"The rabbit pies. You and Cherry couldn't have eaten them all last night. I've got up with a fearful hunger on me, and you know we never get enough

breakfast. If you'd let me have one of the rabbit pies—"

"You utter ass!"

"I think you might. I suppose you collared plenty while you were about it?"

"I told you last night that I hadn't raided the pantry—"

"Yes, but I think you might just let me have one!"

"Oh, get away!"

"Just half of one, Wharton—that won't hurt, you know."

"You confounded young ass!" exclaimed Harry angrily. "I tell you—"

"You promised not to get waxy."

Harry laughed in spite of himself.

"Look here, you young ass," he said quietly. "I suppose it's no good arguing with you, and you're not worth licking; but I didn't go to the pantry last night, and I don't know anything about the rabbit pies. Don't you believe it?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, then, get off the subject, for goodness' sake!"

"Certainly, Wharton. Anything to oblige. All the same—"

"Well, what?"

"All the same, I think you might let me have one of the rabbit pies."

Harry made a threatening gesture, and Billy Bunter scuttled off.

The Removeites dressed and went downstairs, the Famous Four in an expectant mood. Nugent and Hurree Singh had been told of the incident of the night, and they agreed with Harry's opinion that it could only mean another raid on the larder.

That something had happened was evident from Mr. Quelch's face when they saw him in the dining-room. The Remove master had a brow of thunder, and his answer to the boys' greeting was very short and brusque.

Breakfast went off rather dismally—a thundercloud hanging, as it were, over the Remove table. The juniors expected the storm to burst as soon as they were in the class-room, and they were not disappointed.

"Boys!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the word in tones that electrified the class. The Remove was all attention at once.

"Boys, there has been another outrage in this school! The pantry was broken open last night, the lock being forced in exactly the same way as before, and there is little doubt that it was the same culprit."

The Remove was silent.

"This repetition of a disgraceful proceeding," went on Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger, "disgraces this Form in the eyes of all Greyfriars! The culprit must be discovered!"

Dead silence.

"It seems impossible to me that the rascal is not known, at least to some of you," pursued Mr. Quelch. "I leave it to the Remove to find him out. Mind, the individual is in the Remove, and it is the duty of the Form to see that these depredations are exposed and punished. Until the culprit is discovered, the Remove is detained for every half-holiday!"

There was a general gasp.

To visit punishment upon the whole Form for the fault of a single member was certainly drastic; yet, in the circumstances, it was difficult to say what else the Form-master could have done.

A CRIPPING YARN OF HARRY WHARTON & CO., TELLING HOW THE SOLVING OF A MYSTERY BECAME A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!

The juniors looked at one another in wrathful dismay.

"Every half-holiday!" murmured Bob Cherry. "My hat!"

"I think the culprit ought to confess," said Levison.

"Go ahead, then."

"Better tell Wharton that."

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch. "Once more I offer the delinquent a chance of confessing, and thus putting an end to a scandal. Let him speak!"

No one spoke.

"I regret very much," said Mr. Quelch in measured tones, "that the delinquent has not sufficient manliness to own up to his fault and save the rest of the Form from punishment!"

There was a murmur.

"You will note, then, that the Form is detained for every half-holiday until the guilty party is discovered," said Mr. Quelch. "If this is not effective, I shall have to try more drastic measures. We shall now commence."

The Remove was silent with dismay.

No Pie for Bunter!

"IT'S a shame!" broke out Bulstrode fiercely, the moment the Lower Fourth came out of their classroom. "It's a rotten shame!"

"It's beastly!" said Levison. "The guilty party ought to own up."

"Do you know who it is?" asked Bob Cherry, turning upon him suddenly.

Levison shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, of course, I don't know anything about it!"

"Then shut up!"

"I shall shut up when I choose."

"You will shut up now," said Bob Cherry, "or I'll shut you up! You can take your choice."

Levison put his hands in his pockets and walked away whistling. Bunter nudged the wrathful Bob on the arm.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Can I speak to you a minute?"

"Yes; go ahead."

"It's private," said Billy Bunter, looking round at the crowd of juniors who were standing about discussing the new development. "Come along under the elms."

"Oh, rats! No time for jaw, Bunter!"

"It's important."

"Bosh!"

"It's about last night."

Bob Cherry started and looked attentively at the Owl of the Remove.

"Do you know anything about that, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter grinned.

"You know I woke up when you and Wharton were talking, Cherry."

"Yes, I know you did. What about it?"

"Well, come into the Close, and I can speak to you."

"If you raided the pantry, Bunter, you'd better not tell me about it, as I should probably consider it my duty to show you up."

"But I didn't. Do come."

"Oh, very well!" said Bob resignedly.

He accompanied the Owl of the Remove into the Close. Billy Bunter was looking very mysterious, but as he was frequently looking mysterious over trifling matters, Bob Cherry did not attach much importance to that.

"Now, you see," said Bunter, stopping under the elms, "this is how it is—"

"Buck up!"

"One good turn deserves another—"

"I suppose so. Cut it short!"

"If I do you a good turn you ought to do me one—"

"Go ahead! What on earth are you driving at?"

"I've spoken to Wharton, and he's cut up rough about it, though he promised

not to get waxy. I'd rather you kept your temper."

Bob Cherry laughed.

"I'll keep my temper, Bunter, if only you won't be so long-winded. What on earth have you got in your silly noddle this time? Get it out!"

"Well, I woke up and heard you and Wharton talking."

"I know you did."

"Wharton won't give me any of the rabbit pies."

"What?"

"You heard what I said, Cherry. Wharton won't give me any of the rabbit pies. Are you going to give me some?"

"What rabbit pies?" demanded the amazed Bob.

"Those you scoffed from the pantry last night. You can't possibly have wolfed them all, and I think—"

"You utter ass—"

"That is what Wharton said, but it is no argument. One good turn deserves another. If I keep the secret, I think I ought to have some of the rabbit pies."

"You shrieking idiot!"

"It's no use calling me names, Cherry. It's not fair that I should have all the trouble and risk of keeping the secret and not have any of the grub."

"But we didn't raid the pantry."

"If you gave me a couple of pies—"

"I tell you we didn't—"

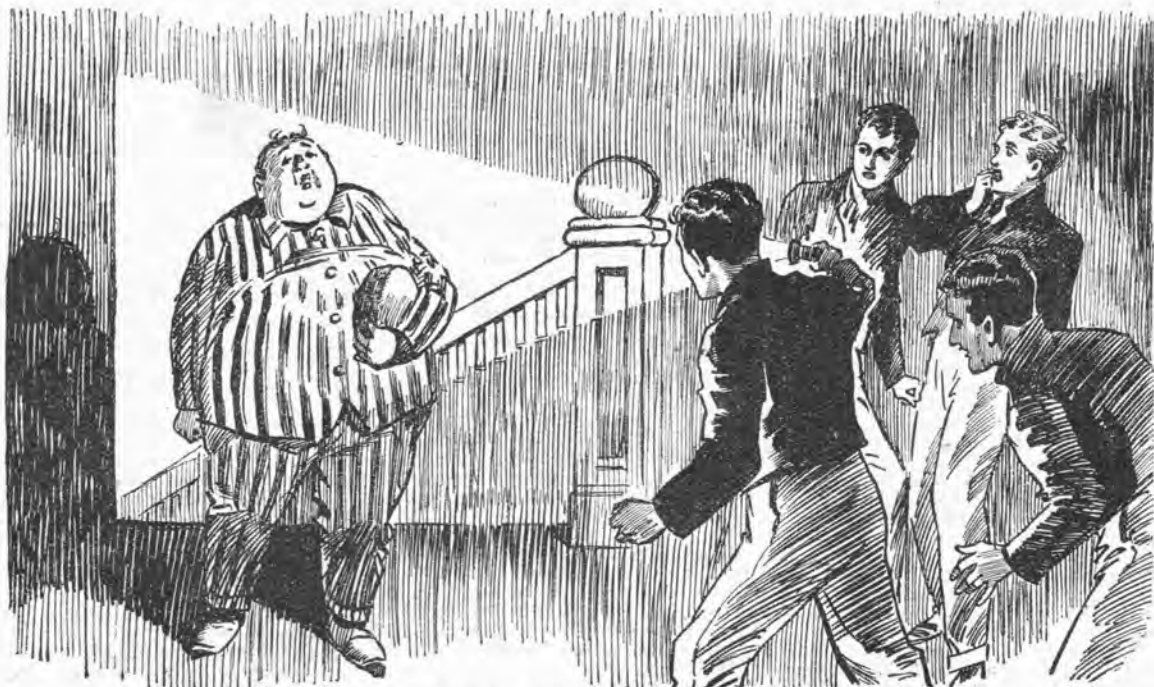
"Well, just one, then."

"You blithering fool!"

"I'm awfully hungry, and dinner is never big enough. It's beastly mean of you to want to keep the grub all to yourselves, and when I'm keeping a secret for you, I think—"

"But I tell you—"

"Just one, or even half, if you haven't many left," said Billy Bunter persuasively. "If you're mean about the matter, I may feel it my duty to give you away."



As the figure reached the top of the staircase Harry Wharton immediately switched on the torch. The beam fell upon a plump, pyjama-clad form well known to the chums of the Remove. It was Billy Bunter!

"I tell you—"

"After all, it's a disgrace to the Form, and you ought to be shown up. Ow, leave go, you beast! If you shake me like that you'll make my spectacles fall off, and if you break them you'll have to pay for them."

"There, you young ass! If you say another word about rabbit pies, I'll wring your neck next time!" said Bob Cherry; and he left the Owl gasping for breath.

Bob was half angry and half laughing when he rejoined his chums. He explained to them the mysterious communication Bunter had had to make.

"The young ass," said Harry Wharton. "Nothing will get the idea out of his head that we raided the pantry, and he firmly believes that we've got a lot of rabbit pies hidden away somewhere."

"It may be deuced awkward if he spreads the yarn among the fellows."

"As he certainly will."

"The awkwardfulness would be terrific. It's a pity that we cannot gag the esteemed Bunter, or amputate his honourable tongue."

"I say, it's rough about the half-holidays being stopped," said Nugent. "The whole Form is wild about it, and no wonder."

"The rotter, whoever he is, ought to own up," said Wharton angrily. "Mr. Quelch has left it to the Remove to find him. I vote that we find the beast and make an example of him!"

"Ratherfully!"

"If we found him out and ragged him and explained to Quelch, I think he'd be satisfied without our giving the rotter away to him."

"Very likely."

"That's the idea, then. The rotter seems to be making a regular habit of these visits to the pantry. He may go again to-night."

"My hat! We'll keep watch, then."

"That's what I was thinking of. Mind, not a word to anyone. We'll keep watch from our beds, without giving a hint of our intention. Then the rotter, if he gets out of bed, won't have any suspicion that we're on the watch—and we can nail him."

"The idea is a wheezy good one!" exclaimed the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The rascally bounder will fall into the trapful snare, and we shall give him the showing up."

"And a jolly good hiding, too," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Yes, he wants that, whoever he is. As a matter of fact, I haven't the faintest idea who it can be, except that I know it's a Remove fellow. I should have suspected Bunter, but he hasn't nerve enough, and, besides, he proved his innocence by suspecting Cherry and myself."

"Yes, he was certainly in earnest about those rabbit pies," said Bob Cherry, laughing.

"Then it might be Bulstrode, only he has plenty of money, and he doesn't need to scoff grub from the larder. He could have all the rabbit pies he wanted from the tuckshop."

"That's so."

"Then there's Levison. He seems to be pretty busy trying to throw suspicion on us. But he's a suspicious beast, anyway. I don't think it was Levison."

"Then who could it have been?" said Nugent, looking puzzled. "I'm quite in the dark. I suppose it's not Vaseline up to his old tricks again, is it?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

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"No. Hazeldene is going straight enough now. He has been as straight as a die since I got him out of trouble with that moneylender."

"The straightfulness of the esteemed Hazeldene is terrific."

"It wasn't Skinner, either. He wouldn't risk it. I can't imagine whom it was. Micky Desmond is reckless enough to do it, but he would have owned up like a shot to save the whole Form from being punished."

"Oh, yes; it wasn't Micky!"

"What about those foreign chaps?" asked Nugent. "Fritz Hoffman is something like Bunter in the eating line, and—"

"Well, it might have been Hoffman," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "Or it might have been Adolphe Meunier, the French chap. But it's not fair to suspect them without an atom of proof."

"If we keep watch to-night that will settle it."

"Yes; if the raider goes raiding again."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Run along and play, Buntly!"

"I say, I'm hungry, and dinner's a long time off yet. I should like one of those rabbit pies, Wharton."

"Oh, get away!"

"I say, Cherry, if you let me have just a snack—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"But, I say, you fellows, I think I ought to have one of those rabbit pies to—"

"What's that?" asked Levison, coming by and stopping. "What's that about rabbit pies, Bunter?"

"Oh, nothing, Levison! They can be as mean as they like, but I'm not going to give them away."

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, and he walked away with his chums towards the cricket field.

Billy Bunter blinked after him through his big spectacles.

"I call that selfish," he said. "I hear that there were seven or eight rabbit pies taken, and they can't have eaten them all."

"So it was Wharton?" said Levison, with a grin.

"I'm not going to give him away to you, Levison," said Billy Bunter magnanimously. "He can be as selfish as he likes, but I shall keep his secret."

And Billy Bunter walked away. He left Levison grinning; and in the course of about ten minutes, Levison had acquainted the whole Remove with what he had learned from Bunter.

Wharton is Suspected!

THE Famous Four came in only just in time for dinner, and it was not till after that meal that they noticed anything unusual afoot. But when the Removites went out of the dining-hall, a change could hardly fail to be noticed.

Most of the fellows were looking curiously at the chums, and some of them were openly sneering.

"Something's up," said Nugent, catching the strange expression on many faces. "I wonder what it is?"

"The upfulness is terrific," said Hurree Singh. "Is it that the esteemed Bunterful ass has been talking in his honourable fatheaded way?"

"Looks like it."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with you asses?" called out Bob Cherry. "Russell! Skinner! What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!" said Russell.

"Why don't you own up?" said Skinner.

"Own up about what?"

"The rabbit pies!"

Bob Cherry's face went scarlet.

"Do you think I raided the pantry, Skinner?"

"I know you did!"

"How can you know anything of the sort, ass?"

"Bunter heard you talking about it when you came back to the dormitory."

"Bunter is an ass!"

"Well, you did it, and you know you did."

"I didn't!"

"Of course, I believe you—I don't think!"

"Look here, Skinner—"

"Oh, own up!" said Skinner, walking away with Russell.

Bob Cherry turned an angry and excited face towards his chums. They were all looking rather grim.

"This isn't nice, is it?" said Bob. "I thought that ass Bunter would be up to something of the sort!"

"The assfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific!"

"What's going to be done?" growled Nugent. "The fellows ought to have more sense. Hallo, here they come!"

A dozen or more of the Remove, with Bulstrode and Levison at their head, came up to the chums in the Close. Levison's face wore a sneer, and Bulstrode was looking threatening. It was the first time since his fall that the bully of the Remove had found any faction in the Remove to back him up against Harry Wharton.

"Look here," said Bulstrode, in a blustering tone, "what are you chaps going to do about this?"

"About what?" asked Harry Wharton quietly, but with a glint in his eyes.

"About the Form being detained because you won't own up."

"That's it!" said Levison. "I said all along that Wharton was the party, and now we've got proof!"

"He ought to be shown up!" said Price.

Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Look here—"

"Oh, we've had enough of your gas!" broke in Bulstrode rudely. "What we want to know is, are you going to own up?"

"That's it—own up!"

"I'm not speaking to you, Bulstrode. I'm speaking to these chaps, whom you're trying to lead by the nose. Fellows, I didn't have any hand in the raid on the pantry, and I don't know anything about it. I think my word ought to be good enough for you."

The Removites looked at one another. "Well, if you say out plain that you didn't do it—," began Price.

"I do!"

"Honour bright?" asked Russell.

"Yes, honour bright!"

"Well, I believe you for one. But what about Bunter?"

"Bunter is a silly ass. He woke up and heard Cherry talking to me, and jumped to the conclusion that we had been on a raid."

"He says you were both out of bed!" said Levison.

"I was out of bed, certainly. I had heard the fellow, whoever he was, come into the dormitory and get into bed, and I wanted to see who it was."

"And did you?"

"No!"

"A likely story," said Bulstrode.

"I hope you fellows believe me," said

Wharton, without looking at Bulstrode. "I think you know I'm not the fellow to lie, or to refuse to own up if there were any owning up to be done."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Russell. "We believe you, if you put it like that. It's not a thing much in your line, anyway. I'd advise you to shut up Billy Bunter, that's all. He thinks you did it."

"And he's jolly well right!" said Levison.

"That's what I say!" said Bulstrode emphatically. "Wharton ought to own up to Mr. Quelch, and get the Form out of a fix!"

"I'd own up like a shot if I had done it!"

"Well, now's the chance."

Harry's eyes glinted dangerously.

"I suppose every fellow's entitled to his own opinion," he said quietly, "but I won't have doubt cast on my word in my presence, Bulstrode. You can think what you like, but if you say that again, I'll knock you flying!"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode.

But he walked away with Levison without pursuing the subject. The Removites dispersed, discussing the matter. Harry's words carried weight with most of them, but there was still a lingering doubt in some minds.

"We'd better look for that silly cuckoo Bunter, and muzzle him!" said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "Hallo, Hazel-dene! Do you believe this yarn the fellows are spreading?"

"Not if you deny it," said Hazeldene.

"That's all right, then. Levison has been getting it out of Bunter, and making him say all sorts of things he didn't really mean to say," said Hazeldene. "Bunter is feeling annoyed because he hasn't had any of the rabbit pies!"

"The young ass! Let's go and muzzle him!" said Bob Cherry, and in a few moments the chums of the Remove ran down the chatterbox of the Form in the Close.

Billy Bunter did not seem alarmed at their approach. He beamed upon them through his big spectacles.

"You've changed your minds?" he asked.

"Eh?" growled Bob Cherry.

"You're going to let me have some of the rabbit pies? I think you ought, as I'm keeping the secret. You see, I really ought to tell Quelch, but I'm keeping it strictly dark out of regard for you."

"You silly chump!"

"I don't think you ought to call me names when I'm really taking a lot of risk and trouble to do you a service. I've had my dinner now, and I don't feel so hungry, but I could do with a rabbit pie—Don't shake me like that, Cherry!"

"It's not Cherry—it's I!" said Harry Wharton, shaking the fat junior wrathfully. "You've been spreading a yarn about us—"

"Oh, is that you, Wharton? I'm rather short-sighted, you know. I wish you wouldn't shake me. You might make my glasses fall off, and then—"

"You've been telling the fellows we raided the rabbit pies—"

"No, I haven't!"

"Levison got it all out of you."

"Well, I suppose he might have gathered something from what I said, but he won't tell Quelch. Unless you like to own up, Quelch won't know that you robbed the pantry."

"But we didn't, you silly cuckoo!"

"I suppose the fact of the matter is



With a rotten roof on one side of him and a sheer drop of fifty feet on the other, Harry Wharton crept on hands and knees along the ivy-covered parapet of the ruined tower. But a gap in the crumbled brickwork stopped him from getting closer to Billy Bunter. The safety of the Owl now depended on Wharton's skill with the lasso!

that you've eaten all the rabbit pies and there aren't any left!"

"We never had any!"

"Well, I can understand a fellow scoffing the lot, of course, if he's hungry," said Bunter, "but I don't see why you should cut up rough because I've asked you for some. Why couldn't you say they were all gone?"

"Oh, it's no good talking to him!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing. "The young ass firmly believes it, and hasn't sense enough to understand. Come on!"

"I say, you fellows—"

The chums of the Remove walked away. Billy Bunter blinked after them and shook his head solemnly.

"Fancy Wharton eating up half a dozen pies, he and Cherry by themselves!" he murmured. "Considering I'm guarding their secret and saving them from getting into a row, I think they might be a little less selfish towards me. If all the pies are gone, they might stand me one at the tuck-shop."

A Startling Discovery!

THE Remove went to bed in a bad humour that night. The following day was a half-holiday, and unless Mr. Quelch relented, the bright summer's afternoon would have to be spent in the stuffy classroom instead of in the green fields or by the shining river. The thought was enough to worry the Removites, for Mr. Quelch was quite certain not to relent unless the culprit was discovered.

Harry Wharton and his chums had not said a word about their intention

to keep watch. The thought had crossed other minds, but it was not easy for healthy juniors, tired with the day's work and play, to remain awake all night. But Wharton, at least, was determined.

"You chaps can go to sleep, if you like," Wharton remarked, in a low voice. "You can trust me to keep awake and to call you, if necessary."

"Well, if you think you can do it, I'll accept your offer," said Bob Cherry. "I'm feeling jolly sleepy."

"I'll keep awake," said Nugent.

"And I also," said the nabob. "The wakefulness of my esteemed self will be terrific!"

The chums went to bed, and for a time there was a buzz of talk in the dormitory, as usual. When all was silent, Harry Wharton sat up in bed and leaned back against the hard bed-rail. He was not likely to drop off to sleep in that position.

Ten boomed out from the clock tower.

"Asleep, you fellows?" said Wharton, in a low voice.

"I'm not," came back drowsy tones from Nugent's bed.

"And I also, fully," said the nabob.

Bob Cherry was fast asleep, and so were the rest of the Remove. The quarters chimed away, and eleven boomed out. There was a sound of someone shifting in bed, and Harry Wharton started and listened. But it was only Nugent turning over to go to sleep.

Wharton looked through the dense gloom towards the nabob's bed. He could not see, but he felt sure that the

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Nabob of Bhanipur was still wide awake.

But he did not speak a word to the Indian junior. It was near time for the raider to get out of bed, if the raid was to be repeated. And it was extremely probable, in Harry's opinion, that the immunity from capture that had attended the two raids might encourage the mystery raider to make a third. If he made it, he was lost, for sleep would not visit Harry Wharton's eyes that night.

Twelve!

The strokes boomed out from the clock tower.

Still there was no sound in the dormitory. Harry's heart sank a little. The loss of sleep meant weariness and lassitude on the morrow, and apparently it was all for nothing.

But just after the quarter-past twelve had chimed out, the silence was broken by an unmistakable sound.

Harry started and listened. He heard bedclothes pushed back, and a faint footfall on the floor.

Someone was getting out of bed.

It was too dark to see from which bed the sound came, but there was no mistaking it. Harry Wharton felt a thrill. The raider was up at last!

He did not move. His idea was to allow the fellow to get fairly out before spotting him, in order that there could be no doubt about the matter. He heard the creak of the door.

The raider had gone from the dormitory.

Harry Wharton stepped quickly out of bed and struck a match. The nabob's sleepless eyes met his.

"He's gone!" whispered Harry.

"I heard him clearly."

"Call the others, while I see which bed is empty."

"Goodful!"

The nabob slipped out of bed and called Bob Cherry and Nugent quietly. They rose at once, and began to slip on their trousers.

Harry Wharton lighted a candle-end and looked along the beds. He gave a start as he came to an empty one, and stared at it in amazement. Then he came back quickly towards his chums.

"Who is gone?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Billy Bunter!"

"What?"

"It's a fact!"

"My only hat!"

Bob Cherry stepped quickly towards Bunter's bed and looked at it. It was empty, and the clothes had been thrown back and were still warm. Billy Bunter was gone!

"The young villain!" muttered Nugent.

"Then he was taking us in all the time!"

Harry Wharton looked puzzled.

"I can't understand it," he said, in a low voice. "Bunter was certainly in earnest about the rabbit pies."

"But if he is the raider—"

"He may only be following the raider's lead."

"True."

"Or there may be something wrong. Let's follow him, anyway. Get your torch, Nugent. We must have a light."

Nugent soon fetched his torch, and the chums quitted the dormitory and closed the door behind them. With cautious footsteps they passed along the corridor and descended the stairs, Harry Wharton leading the way with the torch. Billy Bunter had a good start, and he was out of sight.

The Famous Four halted at the head of the kitchen stairs.

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"He's down there," whispered Nugent. "This door here is always locked of a night, and, you see, it's wide open now."

"He hasn't got a light, then."

"I suppose he knows the way pretty well by this time," murmured Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"Hark!"

There was a dull sound from below.

The Removites knew what it was.

"It's the lock!"

"He's busted it again!"

"The cheeky young bounder! It's too late to stop that now. There will be a fearful row about it to-morrow."

Bob Cherry stepped on the stairs.

Wharton pulled his arm.

"Don't go down, Bob."

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Why not?"

"He might give us the slip in the passages down there. We don't want a long hunt in the dark, and perhaps wake the house. He can't come back any way but this. We can wait for him here."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry, stepping back. "Better put the light out, then."

"Yes, and I'll switch it on again as soon as he's here," said Harry, "when it's too late for him to dodge."

The chums of the Remove waited. In a few moments low footfalls were heard on the stairs. The raider was returning.

They crowded back. The footsteps sounded strangely uncanny in the darkness, where not a glimpse could be obtained of the walker. The unseen raider reached the top of the staircase and walked along the passage.

Harry Wharton immediately switched on the torch.

"Now, then!" he exclaimed.

The torch beam cut the darkness and fell upon a form clad in pyjamas—a plump form well known to the chums of the Remove.

It was Billy Bunter!

But, curiously enough, although the light fell on his face, and the chums of the Remove were round him, Bunter did not stop or speak. He walked straight on, looking neither to right nor to left. In spite of themselves, the juniors felt an uncanny influence, and receded from his path to let him pass.

Bunter's eyes were half-open and fixed on vacancy. He had a large cake under his left arm, showing what he had been downstairs for. He walked straight on without a sound.

Harry Wharton held out the torch, and the beam shone on his face and showed no sign of consciousness there.

Then the juniors understood.

The mystery raider was Billy Bunter, and he was walking in his sleep!

A Narrow Escape!

BILLY BUNTER walked straight on, and the chums of the Remove looked at one another in dismay and amazement. They had not been prepared for anything like this. They had not known that the fat junior was a victim of somnambulism; but it was quite clear now.

"I say, we'd better stop him," said Nugent.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I've heard that it's dangerous to wake a sleep-walker," he said. "It may have some harmful effect on him. Better let him get back to bed."

"The betterfulness is terrific."

The chums of the Remove silently followed the somnambulist down the passage.

Nugent gave a violent start.

"He's not going upstairs!"

"By Jove!"

It was true. Billy Bunter had stopped at the great door in the hall, removed the chain, and pushed back the catch.

The Removites hesitated. Bunter was going out into the Close, doubtless with some dreamy fancy in his sleepy brain that it was safer to get to a distance with the purloined cake.

To wake him might have ill-consequences, but—

While the chums were debating the matter in their minds, the great door was swung open and the junior disappeared.

"Come on!" said Wharton quickly.

They hurried into the Close. For some minutes they could see nothing of the somnambulist. Then the nabob's keen eyes caught a glimpse of white in the moonlight. The moon was climbing over the ivy-clad clock tower of Greyfriars, and, once outside, it was not difficult to see.

"There he is!"

Harry Wharton caught his breath quickly.

"Look! Do you see what he is doing?"

"By Jove! He's climbing the old tower!"

For a moment the chums of the Remove stood petrified.

In a dim corner of the rambling old Close stood the ivy-covered ruins of an ancient tower—one of the oldest relics of the original abbey of Greyfriars. The clock tower was a comparatively modern structure, though it numbered centuries in its age. The ruined tower lay, a black mass of crumbling masonry and clinging ivy, fifty feet high in the moonlight.

Bunter was climbing the ivy, with the cake tucked under one arm. Awake, he would have shrunk from such a climb, even without anything to carry. But a somnambulist knows no fear.

"We must stop him!" gasped Harry Wharton. "A fall there will mean serious injury!"

"Right-ho! Come on!"

The chums of the Remove dashed towards the ruined tower at top speed.

But Bunter was already a dozen feet from the ground when they reached it, and they stopped in helpless dismay.

To wake him now might be fatal.

He would be certain to fall, and a fall meant serious injury on the hard ground, if not death.

They could only stand in utter dismay and watch the progress of the somnambulist as he climbed the ivy, in momentary terror of seeing him fall.

It was certain that the fuss that had been made about the robberies of the pantry had lingered in the mind of the sleep-walker. Some curious idea of getting the loot into a place of safety, where he could eat it undisturbed, had driven Bunter out in the small hours of the night.

"He will do it!" muttered Nugent.

"Stand ready if he falls," said Harry.

"We can't do much, but we may break his fall."

The chums of the Remove stood with craning necks, watching.

Higher and higher went the climber till he reached the top of the old wall, where a low stone parapet surrounded the ruined tower. Over this the ivy grew thickly. The somnambulist drew himself up on the parapet, and there he stopped.

Harry Wharton gave a gasp of relief.

He had climbed that tower once, and he knew that the old roof was broken in many places, and that for a somnambulist to step upon it was certain death.

But Bunter's present position was one of awful peril.

He sat on the parapet, with his legs dangling in the ivy, and a sheer drop of fifty feet below him.

Harry Wharton set his teeth.

"We must help him," he said quietly.

"You cannot reach him."

"I could climb the ivy on the other side of the tower."

"The roof is full of gaps and shaky all over."

"I can risk it."

"You can't!" exclaimed Nugent.

"The roof wouldn't bear you, Harry. It's no good two going instead of one."

"I'm going to try."

"You can't! You shan't! Anyway, you couldn't reach him. If you touched him he would slip off the parapet, and then—" Nugent broke off with a shudder.

"I couldn't get near enough to touch him," said Wharton. "I could only get near by crawling round the parapet on the other side, and it's broken away in places. If I could sling a rope round him—"

"Lasso him, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"He'd drag you down, too."

"Not if I tied the rope somewhere." Harry spoke with quiet decision. "Look here, you fellows go and wake Mr. Quelch and bring him out here. I'll get a rope out of the woodshed and climb the ivy on the other side."

"Wait till Mr. Quelch comes."

"He would stop me. Besides, Bunter

may fall at any moment. If he should wake up there he would be frightened to death, and would be certain to fall."

"I suppose so, but—"

"Look at him!" muttered Bob Cherry.

They looked up again. Bunter's figure was clear in the moonlight. He was eating the cake. He broke off a huge portion, and laid it down beside his knee in space. The lump of cake came whizzing downward, and broke into fragments on the ground at the feet of the Removites. Bunter, munching away at what remained, was quite unaware of what had happened.

"I'm going," said Harry shortly.

He hurried away towards the woodshed. Nugent ran towards the house to bring Mr. Quelch; Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh remained watching. Harry had the rope in a few minutes, and he came back towards the ruined tower.

"Give me a bunk up, Bob."

"Right-ho! But take it steady, old man!"

The next moment Harry Wharton was climbing the ivy. It was thick and strong at the back of the old tower, and the active junior went up swiftly, the rope slung over his shoulder.

He climbed to the top and threw one arm over the parapet. The moon was clear above the clock tower now, and glimmering in silver light upon the scene.

Wharton rose to his feet. The

parapet was a foot wide and covered with ivy. The roof of the tower was clearly visible in the moonlight, riven with black gashes and gaps. It was dangerous to tread it.

Harry looked across. Billy Bunter was still seated there, his legs dangling over space, munching away at the cake. He had almost finished the cake now, and when he came to the end of it, it was probable that he would feel for the piece he had laid down. Harry could imagine what would happen when he started groping for it—in space.

The junior drew a deep breath. He was risking his life now, but he did not hesitate.

He went slowly along the ivy-covered parapet on hands and knees, with the rotten roof on one side of him and a sheer drop of fifty feet on the other.

Closer and closer he crept to the somnambulist, till a gap in the crumbled parapet stopped him. He could get no nearer. There was no help for it. If he had climbed up close to Bunter, he would almost certainly have startled him into falling. When the gap in the masonry stopped him, he was within six feet of the somnambulist.

He sat astride the wall, with his face turned to Bunter, and made a noose at the end of the rope. Harry Wharton had practised casting the lasso in the Greyfriars gym, and was fairly good at it. His skill would stand Billy Bunter in good stead now.

Bunter had finished munching the cake, and his right hand was groping

(Continued on the next page.)

PEN PALS

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out for the piece he had laid down, and which had fallen into the Close.

Harry set his teeth hard. Not finding the cake, Bunter was reaching out farther, bending down more and more. It was only a matter of seconds now before he slipped from the parapet.

Harry caught a glimpse below of half a dozen white faces looking up. Mr. Quelch was there now, and the Head and Wingate and several others, with the chums of the Remove.

Bunter reached farther forward—over space! There was a gasp of horror from below, a whiz of a rope from above. The noose dropped over Bunter's head and shoulders and caught round his waist.

Harry had taken a turn of the loose end of the rope round a projection close at hand. The junior was slipping from the wall, when the jerk of the tightening rope pulled him back on the parapet.

And Billy Bunter awoke. Harry, his face white as death with fear—for Bunter, not for himself—held on to the rope.

"I say, you fellows—"
Bunter blinked round him. He was without his glasses, and without them he was as blind as an owl. He evidently had not the faintest idea where he was.

"I say, you fellows"—a tremor was coming into his voice—"I—I say, where am I? What has happened?"

"It's all right, Bunter!"
Harry Wharton tried to speak in his usual tones, but his voice was husky, in spite of himself.

"That you, Wharton?"
"Yes, it's all right, Bunter! It's only a little game, you know. Don't be scared. I'm looking after you."

"That's all very well, Wharton; but I don't like being taken out of bed for a little game. I'm not strong, as you know, and it's bad for my constitution. I went to bed early, but I think I've been sleeping badly. I dreamt I was eating cake, you know. Where am I? I can't see without my glasses."

"It's all right, Bunter. Don't move!"
"Well, where am I, then? Why are we in the open air? I—I— Oh! A whisper was creeping into his voice.

"We're on the old tower! You had no right to get me up here, Wharton!"
"I've got a rope round you, Bunter. You're quite safe. I'm going to let you down again."

"I—I—I— Oh dear! We shall be killed!"
"It's all right, Bunter! I know it's rough on you, but I'll stand you a feed in the tuckshop to-morrow morning."

"Well, that's decent of you—though you ought to have let me have some of those rabbit pies."

"You shall have as many rabbit pies as you can eat!"

"Good! I dare say a dozen will be enough for me. I can't see very well,

but I suppose there's no danger if you've got that rope safe. I don't like tricks of this sort, though; they might end seriously."

"Oh, it's all right! Think of the feed to-morrow morning!" said Harry, glad of anything to say that would remove Bunter's thoughts from his peril. "Look here, I'll let out the rope slowly while you climb down the ivy. Nugent will climb up and help you down. He's coming up already, and they're getting a ladder, too."

"Oh, all right, Wharton! Hold that rope tight!"
"I've got it."

Billy Bunter began to climb down the ivy. Harry paid out the rope slowly. Nugent, clinging to the ivy, got a grip on Bunter with one hand and helped him.

Mr. Quelch and Wingate had roared a ladder against the tower. It reached up only half-way; but Bunter was soon

courage and presence of mind! The old Heaven no harm has come to you or Bunter!"

And Dr. Locke shook hands with Wharton.

"You have saved Bunter!" said Harry, "Wharton!" he said, with deep emotion in his voice. "I can only say that Greyfriars is very proud of you."

And Bob Cherry and Bunter Singh said the same as they walked back to the Remove dormitory with Harry Wharton.

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars. The mystery of the raider was fully explained now by the discovery that Billy Bunter was a somnambulist.

Harry Wharton was the hero of the hour, and he deserved it. He had risked his life for Bunter. The clearing up of the mystery, of course, relieved the Form of the "gating." There could be no question of punishing a sleepwalker, either.

Billy Bunter was the most amazed of all when he learned the facts. He had been firmly convinced that he was taken up the ruined tower for a joke by the chums of the Remove, and he was inclined to be incredulous at first when the true explanation was given to him.

"Well, I suppose it's true if you say so," he said at last. "I know I walked in my sleep when I was a kid. I suppose my fearful sufferings under that faddist Chesham started it again—going without grub, you know, and all that. I've never really had enough to make me feel quite satisfied since that awful time, and I suppose it preyed on my mind. I suppose that accounts for my not waking up so hungry the last two or three mornings. Speaking of being hungry, I feel rather peckish now, Wharton. What about that feed?"

"What feed?"
"Why, the one you promised me last night on the tower! You remember—I was to have as many rabbit pies as I could eat!"

"Why, you young cormorant!" exclaimed Nugent. "That was only to keep you quiet, so that you wouldn't break your neck!"

"That's all very well, Nugent. But I don't suppose I should have broken my neck, anyway; and Wharton is a fellow of his word. What about the feed, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton laughed.
"Come along!" he said. "Let's go to the tuckshop! If you clear out half of Mrs. Mimble's stock, you'll leave the pantry alone to-night!"

And Billy Bunter came on; and, as the feed was unlimited, it is needless to add that he really distinguished himself!

(Next week, "PETTICOAT RULE AT GREYFRIARS! Read what happens when a girl takes the Remove Form. Look out for this grand yarn.)

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at the top of it, and then the descent was easy. He landed in the Close, shaking in every limb, and looked amazed to find the Form-master and the Head there.

"Take him back to bed at once, and don't explain to him till the morning," said Mr. Quelch, in a low voice, to Nugent.

"Yes, sir."
And Nugent linked his arm in Bunter's and led him away. Harry Wharton, on the parapet of the tower, made his way back to the spot where he had climbed up.

The relief turned him almost sick and giddy for some moments, and he rested—lying on his chest—for a minute or two before he commenced the descent. But he was quite himself when he swung down the ivy and dropped to the ground.

Mr. Quelch grasped him by the hand. "My boy," he said, gripping Harry's hand hard, "you have shown great

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